Dichotomies Reconciled

The work of Dylan Thomas

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I. Introduction

In 1847, the German physicist Hermann von Helmholtz published On the Conservation of Force formulating the general principle of the conservation of energy, which states that the amount of energy in a closed system, such as the universe, remains constant, that energy cannot be created or destroyed.

At the heart of Dylan lies the similar idea that the amount of life is constant. Thus, when new life is created, it is rather a matter of the creation of a new shape since life cannot be created or destroyed. What is termed "death" is just the end to the individual shape, so that whenever death occurs, life does not die only its assumed form vanishes.

This idea explains Dylan's unification of conventional polarizations, for everything is merely a matter of giving shape to life or of the shapes that life has already assumed. "Self" and "other" - that which is not "self" - are the same since they are life in different shapes. So are "good" and "evil," "man" and "nature" etc. For the polarization between "creation" and "destruction," it applies that it is the creation and/or the destruction of a shape of life.

However, if life is a constant, there ought not to be any concerns nor any anxiety about death. I do not think Dylan was in denial of death, as it has been argued. However hard life turned out to be for him, he always celebrates life in his works. This is the case even in the works concerning death for, paradoxically, nothing is more reassuring and reaffirming to life than death.

Dylan's works - poems, drama, and short stories - emerge in the space between the observer, Dylan, and that which he observes. As is common practice, he places himself outside the object to be observed and analysed, but then he describes the object from within as his feelings awakened by the object and his experience of it.

As the central idea is life as a constant, Dylan's subject is the many shapes assumed by life, the uncertainties and mysteries connected to it manifesting themselves as the unknown. But the unknown cannot be evoked until its existence has been recognized. It is that which is or has been lost though it is never really lost but has just assumed another of life's shapes, namely the shape of experience. And this shape remains - at any rate until it assumes a new shape.

From his central idea stems Dylan's recognition of the synthesis between that which is conventionally polarized, which results in paradoxes such as the known unknown, the "unlost" lost, the self-ness of the "other," the death-in-life, the expressed inexpressible etc, which in combination with the poet's outspoken love of words and their sounds and shapes, makes his motivation for writing.

Throughout, I shall be following custom in referring to Dylan Thomas not by his surname, but by his Christian name, I have, indeed, already done so. This should not be taken as a sign of respectlessness nor tactlessness. Rather this practice should be understood to imply what Glyn Jones, who is Welsh, says in The Dragon Has Two Tongues:

> If I use the Christian names of those writers I have chosen to speak about in more detail, this must not be taken as an indication of lack of respect or of over-familiarity. Christian names come easily to the Welsh since all our names, even our surnames, are really Christian names (what are Thomas, Llewellyn, Morgan, Griffith, and even Davies, Williams, Hughes and Jones, but obvious Christian names?), and our surnames, fastened insidiously upon us since Tudor times, are part, an often irritating part, of our anglicization.... It is nice to see that where Dylan Thomas is concerned the English and the Americans have followed this

practice.[1]

To call Dylan 'Mr. Dylan Thomas' or 'Dylan Thomas' every time I have to refer to him is unnecessary. And Glyn Jones among others finds the use of the surname only, i.e. 'Thomas', as is custom with Auden and Lawrence, to be "patronizing, as though one were trying to put him into the obsequious class of Victorian domestics."[2]

The "Author's prologue"

In the summer of 1951, a young student working on a thesis addressed Dylan to ask him some questions. Dylan asked for the questions in writing so that he could reflect thoroughly on his reply to them. The nine pages long answer, in Dylan's handwriting, has popularly come to be called his "Poetic Manifesto."

The " Author's prologue" was the last poem Dylan let publish. Introducing Collected Poems it is a sample of the poems that follow. However, being his last published poem, the "Prologue" has the quality of an epilogue looking back at his poetic works. As such, the "Prologue" resembles an epitaph.

The statement of the "Prologue" is not a new one, which is only suitable for a prologue. On the contrary, it represents a return from the late poems to the earlier ones and to the idea of thesis and antithesis being contained in one another. Therefore, it is the logical place to start a Dylan Thomas History of Ideas as it offers preliminary arguments that will lead to the formulation of my thesis.

Concepts, themes, and imagery common in Dylan's works are introduced in the "Prologue."

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[1]Pp. 58-59.

[2] Ibid.

Primarily, this too is a celebration of life and of life lived. The theme is that common in Dylan of creation versus destruction. The creative forces are more powerful than those destructive. Nevertheless, the destructive forces are strong, always they are right beneath the surface when the celebration of life is at its height. Death, destruction, the vanishing of shapes, is ever-present. In his "Poetic Manifesto," Dylan states that "the joy and function of poetry is, and was, the celebration of man, which is also the celebration of God."[3] "Author's prologue" certainly lives up to that, and does so particularly through two typical aspects of Dylan's works, namely through religious imagery, and through "old tricks, new tricks, puns, portmanteau-words, paradox, allusion, paronomasia, paragram, catachresis, slang, assonantal rhymes, vowel rhymes, sprung rythm,"[4] in short through language itself.

The concept of time is already introduced in the first line of the poem. This concept is one with which one often encounters in the works of Dylan, for instance "Fern hill," "Poem in October," "Poem on his birthday," etc. Here time is introduced by "This day is winding down now / At God speeded summer's end;" this recalls "the boys of summer" who are "in their ruin."[5] The fact that both "now" and "end" acquire weight from terminal position, as if Dylan were saying "this is the end," adds to the paradoxical feeling that the "Prologue" actually is an epilogue, and even one of those which really are meant for the tombstone, an epitaph.

Celebration of Life

The contrast between "now" and "end" represents another *dylanesque* paradox. For this "end" is not *the* end but more like a beginning. The "torrent salmon sun" echoing the movement of the first line's "winding," is the end of the life of the salmon, as it dies after

[3] P. 9.

[4] "Poetic Manifesto," p. 6.

[5] "I see the boys of summer."

having spawned, but at the same time new life begins. Or, it is the destruction of the *shape* of life that is the salmon, while new shapes of life as new salmons are created.

This is not *the* end but *an* end, and an end that marks the beginning of something else. The beach is littered with dead starfish and empty shells meaning that nature is dying. Nevertheless, nature is celebrating life - while dying. The wood neighbouring the beach is "dancing" in honour of the Greek fertility deity of Pan, as if it were refusing to mourn the death of itself (the reference to "A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London" is deliberate). This goes hand in hand with autumn's coming at "summer's end" since autumn represents the death of nature while at the same time it also represents the regeneration of nature; it is a symbol more powerful and clearer than any other of the circle of life.

The termination of shapes means survival for other shapes of life; herons are diving for prey, boys are stabbing for fish, and "crow black" men are fishing, being "crow black" because they are seen from beneath the surface of the water and thus are silhouetted against the bright sky.

Yet, in the midst of all this death, the celebration of life continues. The death of one gives life to another. And the dead shells still speak "seven seas." There is life-in-death and death-in-life, "The country is holy."[6] Dylan's swan-song is sung by a dumb swan, while Dylan builds his arks saving life from the destruction of the beginning flood for us "to know / How I, a spinning man / Glory also this star...":

> Hark: I trumpet the place,
> From fish to jumping hill! Look:
> I build my bellowing ark

[6]"In country sleep".

To the best of my love.

The best of his love is all living things, particularly mankind. The "multitudes of arks" are "bellowing" with the sounds of the passengers partly because a passenger list like this one needs to be broken, partly because the inclusion of these animal sounds too is an expression per se of the life worth celebrating. The life celebrating quality of

O kingdom of neighbours, finned
Felled and quilled, flash to my patch
Work ark and the moonshine
Drinking Noah of the bay,
With pelt, and scale and fleece

speaks for it self. The "Noah of the bay" drinking moonshine is Dylan himself getting drunk on nature and the magical powers of nature.

The religious note

The religious side to Dylan makes up a great and important part of this poem. The "religious wind" that passes "like a fire"[7] will destroy "the cities of nine / Days' night," a phrase that recalls the "Book of Jonah" through the sound. While Nineveh was saved in this, however, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed in "Genesis."As London and New York that were Dylan's personal Sodom and Gomorrah, it is from these cities that Dylan the poet sings "To you, strangers," his audience. Since "The country is holy,"[8] only the cities are destroyed.

[7]"Ears in the turrets hear"

[8]"In Country Sleep"

The religious imagery and theme continue as Dylan turns into Noah and becomes a craftsman building arks, not just a single ark but a multitude of arks. These arks are the poems that follow in the volume and are "patch / Work" arks since they are words patched together by Dylan the wordworker as Noah the woodworker built his ark in "Genesis."

The "flood flowers" either like the Nile fertilizing its surrounding fields by its annual flooding of them, or the flood is transformed and transcended into poetry, a flood of poetry on which arks of poetry sail "across / The water lidded lands" between the Welsh hills like "wooden islands."

As the Bible is fundamental to Western culture, lying as the foundation of our outlook and behaviour, biblical references and even rewritings of biblical stories are common in our literature. Dylan's works offer no exception to this. But unlike the use by for example T. S. Eliot of the Bible and mediaeval biblical legends (that of the Fisher King is one), Dylan's use of these is relatively straightforward. He has no specialist knowledge of the Bible, he never "sat down & studied the Bible, never consciously echoed its language, and [was], in reality, as ignorant of it as most brought-up Christians."[9] What he uses from the Bible "is remembered from childhood, and is the common knowledge of all who were brought up in English-speaking communities,"[10] which we may extend to apply to most Western cultures, and so he uses "nowhere" in his writing "any knowledge which is not common-place to any literate person."[11]

Finally, the reference to "Genesis" in "Author's prologue" underlines the paradoxical theme of the destructiveness of creation or the creativity of destruction, the symbiosis of thesis and

[9]"Poetic Manifesto," p. 5.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Ibid.

antithesis, as "genesis" may be translated into "creation" from the Greek, although the particular story which is referred to is one of destruction and survival.

It seems that Dylan's flood is more creative than destructive unlike the biblical flood.[12] The "rumpus of shapes" which is all of life's shapes, floats on the flood in celebration of life. But some are struggling more than others to remain alive, death is present.

Language

Dylan has often been accused of being too obscure, and there have been many attempts to explain, and explain why. I find his obscurity to be one of many fascinating qualities of his works. One of the explanations as to why Dylan kept a certain level of obscurity is offered by Glyn Jones in The Dragon Has Two Tongues claiming that Dylan consciously obscured the meaning of his works in order to cover "the ordinariness of his themes in a literary world where the words 'intellectuals and artists' were often heard,"[13] and because he "was conscious of some intellectual inadequacy"[14] in his work.

Unfortunately, and I do regret this, I never knew Dylan personally of course. However, I doubt very much that he was particularly bothered by this "ordinariness" of themes, nor do I believe he felt particularly intellectually inadequate. I think, moreover, that his obscurity

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[12]Although "And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying ... And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. ... I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud..." ("Genesis" 9:8-14), so that a new world order was created.

[13]P. 183.

[14]P. 187.

has been much overrated and therefore has been an overpowering obstruction to many readers and students. Further, the level of obscurity, which really is present in a number of his works, stems from his love of the sounds and shapes of words and the colours that they "cast in [his] eyes."[15]

> The first poems I knew were nursery rhymes, and before I could read them for myself I had come to love just the words of them, the words alone. What the words stood for, symbolised, or meant, was of very secondary importance; what mattered was the sound of them as I heard them for the first time ... I did not care what the words said overmuch, nor what happened to Jack & Jill & the Mother Goose rest of them; I cared for the shapes of sound that their names, and the words describing their actions, made in my ears; I cared for the colours the words cast in my eyes.[16]

It all started with nursery rhymes, Dylan says, and it was these that made him want to work with words and "live with them and in them."[17] Thus, it is to no surprise that Jack & Jill and Mother Goose are included in "Author's prologue" being the introduction it is and representing both the beginning and the end of it all. We encounter Jack "Heigh, on horseback hill," and Jill is included through the sound relationship between hill and Jill. The line serves to introduce the almost pantheistic union of God and nature in the line "Hail to His beasthood!" which again recalls Pan. This intrusion of Jack & Jill reduces God to Mother Goose so that sanctuary becomes language. This, in turn, restricts the theme of creation in general to the creation of poetry in particular so that it becomes a poem about

[15]"Poetic Manifesto" p. 1.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Op.cit. p. 2.

writing a poem. But then again poetry is life to Dylan.

I think the notion of poetry equating life has helped on its way the perception of Dylan as solipsistic. This perception has also been supported by reference to his method, namely that of observing from the outside but entering the object in order to make the description from within the object. However, I rather doubt that Dylan considered the world around him a product of his mind.

Dylan loved life although it was tough on him, he loved man and nature. Above all, however, he was deeply in love with "words, words, words"[18] breaking the rhythm of his description many-sided effect of words upon him, or as he is supposed to have told the actors as his sole instruction when Under Milk Wood was performed for the first time in New York in May 1953, "Love the words, love the words!"

His love of life, his love of the process of creation and his love of language are Dylan's major themes. When he is involved with death in his works, it is most often for the paradoxical life reassuring quality of death in death's role of antithesis. The creation theme often shines through as either the creation of an embryo or a poem, or as its opposite, the destruction of one of these, if not even a disappointment over a waste that obstructs creation. Language becomes a theme the moment it is part of the process of creation.

Thesis statement

In this paper, I endeavour to demonstrate that in Dylan's universe man and nature do not originate from God. Instead, God is a creation of man; and man and nature, indeed all living things, originate from a dark pool of life. Language, and poetry, is alive in this universe, and as such originates too from this pool of life. Dylan's atheism results in him substituting

[18] "Poetic Manifesto" p. 3.

the pool of life for God. Thus, he becomes the centre of his own universe, the so-called solipsistic element in Dylan, together with all other living things including nature. A life is time spent away from the pool of life, and death is the return to it. These are the major dichotomies reconciled. The reconciliation of the dichotomies is often carried out through the notion of thesis and antithesis; the synthesis often remains unspoken, but as often it is the pool of life.

There are, therefore, four elements that need to be addressed in detail. In the chapter called "Works on Emanation," I shall be dealing with the pool of life, the time spent away from it, and the return to it. In the second chapter entitled "Carpe Diem," I shall concern myself with how Dylan deals with the temporariness of life; when "life" is understood as the period between conception and death, how he deals with mortality, and how as well as why death is worth celebrating as a part of life, which is the centre of the celebration. In the third chapter, "Works on Creation," I shall be focussing on language and poetry as living things, showing that these too stem from the pool of life. Finally, in the chapter named "The Holy Metaphor," I shall concentrate upon Dylan the Atheist's use of Christian myth and imagery in order to prove that God is non-existing in Dylan's universe.

I feel, however, that a few short comments on the treatment of Dylan by literary history are necessary.

Dylan is often categorized as a Romantic or Neo-romantic. I shall not keep it a secret that I do not agree with this assessment. However, I do recognize the incentive to use this label without accepting it. I think it is too crude a categorization and one which does not recognize Dylan as the multi-faceted artist he is.

When not accused of being either a Romantic or a Neo-romantic, Dylan is often said to be a Surrealist. I find this hard to accept too. Surrealists aim at "automatic writing," the

process of creating a work of art without any interference from the artist's intellect so that the random impulses of the artist are expressed as they appear and in their own order of appearance in the mind of the artist. This is far from being Dylan's method. Nothing could be further from the Surrealist method than Dylan's constant returning to, editing, and rewriting earlier works. Further, the order in which Dylan's images appear is more often than not too strict for a claim of "automatic writing" to hold, and so are his uses of rhyme and rhythm.

There may be some justice in the claim of others that Dylan is, basically, an "Anglo-Welsh"[19] writer. Of course, Dylan would belong to this category. However, I find the definition of the "Anglo-Welsh" to be too broad in that it seems to include all Welsh who write in the English language distinguishing neither subject matter, style, the writers' systems of belief, nor outlook.

All things being equal, it is not my primary aim to categorize Dylan and his works anew. The discussion will, however, be inherent from time to time whenever it suits my purpose which is to construe the Dylan Thomas History of Ideas. But it will be in the form of drawing parallels and contrasts to other artists who may or may not be representative for a particular literary current or period. What follows is not a history of literature, though not historyless.

[19]The term is borrowed with all its unfortunate implications from Glyn Jones' The Dragon Has Two Tongues.

II. Works on Emanation

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from.[20]

Introduction

It is helpful to term the works that treat the basic dichotomy of life and death, as "works on emanation." The subject of these works is emanation, the process of coming from a source. This source is common to all living things. It is a source to which we return. Thus this basic dichotomy is reconciled in Dylan's universe. Emanation takes place in the circle of life at the time of conception and at the time of death. At the time of conception, the emanation is from the pool of life, while at the time of death it is to the pool of life. The pool of life is where everything and everyone originates, it is the common original source.

In this chapter, I shall concern myself with Dylan's treatment of this basic duality of life and death.

As I stated in the general introduction to this paper, it is one of my main points that Dylan often uses the antithesis in his works. This is demonstrated by "Author's Prologue":

This day winding down now
At God speeded summer's end

The thesis "end" has the implied antithetical meaning of "beginning;" that is, when the end is reached, something new may begin. Thus for any process to take place, another has to end. This means, then, that destruction is the basis for creation, death is the basis for life,

[20]T.S. Eliot: "Little Gidding: 5" in Four Quartets.

which is the reason for celebrating death and that is exactly what nature is doing in "Author's prologue," celebrating its own death at that.

However, the celebration of the destructive forces of life is only one of the many different ways in which Dylan pays tribute to life in his works. "Author's prologue" also offers a celebration of the creative forces of life. In the poem, Dylan is God, the Creator, partly through the juxtaposition of himself and Noah and partly through the Noah-ish word-working which is the writing of the poem itself, but also through the flood being so creative.

Mainly, "Author's Prologue" is about the creative and destructive forces of life and about the reconciliation of these dichotomies in life.

In more ways than the linguistic one, the words "womb" and "tomb" rhyme with each other in Dylan's universe; the process of death begins at the time of conception in the womb. In this way, destruction is brought into existence by creation and creation is brought into existence by destruction. On this background, it becomes possible to speak meaningfully about a destructive creation and a creative destruction, death's creativity.

My hero bares his nerves

The capacity of creating life is celebrated while the wasting of this capacity is condemned as well as made an everyday occurrence, in the poem "My hero bares his nerves," which is about masturbation.

The speaker of "My hero bares his nerves" is a penis, its "hero" is the man to whom it is attached. The multiple meanings of "wrist" is the cause of the confusion. "Wrist" means the joint that connects the hand with the forearm, the part of the sleeve or glove that covers this area, but it is also the joint connecting the foot to the tibia. Thus "from wrist to

shoulder" is the body of the penis which is covered by skin. By a movement, the hero "unpacks the head that ... / leans on my mortal ruler" - a rather indiscreet image of masturbation. The "mortal ruler" being the body of the penis, it is also "the proud spine" of the following line as well as an image of time.

My hero bares his nerves along my wrist
That rules from wrist to shoulder,
Unpacks the head that, like a sleepy ghost,
Leans on my mortal ruler,
The proud spine spurning turn and twist.

And these poor nerves so wired to the skull
Ache on the lovelorn paper
I hug to love with my unruly scrawl
That utters all love hunger
And tells the page the empty ill.

The "poor nerves" are the fingers holding the "lovelorn paper" on which the speaker unruly scribbles his "all love hunger." The "unruly scrawl" on the page is that which is "stripping my loin of promise" in stanza three. The nerves are characteristically "*wired* to the skull" [my italics], the nerves are metallic, corresponding to Dylan's persistent confusion of flesh and metal.

He holds the wire from the box of nerves
Praising the mortal error
Of birth and death, the two sad knaves of thieves,
And the hunger's emperor;
He pulls the chain, the cistern moves.

Before flushing, the "hero" praises "the mortal error / of birth and death," the error being what the adolescent boy of "A Prospect of the Sea" talks about when he says "Death from playing with yourself." However, in apposition to "birth and death" is "the two sad knaves of thieves, /And the hunger's emperor." This is an image of the crucified Christ and the two thieves on Calvary. The thieves are the testicles through their being containers of life and death, making the "hunger's emperor" phallic, to be sure. Thus the hero praises his genitalia and their capacity of creation, and of waste.

In order to get rid of his waste, the hero "pulls the chain" so that "the cistern moves." Having just praised his own capacity of creation, he now seems to imply that masturbation is as common and everyday-like as flushing the toilet, while a moment earlier he condemned it for its sterility and quality of loss.

I see the boys of summer

Watching "the boys of summer," Dylan sees the creation that was wasted in "My hero bares his nerves." But they are quite unexpectedly "in their ruin:"

> I see the boys of summer in their ruin
> Lay the gold tithings barren,
> Setting no store by harvest, freeze the soils;
> There in their heat the winter floods
> Of frozen loves they fetch their girls,
> And drown the cargoed apples in their tides.

Summer is the season of flowering, flourishing, well-being and recalls the merry memories and expectations of harvest-time, yet the boys who should be in their heydays are decaying. "My heart knew love, my belly hunger; / I smelt the maggot in my stool," the still unbegotten child says in "Before I knocked." There are three conditions known to man even

before conception, viz. love, hunger, and death. The process of decay that will lead to death, begins even before the moment of conception. This is the idea which is behind the line "the boys of summer in their ruin."

The theme around which everything evolves, is the facing of the existence of ageing, the decay of the flesh that will ultimately bring forth death. It is an acknowledgement of death as a condition of life, and simply a recognition of the mere existence of death.

"I see the boys of summer" is constructed as thesis and antithesis, parts one and two respectively, which meet in a sort of strange synthesis in the third part. In the first line of this third part, it becomes clear that it is a kind of conversation between two parties: "I see you boys of summer in your ruin" as "the sleepy man of winter" says. The line is a repetition of the very first line of the poem. However, the addressee has changed. In the first part, the line read "I see *the* boys of summer in *their* ruin" [my italics]. Here the addressee is undefined, it could be the speaker himself or anybody. In part three, however, the addressee is the boys.

> I see you boys of summer in your ruin.
> Man in his maggot's barren.
> And boys are full and foreign in the pouch.
> I am the man your father was.
> We are the sons of flint and pitch.
> O see the poles are kissing as they cross.

The two parties interchange lines, and it is nearly impossible to establish with certainty exactly who says which line. However, the second line must belong to the boys reminding the "sleepy man of winter" of the decay his "flesh is heir to"[21]. The next two lines seem to

[21]Shakespeare: Hamlet III:1.

be spoken by the old man, while the last two belong to the boys. The very last line of the poem, "O see the poles are kissing as they cross," removes all the promise of the last line of part one and two: "O see the pulse of summer in the ice" of one, and "O see the poles of promise in the boys" of two, respectively, by proving homosexuality one of the themes of the poem.

There will be no offspring from a homosexual relation, so homosexuality is sterile. Sterility is the antithesis of the first part, the thesis being fertility; compare "the boys of summer" with "in their ruin," for instance. After summer, it is time for harvesting. In the first stanza of part one, it is autumn, time for harvest. But the harvest will be frozen and the usually golden tithings will be "barren." Thus, fertility involves sterility as life involves death and vice versa.

In the second stanza, the theme of sterility is continued by the introduction of masturbation through playing with words:

> These boys of light are curdlers in their folly,
> Sour the boiling honey;
> The jacks of frost they finger in the hives;
> There in the sun the frigid threads
> Of doubt and dark they feed their nerves;
> The signal moon is zero in their voids.

Jack Frost becomes "jacks of frost" which is still winter, cold, and sterile, and contains "jack off," masturbation. This fits into the image of the "signal moon" which is made "zero." Tindall suggests that the first stanza is conception and genesis, a suggestion that allows him to argue that this "signal moon" is the womb, apart from being the actual moon. It is made "zero" by "shape and promise." He continues: "as the honey-boiling womb holds

curdling, frosty death, so the penis."[22]

The theme of sterility and death is continued in stanza three. In stanza four, the boys have become "men" who will come to "nothing." Yet introducing hope to this image of doom, there is "summer in the ice."

> But seasons must be challenged or they totter
> Into a chiming quarter
> Where, punctual as death, we ring the stars;
> There, in his night, the black-tongued bells
> The sleepy man of winter pulls.
> Nor blows back moon-and-midnight as she blows.

Beginning with the word "But," it is clear from the outset that the second part is in opposition to the first. In the first stanza, the lines are drawn between "the boys of summer" and "the sleepy man of winter" who may be seen as an image of time. As time, he is connected with the changing of the seasons and the seasons themselves, as a representative of time, he must be challenged before midnight or death, the "chiming quarter."

> We are the dark deniers, let us summon
> Death from a summer woman ...

As "dark deniers" they deny promise, the good, but they are also deniers of the dark. As life and death are involving one another and parts of each other, "death" in the second line also means birth, the end is the beginning.

Nature enters the scene in the third stanza preparing the way for the climactic image of

[22]Tindall, p. 20.

Christ and the two thieves crucified on Calvary in the line "And nail the merry squires to the trees" of the fourth stanza. Recalling Good Friday and Christmas at the same time and thus confusing death with life, it is an image full of despair and of hope.

> In spring we cross our foreheads with the holly,
> Heigh ho the blood and berry,
> And nail the merry squires to the trees;
> Here love's damp muscle dries and dies,
> Here break a kiss in no love's quarry.
> O see the poles of promise in the boys.

The despair is taken up in the line, "Here love's damp muscle dries and dies," in an expression of the end of love. However, this is followed by the violent creation of a kiss: "Here break a kiss in no love's quarry," offering some kind of hope again. The line of sterility and thereby death is followed by a line of life. The lines are joined by the fact that they both happen "here" reminding us of and proving the central theme of the poem, namely that death is a part of life. A statement which has been right beneath the surface since the beginning of the poem: "I see the boys of summer in their ruin," in which it is suggested that the process of mortal decay is at work even at the peak of life.

Having recognized the existence of death and that death is ever-present, the question of how to deal with it arises. In "I see the boys of summer," death is acknowledged as man's condition, but it is not dealt with as such as the frame of reference is not the after-life but the cosmos of the present. In addressing the matter of the after-life, most people would turn to theology. Dylan, on the other hand, turns to nature stating in "And death shall have no dominion" as the theme that resurrection does not come from God, it comes from nature.

And death shall have no dominion

The title and the first and last line of each stanza refers to Paul the Apostle's letter to the Romans 6:9, which reads: "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." This does not, however, make this poem Christian. Dylan uses, as I shall return to in the proper chapter, Christian imagery, stories, biblical passages etc. allegorically and as a common frame of reference. Here, "dominion" meaning authority to rule, the line "and death shall have no dominion," means that death will lose its authority to rule to nature, nature has dominion, which promises resurrection through nature.

From the outset, this chanting, ecstatic poem, "And death shall have no dominion," claims man's unity with nature: "Dead men naked they shall be one / With the man in the wind and the west moon" referring to the man in the moon and to the west wind by juxtaposition. Juxtaposing these expressions elucidates and widens the extent to which man and nature are in unity and will re-unite after death. This is not a sermon for any one particular, but for all the dead throughout time.

> And death shall have no dominion.
> Dead men naked they shall be one
> With the man in the wind and the west moon;
> When their bones are picked clean and the clean bones gone,
> They shall have stars at elbow and foot;
> Though they go mad they shall be sane,
> Though they sink through the sea they shall rise again;
> Though lovers be lost love shall not;
> And death shall have no dominion.

"Though they go mad" or "sink through the sea" or "lovers be lost," that is, no matter what state they are in at the time of death, resurrection will come and "they shall have stars at

elbow and foot" bringing reunion with nature. However, the reunion will take place only "when their bones are picked clean and the clean bones gone."

> Twisting on racks when sinews give way,
> Strapped to a wheel, yet they shall not break;
> Faith in their hands shall snap in two,
> And the unicorn evils run them through.

Those who have been "twisting on racks" and "strapped to a wheel" because of their heresy become martyrs in the second stanza, and at the same time the painfulness of life is described. Resurrection does not come from God as they have made clear through their heretical acts and "faith" will therefore "snap in two" "in their hands." Further, "the unicorn evils run them through," the unicorn represents here Christ as well as the most foul and furious beast. Instead, resurrection comes from and through nature: "Though they be mad and dead as nails, / Heads of the characters hammer through daisies."

After the funeral

If resurrection comes through nature, then death is a return to nature: "whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord."[23] In "After the funeral" the real mourner who is "a desolate boy" and the lyrical speaker too, reaches this conclusion that by dying, Ann has returned to nature.

> But I, Ann's bard on a raised hearth, call all
> The seas to service that her wood-tongued virtue
> Babble like a bellbuoy over the hymning heads,
> Bow down the walls of the ferned and foxy woods

[23]"II Corinthans" 5:6.

That her love sing and swing through a brown chapel.

The "brown chapel" is the forest, the place in which we are supposed to worship.

The "desolate boy" and "Ann's bard" is the real mourner, while the other, hypocritical mourners deliver their "mule praises" to the wrong Ann in the real mourner's view. These expressions of admiration and honour are "mule" which means that they combine the characteristics of two distinct types. The two types that the expressions combine are, elegiac, yes, but they differ in honouring the sculptured Ann on the one hand and on the other the actual Ann.

The two Anns unite in the speaker. The monument "of the hewn voice" becomes one with Ann's "seventy years of stone." The hands of the monument are "cloud-sopped" in mockery of Heaven. "The strutting fern lay seeds" in the last line is an expression of a "natural immortality of the biological processes of returning to life,"[24] or put more simply, an expression referring to the resurrective powers of nature.

The force that through the green fuse

As I demonstrated in my analysis of "And death shall have no dominion" above, the title and first and last lines of each stanza means that death will lose its authority to rule to nature. This implies the promise of resurrection through nature. However, the union between man and nature does not belong to the realm of death, in life as well the link is at work:

The force that through the green fuse drives the flower
Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees

[24]Ackerman, p. 104.

Is my destroyer.
And I am dumb to tell the crooked rose
My youth is bent by the same wintry fever.

Again Dylan draws on the antithesis; the blossoming life of the flower is seen as the top of the explosive "force" of the fuse allowing the destructive "blasts" of the second line. The dynamic force is both creative and destructive. "Green" is as in "Fern Hill" young so that "green age" becomes youth, but "green" also underlines once again the union with nature.

It is almost clumsily clear that the "crooked rose" is from Blake's sick one. "Crooked" is bent and bowed with age, which the rose shares with the "wintry fever." Cold and hot, infertility and sexual desire are juxtaposed in this "wintry fever" that refers to the sterility of love in old age as well as in adolescence. But this, the speaker is incapable of telling, he is "dumb."

Stanza two is a parallel, but the imagery moves from plant to water:

The force that drives the water through the rocks
Drives my red blood; that dries the mouthing stream
Turns mine to wax.
And I am dumb to mouth unto my veins
How at the mountain spring the same mouth sucks.

The natural power forcing the water "through the rocks" is the same power that pumps the life sustaining blood in the veins. The antithesis is again the destructive powers of the same force. The force of youth is also the force of age and of ageing, the decay of the flesh. As in the previous stanza, the speaker is incapable of communicating his unity with nature to nature.

The hand that whirls the water in the pool
Stirs the quicksand; that ropes the blowing wind
Hauls my shroud sail.
And I am dumb to tell the hanging man
How of my clay is made the hangman's lime.

"Quicksand" beautifully contains the central antithesis of this poem by uniting the living, the quick, with the dead which is the sand that indicates the passing of time in an hourglass, and thus recalls the decay. The force that drives both man and nature, has now turned into a "hand" controlling life and death; it "ropes the blowing wind" that "hauls my shroud sail."

The "hanging man" is allowed by "ropes" and in this way connected to the sailing imagery. In death the body becomes "clay" on its regenerating return to nature, like fallen dead leaves from the trees in autumn turn into fertile and creative mould. Of this clay, however, an instrument of death, of destruction, the "hangman's lime" is made.

The lips of time leech to the fountain head;
Love drips and gathers, but the fallen blood
Shall calm her sores.
And I am dumb to tell a weather's wind
How time has ticked a heaven round the stars.

Time, which was introduced in the previous stanza by "quicksand," is imagined as a "leech," a bloodsucker, drinking from the well of the natural force. "Love drips and gathers," though from the leech's feast, creating new life out of "the fallen blood," which is death. This eases the mother's sore wounds of the leech's sucking.

In the last two lines of this stanza, the speaker rejects the Christian doctrine of an eternal after-life by stating that Heaven is a product of time. Not only a product of time, though, the idea of Heaven is a product of man-made time since time now ticks like a clock.

The poem closes by stressing the connection between and the interdependence of creation and destruction:

> And I am dumb to tell the lover's tomb
> How at my sheet goes the same crooked worm.

The "lover's tomb" is another instance of the idea that the process of death begins at the time of conception. The "crooked worm" recalls the "crooked rose" from the first stanza. The worm is a sign of decay, and when "crooked" it symbolises impotence. Thus the "sheet" is a "shroud," like the sail in the third stanza, as well as a bed sheet, the place of love-making which contains the antithesis of creation and destruction.

The Visitor

"The Visitor" is one of Dylan's early short stories. Like the poems, the early short stories deal with the union of man and nature, the dichotomies of vitality and decay, birth and death, etc; while others depend on rituals which unite the realm of the living with that of the dead. An example of the latter is "The Burning Baby," while an example of the former is "The Visitor."

In "The Visitor" we meet Peter who is an invalid. He is nursed by the woman Rhianon, whose

> "dress, rustling about her, made the soft noise of water. He [Peter] called her over to him and touched the bosom of her dress, feeling the water on his hands."[25]

Since life originated in water, the quality of Rhianon's dress of water suggests her representing fertility. This suggestion is supported by her name, Rhianon, which is a variant spelling of Rhiannon who is the goddess of fertility in Welsh mythology. Further, "Rhianon" associates to "Rhian" which is a name derived from "rhiain" meaning "maiden." That is what she is.[26]

The invalid Peter lies in bed waiting for death: "what were the sheets around him if not the covering sheets of the dead?"[27] Death has presumably been there already, since "he heard in his brain the voices of Callaghan and Rhianon battle until he slept."[28] "The invalid waited for his visitor. Peter waited for Callaghan."[29] Callaghan, a variant spelling of Callahan, derives from the Irish Ceallach which means war and strife, thus he is death personified. Therefore, Callaghan battles constantly with Rhianon who wants to protect her creations. The struggle between the two is the struggle between life and death.

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[25]Collected Stories, p. 27.

[26]The concern with names and their meanings and associations as demonstrated in this story and analysis, is not unique, cf. e.g. "The Holy Six" in which the names of the six holy men are anagrams: Mr. Lucytre (cruelty), Mr. Vyne (envy), Mr. Rafe (fear), Mr. Edger (greed), and Mr. Stul (lust). For names, see http://www.behindthename.com/

[27]Collected Stories, p. 24.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Op.cit. p. 25.

Life and death are fighting over Peter who lets "his hand rest on his head, stone on stone."[30] The name Peter means "stone" through the Greek "petros." Thus his hand, which is stone, rests on stone, which is his head, "stone on stone."

The story is entitled "The Visitor" because the subject is death, and the visitor is death. The ethos of the story is that death is inevitable, and that there is no point in fearing death. Peter is aware of his mortality, he even recognizes this day as his last. Having won the argument with life, death finally arrives - while life is attending on Peter: "Shall I kiss you awake? said Callaghan. His hand was cold on Peter's hand."[31] In this way, Peter dies and is taken by Callaghan to the Jarvis valley.

Jarvis derives from Gervasius who was a monk at Christ Church, Canterbury, from 1163 until his death in 1210; he was a chronicler and thus a historian. By taking him to the Jarvis valley, Callaghan makes Peter a part of history, a part of eternity. Moreover, the arrival at the valley marks a return to nature.

> Peter, in his ghost, cried out with joy. There was life in the naked valley, life in his nakedness. He saw the streams and the beating water, how the flowers shot out of the dead, and the blades and roots were doubled in their power under the stride of the spilt blood.

Happy about finally having died, Peter finds himself reconciled with nature. However, since Rhiannon in Welsh mythology is also the moon, and "there from the stripped valley rose

[30]Ibid.

[31]Op.cit. p. 28.

the smell of death, widening the mountainous nostrils on the face of the moon,"[32] this land of the dead is also the land of creation.

The death of the individual always causes sorrow with those left behind, including Rhianon, the personified fertility and life: "She did not hear him, but stood over his bed and fixed him with an unbreakable sorrow."[33] However, having simply returned to nature and thus come back to live, Peter cannot understand that he is dead nor her tears, therefore he says "hold my hand ... why are you putting the sheet over my face?"[34]

A refusal to mourn the death, by fire, of a child in London

In life, man is governed by the same forces as are at work in nature. In death, man returns to the pool of life and becomes part of nature again. This notion of death as a return to nature recurs in "A refusal to mourn the death, by fire, of a child in London" which shows man's final reabsorption into natural life. This reabsorption into nature is one of two reasons why this elegy paradoxically refuses to mourn. The second explanation is found in the third stanza : "I shall not murder / The mankind of her going with a grave truth." Any "grave truth," any eulogy would diminish the "majesty," or majestic quality, of the death of this girl, to mourn her would be to kill her again since all the words are inadequate. The death of this girl becomes the death of all "mankind."

The poem opens by stating that man and flower are fathered by the same creative "darkness":

Never until mankind making

[32]Op.cit. p. 29.

[33]Op.cit. p. 31.

[34]Ibid.

Bird beast and flower
Fathering and all humbling darkness

This "darkness" is 1) "mankind making," 2) fathering bird, beast, and flower, and 3) "all humbling," so that the "darkness" becomes the creative powers of nature from which everything living stems. It is a pool of life.

And I must enter again the round
Zion of the water bead
And the synagogue of the ear of corn

The speaker enters the chapel or synagogue of nature, "the ear of corn" is the synagogue. Thus the holiness of nature is established. "The round / zion of the water bead" combines Judaism with the beads of Catholicism since beads are told in neither Judaism nor Protestantism. According to Maud, "by stressing the circularity, the poet suggests other associations: the life cycle, a zero, the world in a waterdrop."[35] The world in a drop of water recalls the second stanza of John Donne's "A Valediction: Of Weeping" which describes how an image of nothing can be made into an image of the entire world.

Deep with the first dead lies London's daughter,
Robed in long friends,
The grains beyond age, the dark veins of her mother,
Secret by the unmourning water
Of the riding Thames,
After the first death, there is no other.

[35]Entrances to Dylan Thomas' Poetry, p. 52.

That the girl has returned to nature through her death is made clear in the fourth stanza. "Deep with the first dead lies London's daughter" means that the girl is now with all those who died before her. The mother of the girl is both London and mother earth with the "dark veins" that are full with the "unmourning water / of the riding Thames." The image of "the riding Thames" recalls "the sea tumbling in harness" of the first stanza. The sea here seems to be Poseidon's horse, and it is to be ridden by the Thames, which becomes the river of life. The round zion of the water bead of the third stanza is part of this river of life which naturally does not mourn the returning of one of its creations.

The last line of the poem, "After the first death, there is no other," seems cryptic. Apparently, it does not offer any consolation, and it is a strange promise of resurrection. However, it is clarified when it is considered in connection with "And death shall have no dominion." The biblical passage to which the lines refer, is the same: "Romans" 6:9. The girl has been resurrected through her return to nature. Accordingly, mother earth's daughter will not be subjected to another death, unlike "Revelation" 20:14; "this is the second death."

Ceremony after a fire raid

The idea of a darkness of creation, making a pool of life, is taken up again in "Ceremony after a fire raid." This poem really *is* a ceremony and does mourn the child's death in contrast to the elegiac "A refusal to mourn the death, by fire, of a child in London" which denied to grieve but then actually used the language and sentiments of intense mourning.

The ritualistic "Ceremony after a fire raid" falls into three parts: The first part is a chant of despair, the despair is relieved by the intimations of immortality. The next section is a combination of collect and sermon. And the final part is a combination of Gloria, communion, and organ voluntary.

Myselves
The grievers
Grieve
Among the street burned to tireless death
A child of a few hours
With its kneading mouth
Charred on the black breast of the grave
The mother dug, and its arms full of fires.

"Myselves / The grievers" are the grieving lyrical speaker made plural by the, romantic, inclusion of mankind. There he stands in the rubble of a street "among" streets making all streets "burned to tireless death," mourning the death of "a child of a few hours," a - new-born - baby. "Kneading mouth," "black breast," and "dug" support the interpretation of the child as a baby, at the very least the child has not yet been unweaned. Although "dug" is a verb here, the noun is implied. "The grave / The mother dug" is an instance of the dylanesque rhyming of womb with tomb suggesting that death starts in the womb. Syntactically "its" in "its arms full of fires" refers to the child. The child's arms are "full of fires" as are the streets after the bomb. "Sun the father his quiver full of the infants of pure fire," it says in the second stanza of "Holy Spring." "Sun the father" is God, the creator, and Jesus, the re-creator giving light and life again after the long, dark winter of death. This is the fire of life and love, and this is the fire of which the baby's arms are full in "Ceremony after a fire raid," not the fires of the night's bomb explosions. This fire is creative as opposed to the destructive fire of the bomb.

Begin
With singing
Sing
Darkness kindled back into beginning

When the caught tongue nodded blind,
A star was broken
Into the centuries of the child
Myselves grieve now, and miracles cannot atone.

The sermon begins "with singing" of "darkness kindled back into beginning." "Darkness" means death. "Beginning" is creation, genesis. Genesis is dark as death, but since the "darkness" is "kindled," it is bright and promising. In this way, "Darkness" becomes the creative,

... mankind making
Bird beast and flower
Fathering and all humbling darkness

of "A refusal to mourn the death, by fire, of a child in London." The singing is a celebration of this creative darkness, the pool of life.

Having thus turned things upside-down, the "star broken" is not only the destructive exploding bomb, but the bright star of genesis, conception and birth, it is "the three-pointed star" of "In the beginning." It is the "darkness kindled" again. Nevertheless, the grief is so strong that "miracles cannot atone" for the death of the child.

Give
Us your death that myselves the believers
May hold it in a great flood

The "grievers" of the first two stanzas become "the believers" in the third asking for forgiveness and, through the Noah-ish "great flood," for renewal. However, this flood is not

merely Noah's, it anticipates the creative "infant-bearing" waters of the third part of the poem, and it is a combination of this with the water used to extinguish the destructive fires of the bomb and the tears of the grievers.

> Crying
> Your dying
> Cry,
> Child beyond cockrow, by the fire-dwarfed
> Street we chant the flying sea
> In the body bereft.
> Love is the last light spoken. Oh
> Seed of sons in the loin of the black husk left.

The believers become grievers once more, crying over "your dying." Standing in the "fire-dwarfed" street, they "chant the flying sea." The buildings of the street are made dwarfs by the bomb's destructive fire which will be put out by the "flying sea" and the fire in the child. Finally, the grievers are consoled by the thought of eternal life: "Love is the last light spoken" and, since things are turned upside-down, also the first. Again, compare "In the beginning": "In the beginning was the word" that "flowed up, translating to the heart / First characters of birth and death." Love is the last word as it was the first in the beginning; "the last light" before the darkness, becomes the first light after the darkness. Also compare "St. Matthew" 19:30: "the last shall be the first."

The "black breast" of the first stanza has now in the fourth become "the loin of the black husk left." It is an entire family consisting of a mother, a father, a baby girl, and the possibility of future sons that have been burned to death as a result of the air raid. The breast and husk of the lion are "black" partly because they have been burned, but partly too because they belong to the darkness of creation.

In part two, the plural speaker becomes singular again, a complete congregation speaking with one single voice, the voice of a priest. Speaking from the pulpit, this priest elevates the dead child to all the dead. The child sacrificed on "London's altar" is all victims on all altars - even Adam and Eve since they became victims of the serpent, and thus the child, "London's daughter" of "A refusal to mourn the death, by fire, of a child in London," becomes all mankind.

Having raised the child to all the dead, the priest elevates the child to Christ in the second stanza: "the one / child who was priest and servants." Further, we are reminded that this sermon is a kind of creation account, the priest says "I know the legend / Of Adam and Eve is never for a second / Silent in my service." "Beginning crumbled back to darkness" is a reversal of the first part's "darkness kindled back into beginning."

In the final part, the service ends with organ pipes. A movement away from grief and mourning towards a feeling of triumph is completed. The weathercocks, steeples, and clock of the city burn, now, as do the cathedrals which are "luminous." This urban destruction represents the burning of time and space. even the Eucharist is on fire: "Into the bread in a wheatfield of flames, / Into the wine burning like brandy." This cries for holy water to put out the fire. So to put out the destructive fire, the creative "infant bearing sea" erupts like a volcano or "fountain." Then the poem reaches its climax in the fountain's "for ever" uttering "glory glory glory." All this destruction prepares the way for renewal and creation, "the sundering ultimate kingdom of genesis' thunder."

> Into the organpipes and steeples
> Of the luminous cathedrals,
> Into the weathercocks' molten mouths
> Rippling in twelve-winded circles,
> Into the dead clock burning the hour

Over the urn of sabbaths
Over the whirling ditch of daybreak
Over the sun's hovel and the slum of fire
And the golden pavements laid in requiems,
Into the cauldrons of the statuary,
Into the bread in a wheatfield of flames,
Into the wine burning like brandy,
The masses of the sea
The masses of the sea under
The masses of the infant-bearing sea
Erupt, fountain, and enter to utter for ever
Glory glory glory
The sundering ultimate kingdom of genesis' thunder.

Before I knocked

Directly from this "ultimate kingdom of genesis' thunder" comes the vital liquid of "Before I knocked:"

Before I knocked and flesh let enter,
With liquid hands tapped on the womb,
I who was shapeless as the water
That shaped the Jordan near my home
Was brother to Mnetha's daughter
And sister to the fathering worm.

The poem "Before I knocked" begins in the pool of life. Even before the speaker has developed into a sperm cell, in the first stanza he is "shapeless as the water," he has a conscience. Therefore, he is able to remember the time "Before [he] knocked and flesh let

enter, / With liquid hands tapped on the womb." This speaking, remembering, shapeless vital liquid is "brother to Mnetha's daughter / And sister to the fathering worm." In Blake's Tiriel, Mnetha is Gaia nursing her offspring, Heva, who is her senile daughter, and Har, her son, who has fathered a tribe. Only in Tiriel, there is a Mnetha to which Dylan may refer. Gaia, Mother Earth, belongs to the first generation of gods in Greek mythology. The daughter of Mnetha is Heva whose father is Tiriel, the old and blind wanderer who has been exiled by his own children. Tindall suggests that Mnetha is a combination on Athena and Memory, and thus, he claims, Heva becomes the Muse of poetry.[36] However, avoiding the complications of this suggestion, "brother to Mentha's daughter" becomes Har and thus the father of man. In "Before I knocked" a much more universal character than Tindall's is needed. The "shapeless" liquid "that shaped the Jordan" has to be seen as a universal forefather; not only a brother to one of the Muses, this is a mythical, god-like figure. Not only brother to Heva, the liquid is also "sister to the fathering worm," Tiriel who, still in Blake's poem, is the personification of the decay of the flesh. In this way, the liquid becomes the starter and the stopper, the creator and the destructor, sowing the seeds of life and taking them away again.

Since the liquid has this divine quality in stanza one, "my father" of stanza two is a powerful creative deity too. Though the liquid is unaware of the external world;

> I who was deaf to spring and summer,
> Who knew not sun nor moon by name,

it is aware of the creative activities of its father, the blacksmith. "My flesh's armour" hits on the recurring metaphor of metals for flesh, and thus the liquid's flesh is still "molten" while the father swings his "rainy hammer" from which fall the "leaden stars" as a result

[36]P. 37

of the "thud" that the liquid feels. This is creation. As creation, the blacksmith imagery becomes a sexual metaphor for conception.

Not knowing the blessings of the external world, "spring and summer," does not imply unawareness of death. On the contrary, this "as yet ungotten" liquid has already "smelt the maggot in [its] stool." The decay of autumn that results in winter "the message" of which, the liquid knows even before its "mortal creature" is "cast forth." Nevertheless, from winter, the antithesis of this poem, leaps spring, the thesis and in the seventh stanza the liquid is "born of flesh and ghost." Born of Mary and the Holy Ghost, the liquid now turned child is like Christ, and turns Christ:

> I, born of flesh and ghost, was neither
> A ghost nor man, but mortal ghost.
> And I was struck down by death's feather.

It is a Christ figure that already recognizes life's pain and suffering as well as his own mortality. He is a mortal deity, and since Christ is every man, this deity is man. Further, the origins of man is the pool of life to which man and all other living things return at death; winter turns to spring.

Thus, we who worship Christ, or God, ought to worship the mortal deity who guarantees life's continuum, instead of worshipping a deceiving God, a God who is doublecrossing since he introduced death and falsely promised eternal life in the form given us at our birth:

> You who bow down at cross and altar,
> Remember me and pity Him
> Who took my flesh and bone for armour
> And doublecrossed my mother's womb.

Even before it enters the realm of living beings, the vital fluid of "Before I knocked" possesses the consciousness which is a prerequisite of its awareness of death and of the fact that all elements included in this realm of life are doomed to die. That the vital liquid is aware of death even before it comes alive is thematic in "Before I knocked."

A process in the weather of the heart

When life leaves the scene, death enters it possessing it completely - until life returns to it. The strange but attractive mixing of internal and external metaphor of "A process in the weather of the heart" demonstrates how the womb becomes the most infertile place of all the moment the infant has been born. The level of infertility reaches the height of absoluteness, death. However, "the darkest hour is just before dawn," as The Mamas & The Papas sing,[37] and thus fertility and life will return to the womb. In this way, the theme of awareness of death as found in "Before I knocked" is continued, explored deeper, and developed in "A process of the weather of the heart:"

> A process in the weather of the heart
> Turns damp to dry; the golden shot
> Storms in the freezing tomb.

A natural process which in itself links man and nature by connecting a term for the outer climate, "weather," with a term often used in connection with the description of - inner - feelings, "the heart;" this process of nature makes a "tomb" of the womb by turning "damp,"which is fertile and alive, to "dry," which is sterile and dead. In this "dry" and "freezing," sterile, environment "storms" the fertile "golden shot." The thesis is transformed into its own antithesis. This "shot" is "golden" because it is "damp" semen.

[37]Pauling/Bass: "Dedicated to the one I love," 1967.

A weather in the quarter of the veins
Turns night to day; blood in their suns
Lights up the living worm.

Moving outwards and toward the opening line of the last stanza ("A process in the weather of the world"), we move away from the heart continuing the journey to the veins. Here, the "weather" "turns night to day" at which time man wakes to consciousness and becomes aware of the dryness, of death.

"The blood in their suns," a playful reversal of 'sons in their blood,' "Lights up the living worm" stressing the decay of the flesh that ultimately leads to death. However, the worm, here, also symbolizes the penis firing the "golden shot." "The living worm" thus comes to symbolize death as well as life at the same time. This does not represent a problem, though, for death is a part of life, and the theme of this poem is the awareness of that particular fact of Dylan's universe.

A process in the eye forwarns [sic]
The bones of blindness; and the womb
Drives in a death as life leaks out.

Parallel to the "suns" above that leak light in on the worm, "life leaks out" of the womb. This is the proof that the "tomb" of the first stanza has been made out of the womb, for here as "the womb" gives up its life, death "drives" in replacing the life of the now born infant. Further, as death is part of life, the womb also gives birth to death.

Tindall[38] seems to think that the usual balance in Dylan's poetry between the forces of life and death is broken here. However, there is nothing in particular suggesting that Dylan is

[38]P. 35.

unusually dismal if dismal at all. Dylan is after all stressing the naturalness of these processes which, in Dylan's own words, make a "tomb" of the "womb" immediately after having given birth. Life is eternal; by death, the life of the dead form returns to the pool of life so that the cycle can start all over again. In this, there is nothing dismal. Death is here nothing more than the natural companion to life. In this way, the forces of life and the forces of death are ever balanced.

> A darkness in the weather of the eye
> Is half its light; the fathomed sea
> Breaks on unangled land.
> The seed that makes a forest of the loin
> Forks half its fruit; and the half drops down,
> Slow in a sleeping wind.

The movement out and away from the heart which was the point of departure, has now come so far that it becomes necessary to look inwards again. The "darkness" is half the light of the eye, an idea similar to that of "Holy spring" in which the dark and evil powers provide renewed inspiration. This allows the eye to see into the tomb, and see the bones lying there. However, this means also that half the knowledge of the eye is of the dark seeing death half the time, so that the eye is enlightened by the darkness in both meanings.

The "fathomed sea" of the fertile womb "breaks" like a wave, or gives birth, on land which is "unangled," meaning either that it is "dry" and sterile and therefore unfished, or that the land is unspoiled, "damp" and fertile; or it may carry the meaning of both at the same time as with the "living worm" above. The latter possibility contains and involves the paradoxical theme of awareness of death as part of life.

The "forest of the loin" is the pubic hair which is a result of the quality for growth of the "seed." But each tree in this "forest" "forks" its fruit, dividing it into two piles, so that half the fruit of each tree in this "forest" "drops down" into "that sleep of death."[39] One half of the entity is lost.

Nevertheless, "Slow in the sleeping wind" recalls the quickness of the "golden shot" roaring and storming. The fast wind of the storm has now become a slow drop in a "sleeping wind." Thus, the external is connected to the internal again. And then,

> A weather in the flesh and bone
> Is damp and dry; the quick and dead
> Move like two ghosts before the eye.

The opposites of "damp" and "dry," "quick" and "dead" meet and unite, becoming one single entity again. Both life and death is present at once moving "like two ghosts" as seen by the eye that is made up of equal parts of light and darkness. This is the Yin and the Yang, each being included in the other. And thus;

> A process in the weather of the world
> Turns ghost to ghost; each mothered child
> Sits in their double shade.

Preparing the way for the Apocalyptic last three lines while continuing the development of the poem, the entire "world" has grown from the "heart" of the first stanza. What was begun as an attempt to unite external "weather" with internal "heart" now ends as a reunion of microcosm and macrocosm. And thus, "ghost" has to turn to "ghost," there exist no other

[39]Hamlet III: 1.

possibility as there is only one single entity left composed of inner and outer, life and death, as well as all other thinkable opposites. The last three lines, then, follow logically:

> A process blows the moon into the sun,
> Pulls down the shabby curtains of the skin;
> And the heart gives up its dead.

The same process of nature which has been the determinant all through the poem, "blows the moon into the sun" reminding us of the night that was turned to day in stanza one. Then this natural process "pulls down," that is makes use of the same movement as the fruit that dropped down, "the shabby curtains of the skin."

"And the sea gave up the dead;"[40] the last line is yet another demonstration of the totality. Beginning with the heart, and pausing briefly at the world, the theme at last reaches biblical dimensions.[41] "The heart gives up its dead" like the womb gave up its life in stanza two. Having given up its dead, life may take over again.

Concluding remarks

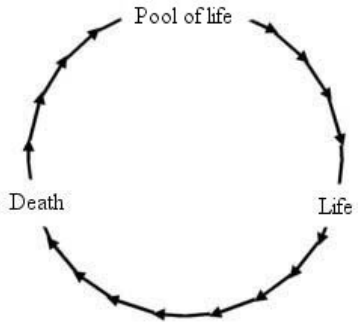
The works on emanation deal with the - natural - processes of life and death understood narrowly as the leaving and the returning to the pool of life. This pool of life is the unspoken synthesis of the antithesis life and death in the poetry of Dylan as well as the origin of all living things. Other antitheses like fertility and sterility or infertility, creation

[40]"Revelation" 20:13

[41]At the last judgement, the sea will give up its dead so that they can be "judged every man according to their works." Some will be thrown into the lake of fire, others will live eternally. "Revelation" 20:13-14.

and destruction, are in Dylan manifestations and instances of the same basic dichotomy of life and death which are reconciled in the notion of the pool of life.

Dylan's rhyming of "womb" with "tomb," this perception of life or the way of the world may be represented graphically:



The circle of life in Dylan's universe.

The model shows that life and death are dependent on one another. Life originates from the pool of life which gets its material from death which is a condition of life. This leads to the paradox that the destructiveness of death becomes creative, and that the creativity of life (and of the pool of life) becomes destructive.

Except for the poem "And death shall have no dominion," so far there have been only weak hints at Dylan's idea of man's unity with nature. Therefore, in the above representation of Dylan's perception of the circle of life, this is only assumed; it is largely assumed that it is valid for all living things. In the next chapter, on Dylan's speculations on the nature of life understood as the period in the circle of life between the pool of life and death, I shall demonstrate this unity.

III. Carpe Diem

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated Dylan's reconciling life and death, and the existence of the pool of life from which all life originates. In the present chapter, I shall concern myself with the period in this cyclical perception of the world between the departure from the pool of life and the return to it; between the two times at which this emanation takes place, namely between the time of conception and the time of death. I shall refer to this period simply as "life."

In Dylan's universe, there is no after-life. As I demonstrated in chapter one, Dylan perceived death as an emanation from life and a return to the pool of life. This return to one's origins does not hold the - Christian - promise of eternal life. On the contrary, it offers nothing of the sort. In the return to the pool of life, the part of the constant amount of life, which is returning, simply becomes reunited with this mass. This means that one only lives once, that the same life form never returns to life. It also distances the idea from the notion of reincarnation, for it is not an instance of an eternal dimension of the soul. Instead, it is a matter of the mortality of the individual versus the immortality of life.

Since there is no after-life and no possibility of a second chance of life, the obligation in life is to enjoy it; carpe diem, seize the day. Instead of looking forward to the after-life, one must enjoy the time given on earth.

However, if there is no promise of an eternal life, death becomes such a great part of life that it becomes ubiquitous. Or, perhaps put more precisely, the *awareness* of death, the recognition of the fact that "I, too, must die," the recognition of the decay of the flesh turns ubiquitous. Recognizing death as part of life leads to speculations about the nature of life.

It may also lead to a mortal dread; and seeing death everywhere could result in the rather agitated way of living which was Dylan's.

The works of the carpe diem that I shall treat in this chapter, evolve around this. They deal with the temporariness of life, with the tie between man and nature, and they represent Dylan's wonderings on the nature of life. In short, they celebrate all aspects of life.

If I were tickled by the rub of love

A true celebration of life and all the aspects of life is "If I were tickled by the rub of love." In this, the only thing that would be able to tickle the speaker to laughter is life were it not for that "rub" which is the ubiquity of death.

> If I were tickled by the rub of love,
> A rooking girl who stole me for her side,
> Broke through her straws, breaking my bandaged string,
> If the red tickle as the cattle calve
> Still set to scratch a laughter from my lung,
> I would not fear the apple nor the flood
> Nor the bad blood of spring.

"I would not fear the apple nor the flood" the speaker says, which means that he would not fear the loss of innocence nor the subsequent punishment. Both "apple" and "flood" refer to the book of Genesis, the sin in Eden and the punishment. It must be stressed, though, that according to "Genesis" the Flood was not the punishment for the sin committed in Eden, namely the eating of the forbidden fruit, the apple. The punishment for this sin was the expulsion from Paradise; whereas the Flood was God's punishment for the corruption of

the earth[42] - not for sin but for wickedness[43] and corruption. The Flood is in all its destructive ness full of hope since it establishes a new world order. Therefore, as long as the speaker is not corrupted, he need not fear the flood.

If the speaker was "tickled by the rub of love" and "the red tickle as the cattle calve / Still set to scratch the laughter from [his] lung," that is, if he could laugh at birth, then he would not fear committing the sin of coupling with

> A rooking girl who stole me for her side,
> Broke through her straws, breaking my bandaged string.

This "rooking girl" is the speaker's Eve through the notion of the girl as a thief who partly steals one of his ribs, compare "And the rib, which the Lord had taken from man, made he a woman,"[44] and partly steals himself away from his mother, by breaking the "bandaged string" which is his connection with his mother.

> Shall it be male of female? say the cells,
> And drop the plum like fire from the flesh,
> If I were tickled by the hatching hair,
> The winging bone that sprouted in the heels,
> The itch of man upon the baby's thigh,
> I would not fear the gallows not the axe
> Not the crossed sticks of war.

[42]Cf. "Genesis" 6:11-12.

[43]Cf. Op.cit. 6:5.

[44]"Genesis" 2:22.

Conceiving in the womb, the cells determine the gender of the child which they "drop" like a "plum." This plum is, as Tindall points out, an unforbidden fruit[45] unlike the "Genesis'" apple. If this were a baby with "hatching hair," "winging bone," and with an itching thigh, the speaker would fear death neither by "the gallows nor the axe," that is, he would not fear to be killed. Nor would he fear "the crossed sticks of war" which imply crucifixion as in "the poles are kissing as they cross" from "I see the boys of summer."

The masturbating hero of "My hero bares his nerves" is recalled in stanza three:

> Shall it be male or female? say the fingers
> That chalk the walls with green girls and their men.
> I would not fear the muscling-in of love
> If I were tickled by the urchin hungers
> Rehearsing heat upon a raw-edged nerve.
> I would not fear the devil in the loin
> Nor the outspoken grave.

The masturbation image is suggested particularly by the parallel to the first line of the previous stanza. Here, however, it is the fingers that ask the question what gender his offspring shall be. The image and reference to "My hero bares his nerves" is further developed by the "urchin hungers / Rehearsing heat" which may be explicated by referring to the image of a young bird testing his wings before his first flight. This image of testing one's unproven ability, is underlined by the rest of the line. The "nerve" is "raw-edged" since it has not yet been ground in, to continue the reference to the crafts.

[45]P. 47.

If he were masturbating, the speaker says, he would not fear committing the sin of coupling, "the devil in the loin" by giving way to his pure and adolescent lust, nor would he fear "the outspoken grave" of the womb, the place at which the process of death begins.

The "lover's rub," or "the rub of love" as in the first stanza, by which the speaker is "tickled" in stanza four, and the "rub" about which Hamlet speaks in his famous soliloquy is the same kind of "rub:"

To die, to sleep;
To sleep, perchance to dream - ay, there's the rub:
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause - there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.[46]

The rub, or problem, is that there are no dreams in "that sleep of death," or if death is like sleep, there may be bad dreams, and death begins at the time of conception.

If I were tickled by the lover's rub
That wipes away not crow's-foot nor the lock
Of sick old manhood on the fallen jaws,
Time and the crabs and the sweethearting crib
Would leave me cold as butter for the flies.

[46]Shakespeare: Hamlet III:1.

The "crabs" here may be connected to Hamlet's phrase "if like a crab you could go backward;"[47] that is, reverse time and its doings, and go from "sick old manhood" to the "sweethearting crib". Whether this "crib" refers to the time of conception or to birth and thus is associated to Christ, is unclear. What is clear is that in case the speaker was indeed "tickled by the lover's rub," time and all its signs and doings, would leave him as indifferent as butterflies.

Dislocating "sea" and "dead" in

> The sea of scums could drown me as it broke
> Dead on the sweetheart's toes

implies the darkness of the pool of life to which all that is alive return in death. Recalling the "crabs," the "sweethearts" are wading on their toes having risen from their cribs.

The theme of masturbation is taken up again in stanza five, which begins with the ambiguous statement that "this world is half the devil's and my own."

> This world is half the devil's and my own,
> Daft with the drug that's smoking in a girl
> And curling round the bud that forks her eye.
> An old man's shank one-marrowed with my bone,
> And all the herrings smelling in the sea,
> I sit and watch the worm beneath my nail
> Wearing the quick away.

[47]Op.cit. II:2.

Depending on who the devil here is, the first line may mean either half the devil's and half mine or all mine, or a cryptic combination of the two. As Dylan sees everything springing from the same source, so do good and evil. This way, "half the devil's and half my own" comes to mean that the speaker is a half devil and a half god, that the speaker is half evil and half good, and half creator and half destructor.

However, these metaphysical considerations are not what preoccupies the speaker at this moment. His preoccupation is much more earth-bound as he is "daft with the drug that's smoking in a girl / And curling round the bud that forks her eye." The speaker is now himself, perhaps simply young Dylan, an adolescent whose eye is fixed on the male "bud" like hers are. But this "bud"of youth is "an old man's shank" which suggests impotence. This goes hand in hand with the image of the dead fish in the sea. Either "smelling" in the line "the herrings smelling in the sea," means "stinking in death" or "sniffing for roe,"[48] but it may also be a reference to the phrase that "the sea is full of other fish" in the meaning that there are other possible partners. If so, the impotent speaker misses his chance here, but since the fish in the sea are not "swimming" which would have met the demands of the meter, but "smelling" death is suggested, and thus the speaker has forever lost his chance. Therefore, the speaker is watching "the worm beneath [his] nail / Wearing the quick away."

The worm, suggesting mortal decay as in "My hero bares his nerves," of his finger is "wearing" life away; compare also "And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground,

[48]Tindall, p. 48.

lest that he should give seed to his brother,"[49] having been asked by his father, Judah, to marry the wife of his brother, Er, who was "wicked" and killed by God.[50]

Elder Olson suggests that the speaker "sits and watches the vein pulsing below the fingernail; and he sees it as a worm 'wearing the quick away,' robbing him of life even as its pulse gives him life. And that pulsation is 'the only rub that tickles.'"[51] The problem with this reading is, however, that there is no visible pulsing vein beneath the fingernail. Nevertheless, Olson's articulation of his reading makes clear the union of life and death by stressing that the pulse through its life sustaining role is a definite sign of mortality, or life's temporariness.

Now, it becomes evident that the "rub" of this poem comes from Hamlet's soliloquy. Impotence and masturbation both result in sterility.

> The knobbly ape that swings along his sex
> From damp love-darkness and the nurses twist
> Can never raise the midnight of a chuckle,
> Nor when he finds a beauty in the breast
> Of lover, mother, lovers, or his six
> Feet in rubbing dust.

This is "the only rub that tickles" the speaker, or Onan. "The knobbly ape" that has not come far on the way of evolution, or is not far from the "damp love-darkness" of the womb,

[49]"Genesis" 38:9.

[50]Op.cit. 38:7-8.

[51]Pp. 39-40

"swings along his sex" in happy masturbation away from the creative pool of life and "the nurses twist." "His six / Feet in rubbing dust" introduces death to this image of sterility.

At this point, it seems that unlike Hamlet's one rub, there is not one single rub but multiple rubs. The important one of all these rubs is if any of these multiple rubs can even "raise the midnight of a chuckle," the slightest and darkest laugh removing all the speaker's fears. All the processes of life are connected with sex, even death. The beginning of everything is also the beginning of the end. Sex is attractive and repulsive at the same time; as Olson writes "sex is desirable, indeed compelling, but it does not gratify to shut out fear and, moreover, it is associated with sin, senile impotency, pain, and death, and so undesirable."[52] Olson continues by stating that these undesirables "in turn are desirable, indeed, compulsive, since they are linked to sex" and since "association is reciprocal."[53]

Summing up the main questions and arguments in the last stanza, the speaker asks three unanswerable questions in an attempt to answer his main question; namely what the rub really is:

> And what's the rub? Death's feather on the nerve?
> Your mouth, my love, the thistle in the kiss?
> My Jack of Christ born thorny in the tree?

Recalling "My hero bares his nerves" and the sterility of the act of masturbation which is expressed in that poem, the "nerve" is phallic. However, "Death's feather on the nerve" is also the feather of the angel of death that touches every nerve marking the temporariness of life. "The thistle in the kiss" is the kiss that prickles more than it tickles as well as the

[52]P. 38.

[53]Ibid.

treachery of the womb that sets death into the world with every given birth. “Jack of Christ born thorny in the tree” is difficult. As in “I see the boys of summer,” the phrase “jack of” hints at masturbation again, and thus again at sterility. “Jack of Christ” could, following this line of thought, mean religious impotence. However, the line may also bear reference to Jack-in-the-green, an element in the spring celebrations of ancient fertility cults throughout most of Europe, after all the “Jack of Christ” is “born ... in the tree.” Further, “Christ born thorny in the tree” may also refer to the crucifixion of Christ wearing his crown of thorns, which in all the despair connected to it also carries hope for “my Jack” or everyman including the speaker since Christ’s death removed original sin and promised eternal life. Thus an element of infertility becomes an element of fertility, despair becomes hope. Nevertheless, all three answers are part of our reality: death, treachery, and much of our reality evolves around the axes of fertility/sterility and hope/despair.

> I would be tickled by the rub that is:
> Man be my metaphor.

Life, the pulse of life, is the only rub that tickles, but death is ubiquitous and man provides the language for expressing it. The origin of all living things being the same pool to which they return in death, man - his conception, his life, his decay, and his death - provides the best metaphor for what life is which is the question the speaker seeks to answer in this poem.

Fern Hill

The passing of time and thereby the ubiquitousness of death is thematic in the poem “Fern Hill.” Representing his childhood experiences at Fern Hill in paradisiac terms, the speaker finally comes to the conclusion that paradise is not perfect.

> Now as I was young and easy under the apple bows

About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green,
The night above the dingle starry,
Time let me hail and climb
Golden in the heydays of his eyes,
And honoured among wagons I was prince of the apple towns
And once below a time I lordly had the trees and the leaves
Trail with daisies and barley
Down the rivers of the windfall light.

The speaker begins his narration of his childhood with the word "now" which, stressed by "was" which takes us back into the past, reminds the reader of time. This narration is not a photographic representation of the speaker's holidays at Fern Hill, instead it is his memory of his holidays there. A memory which has been marked by time and time's passing. Therefore, the representation is as "lilting" as the farm house. This is further supported by the modified opening of tails "once below a time" instead of the common "once upon a time." The instant effect of "below" and "upon" is the same; it places the narration in a distant past, yet "below" does not remove the narration as far from the present as "upon" does. However, "below" also means "subordinate to" meaning that this recollection is subordinate to time, it has been coloured by time.

The speaker takes us back to the time when the speaker was "young and easy," when he was young and "carefree" as stanza two echoes it. Further he tells us that he was "happy as the grass was green."

Playing in the fields and around the farm house, he "was prince of the apple towns" and he "lordly had the tree and leaves / Trail with daisies and barley / Down the rivers of the windfall light." Like Adam in the Garden of Eden, the boy here reigns over the farm. However, like Adam, he is prince not king, divine but not God. The king or God being the

true sovereign has the power to expel him. As yet, though, death has not been introduced, the boy is unaware of his mortality.

The "windfall light" which is that of the green, unripe apples, indicates a general fall in this Eden crowded with apples or temptations. And keeping the boy unaware of his deceit, "time let me hail and climb / Golden in the heydays of his eyes."

All the sun long it was running, it was lovely, the hay
Fields high as the house, the tunes from the chimneys, it was air
And playing, lovely and watery
And fire green as grass.
And nightly under the simple stars
As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away,
All the moon long I heard, blessed among stables, the nightjars
Flying with the ricks, and the horses
Flashing into the dark.

The merry tune terminology which was begun with the "lilting" of the first stanza meaning to have a regular rising and falling pattern, is here in the third stanza continued with "tunes" and "air." The rising and falling pattern of this sweet melodious memory is supported by and reflected in the typography which has the same pattern in the left margin.

Into this merry tune, night with its darkness intrudes. The intruding night, though, is not the time for evil deeds as in Shakespeare's Macbeth or Dylan's short story, "The school for witches." Nor is it time for boyish nightmares. Instead, it is more like a continuation of "all the sun long" or the part of the day when the sun is in the sky. This natural continuum is underlined by the parallel periphrasis "all the moon long" for night. Thus the delights of day are shared with those of the night.

Being "famous among the barns"[54] during day, the boy is "blessed among the stables" in the night, a quality he shares with the "nightjars / Flying with the ricks." The night seems nothing more than a dream of day for the boy. Innocently "carefree" as he is, he is completely unaware of the fall that will take place. A fall which has taken place in the sixth stanza:

> Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me
> Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand,
> In the moon that is always rising,
> Nor that riding to sleep
> I should hear him fly with the high fields
> And wake to the farm forever fled from this childless land.
> Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,
> Time held me green and dying
> Though I sang in my chains like the sea.

The moon is here more prominent than the sun which in the previous stanza has been the more dominant of the two; now in this last stanza the moon "is always rising" so that the intruder is the day in contrast to the rest of the poem where the intruder is the night. The previous five stanzas deal with those innocent, "lamb white days" when the speaker was completely unaware of the passing of time, ageing, and his own mortality. However, upon this return to the farm, the speaker is taken by "time" "up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of [his] hand," he wakes up and sees "this childless land." The interpretation of the boy now being an adult is further supported by the fact that time leads him to the loft by "the shadow of [his] hand," which implies the process of ageing, a process that was a work even back then when he was holidaying on the farm. The paradisiac vision of an innocent childhood is broken.

[54]Stanza two.

Yet it was a happy time, when he "sang in [his] chains." The singing ties the last line together with the rest by continuing the musical metaphor for happiness. This singing, though, takes place in "chains" so that it is impossible for him to break loose, to escape time.

The breaking of the vision, allows the speaker to see that time held him "green and dying" or unripe and just in the beginning of his life, yet already "dying." The fall that has taken place here, consists of the loss of this unawareness of death.

As I briefly touched upon in my general introduction to this thesis, Dylan has - too - often been crudely categorised as a Romantic or Neo-romantic. Part of the explanation to this is to be found in "Fern Hill" and in particular in the vision of the innocence of childhood and the vision of this childhood as a paradisiac state in all its uncivilised and uncultivated splendour in this poem.[55] This is a misreading.

"Fern Hill" is not a Wordsworthian lament on the lost (divine) light of childhood; it is not a sentimental representation of a cleanness and innocence worth striving for, nor is it a Blakean expression of "infant joy."[56] On the contrary, in "Fern Hill" Dylan creates the experience of childhood holidays in a very physical way which makes the sense impressions very powerful. As readers we experience the farm in the manner of the boy; we sense the light, the wind, the air, the smells and the tastes, etc., the experience is absolute.

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[55]Dylan as a Romantic, cf. eg. Margaret Drabble (ed.): The Oxford Companion to English Literature, "Thomas, Dylan": "Thomas's romantic, affirmative, rhetorical style..." (P.1009); and Grevel Lindop: "Poetry in the 1930s and 1940s" in: Dordsworth, Martin: The Penguin History of Literature. The Twentieth Century. P. 305: "'Poem in October' and 'Fern Hill,' celebrations of romantic delight in an idealized countryside...."

[56]Ackerman, p. 119.

Thus in tone as well as content, “Fern Hill” is far from Wordsworth and Blake, it is not a striving towards times lost as it is a revival and an almost physical re-creation of these. In its tone and treatment of waking up, like Adam in Eden, to a brand new day, it is much closer to Thomas Traherne's Centuries of Meditations, “The third century”:

> All appeared new, and strange at first, inexpressibly rare and delightful and beautiful. I was a little stranger, which at my entrance into the world was saluted and surrounded with innumerable joys. My knowledge was Divine. I knew by intuition those things which since my Apostasy, I collected again by the highest reason. My very ignorance was advantageous. I seemed as one brought into the Estate of Innocence. All things were spotless and pure and glorious: yea, and infinitely mine, and joyful and precious, I knew not that there were any sins, or complaints or laws. I dreamed not of poverties, contentions or vices. All tears and quarrels were hidden from mine eyes. Everything was at rest, free and immortal. I knew nothing of sickness or death or rents or exaction, either for tribute or bread. In the absence of these I was entertained like an Angel with the works of God in their splendour. and glory, I saw all in the peace of Eden; Heaven and Earth did sing my Creator's praises, and could not make more melody to Adam, than to me: All Time was Eternity, and a perpetual Sabbath. Is it not strange, that an infant should be heir of the whole World, and see those mysteries which the books of the learned never unfold?[57]

[57]In: Margoliouth. Thomas Traherne. Centuries, Poems, and Thanksgivings. Volume I: Introduction and Centuries. Pp. 110-111.

Here, Traherne expresses the same rapture that Dylan expresses in "Fern Hill" and makes so physically real for the reader. Further, in both texts the child experiences a kind of timelessness, an unawareness of time's passing, of life as eternal.

And Henry Vaughan's "the Retreat:"

> Happy those early days! when I
> Shined in my Angel-infancy.
> (...)
> Before I taught my tongue to wound
> My conscience with a sinful sound,
> Or had the black art to dispense
> A several sin to every sense,
> But felt through all this fleshly dress
> Bright *shoots* of everlastingness...

"Happy those early days!" opens this celebration of childhood's innocence and unawareness so similar to Dylan's "Fern Hill." Both express what a happy time childhood was for the speaker; thus they are both celebrations of childhood and of having been a child once.

All three texts are celebrations of childhood and its innocence before the child falls into the recognition of death and its own mortality (not to mention the mortality of its parents). They do not represent the longing for a lost Golden Age when the world was harmonious, nor do they strive sentimentally for times past as so much of the poetry of the 19th century does.

Poem in October

Nor is "Poem in October," which celebrates the poet's thirtieth birthday, in the mood of the 19th century poets:

It was my thirtieth year to heaven
Woke to my hearing from harbour and neighbour wood
And the mussel pooled and the heron
Priested shore
The morning beckon
With water praying and call of seagull and rook
And the knock of sailing boats on the net webbed wall
Myself to set foot
That second
In the still sleeping town and set forth.

The speaker wakes to nature's calls from the harbour and the neighbouring wood early in the morning, "the still sleeping town," on his birthday and goes for a walk. The walk takes him to the "brown chapel,"[58] which is the place of worship. The herons are priest-like and the water is praying uniting nature with the sacrament, nature is holy. "To heaven" is another Biblical metaphor establishing the holiness of nature and referring to the circle of life, the natural processes of life or conception and death.

On his walk towards and up Sir John's Hill, he is greeted by nature:

My birthday began with the water-
Birds and the birds of the winged trees flying my name
Above the farms and the white horses

[58]"After the funeral"

And I rose
In rainy autumn
And walked abroad in a shower of all my days.

Until Dylan remembered that the trees still have leaves in October, the "winged trees" were "bare."[59] This is a typical instance of the way Dylan worked over every single word. Further, it clearly dissociates Dylan from the Surrealists[60] since this is far removed from their aim and automatic writing technique.

These "winged trees" are winged because they are packed with birds, the leaves may look like wings, and as in "Especially when the October wind" the trees are words, poems.

The water imagery continues in the "rainy autumn" in which he walks in a "shower of all his days." The October rain is transformed into a shower of his past days. This causes confusion of actuality and memory, and thus he takes the "road / Over the border" between past and present.

Vaughan's "shoots of everlastingness"[61] of childhood is the eternity of childhood, both that timelessness felt by the child and the eternity of childhood memories. These flashbacks, the recollection of these, the "shoots," come as suddenly as the crossing of a line or border, the border between past and present which has just been crossed by the speaker.

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[59]Cf. Ackerman, p. 116; Tindall, p. 186.

[60]Ray, citing André Breton's "Premier manifeste," defines Surrealism as "pure psychic automatism by which it is intended to express, verbally, in writing or by any other means, the real process of thought, without any control exercised by reason, outside of all aesthetic or moral preoccupations." (P. 3)

[61]In "The retreat," cf. above.

Having crossed this border between past and present, the speaker rises to the top of the hill coming into the sun above the clouds, which causes further confusion. The October sun is "summery:"

...and the sun of October
Summery
On the hill's shoulder.

Looking down at the town, the autumnal castle which is "brown as owls" is contrasted with "all the gardens / Of spring and summer." Thus, in stanza four, there are three seasons present, the actual autumn as well as the imagined or sensed summer and spring. Along with these, there are two actual and instantaneous weathers, the sunshine and beneath him the rain. The two times of past and present which exist side by side, become united with the two weathers:

There could I marvel
My birthday
Away but the weather turned around.

The turning of the weather evokes the apple-crowded, melodious past:

And down the other air and the blue altered sky
Streamed again a wonder of summer
With apples
Pears and red currants
And I saw in the turning so clearly a child's
Forgotten mornings when he walked with his mother
Through the parables

Of sun light
And the legends of the green chapels

"Turning" is the operative word in this poem. The past was brought into the present by a turn in the weather. In this "turning," the speaker sees himself as a boy spending his summer at the Fern Hill farm. Thus, it is another air, and the sky is blue and altered. It is summer. The "parables / of sun light" and "the legends of the green chapels" are childhood's tales, mysteries and "wonder," and at the same time they prove nature holy. "The green chapels" is in contrast to the "brown chapel" of "After the funeral;" "green" is the colour of summer, it is innocent and unripe as in "Fern Hill," while "brown" is autumnal and regenerating.

Memories brought back by a change of the weather, can only be put away again by another turning of the weather:

And there could I marvel my birthday
Away but the weather turned around. And the true
Joy of the long dead child sang burning
In the sun.

The weather's reversing brings the speaker back to the present from the past, or at least the speaker becomes aware of the town below again.

"The true / Joy of the long dead child" is a repetition of the previous stanza's "The summertime of the dead whispered the truth of his joy / To the trees and the stones and the fish in the tide." "The summertime of the dead" is the boy's past; "the long dead child" is the speaker's past as the boy. In the previous stanza, the boy's ghost whispers "the truth of

his joy," while this whispering has become full singing in the last stanza. Both the whispering and the singing is to and by nature.

Having thus returned from the past, the speaker again becomes conscious of the contrasts between actuality and memory, past and present, and between summer and autumn. Once more, the change in external weather has brought about internal transformation. The boundaries which were dissolved a moment ago, have now been re-established.

This regained recognition of contrasts is marked by a near repetition of the very first line of the poem; the variation proves the speaker slightly changed:

It was my thirtieth
Year to heaven stood there then in the summer noon
Though the town below lay leaved with October blood.
O may my heart's truth
Still be sung
On this high hill in a year's turning.

Also the repetition of the central antithesis of this poem, namely that between past and present, stresses the return to the present. The past, "then in the summer noon," is warm and light, while the present is "leaved with October blood," the dead autumnal leaves of trees and his heart singing his truth, which he hopes will "still be sung" at the same time next year. Thus regenerated, the speaker may step down and go home.

As "turning" is the word that forces the development and movement of this poem as the word for transformation, change, and time, it appropriately gains weight from being the last word.

The idea of going for a walk and encountering different places and weathers is also found in Vaughan, for instance in his "Regeneration" from Silex Scintillans of 1650. In this, the speaker walks abroad in the morning, like Dylan crosses the border, and enters a grove and finds that everything is transformed:

> Here, I reposed; but scarce well set,
> A grove descried
> Of stately height, whose branches met
> And mixed on every side;
> I entered, and once in
> (Amazed to see't,)
> Found all was changed, and a new spring
> Did all my sense greet.[62]

Once again, it seems more immediately relevant to look at a work by a 17th century poet, than at the 19th century Romanticism of Wordsworth for instance.

In both "Fern Hill" and "Poem in October" the eternity of childhood contrasts with the temporariness of life that is recognized by the experienced adult. In "Fern Hill," the flashback into the idealized childhood is caused by the speaker's return to the farm as the experienced adult; whereas in "Poem in October" the flashback is caused by the day marking the (personal) passing of time, the speaker's birthday, which, not incidentally, is in autumn, the season of regenerating death. Finally, both poems are celebrations of having experienced childhood. However, this is only one aspect if life.

The peaches

[62]Vaughan: "Regeneration."

"The Peaches" is the first short story in Dylan's semi-autobiographical A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog. The Portrait consists of ten independent short stories that together form a resemblance to a künstlerroman. As such it recalls James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (published first in The Egoist, 1914-15), to which the title also alludes. It describes the development of Stephen Dedalus from his early innocent childhood until he exiles himself from Ireland in order "to encounter ... the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race."[63]

Dylan's title also refers to Henry James' novel The Portrait of a Lady (1881), that addresses the parallel questions of how reality is perceived and understood and how morality and experience is derived from it and how the artist apprehends reality and creates his impression of it or creates an illusion of life; questions that are similar to those addressed by Dylan in his Portrait.

However, the form of ten independent short stories is more similar to the form of Joyce's Dubliners (1914). Both Dylan's Portrait and Joyce's Dubliners follow a pattern of childhood, adolescence, maturity, and public life. Further, as Annis Pratt points out[64] there are strong similarities between the short stories in the two works. The boy, for instance, in Joyce's "Araby," "The Sisters" and "Encounter" is "strikingly similar to that of Thomas's autobiographical hero" through the thematic initiation of the boy into death, disillusionment and perversion. Pratt continues by pointing out the parallels between "Evelyn" and "Two Gallants" in Joyce and Dylan's "Patricia, Edith and Arnold;" "After the Race" and "Old Garbo," and finally between Joyce's "A Mother," "Little Cloud" and "A Painful Case" and Dylan's "Just Like Little Dogs" and "Where Tawe Flows."

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[63]Joyce: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, pp.275-6.

[64]Annis Pratt: "Dylan Thomas's Prose," pp.125-6; in C.B. Cox: Dylan Thomas. A Collection of Critical Essays, pp. 117-129.

Nevertheless, "Portrait of...." is a common title for paintings; as Dylan wrote in his "Poetic Manifesto:"

> "the name given to innumerable portrait paintings by their artists is, 'Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man' - a perfectly straightforward title. Joyce used the painting title for the first time as the title of a literary work. I myself made a bit of doggish fun of the painting-title and, of course, intended no possible reference to Joyce."[65]

Thus, Dylan attempts to distance himself and his work from Joyce. Yet, the parallels are so many and the similarities are so strong and obvious, as shortly discussed and shown above, that they cannot be denied.

Dylan states that he "made a bit of doggish fun of the painting-title," a statement that elegantly attempts to give one explanation to the title by distancing it from Joyce, while at the same time it incorporates the title in the word "doggish." Malicious or spiteful fun or not, the "young dog" that the work portrays is Dylan, or at least the artist, as the *enfant terrible*; further, "dog" is, for instance, South Wales working class slang for "a bit of a lady's man" as Peach points out.[66]

"The Peaches" is a recount of a childhood stay at the farm at Fern Hill - as the poem "Fern Hill" and the flashback in "Poem in October." However, in "The Peaches" the experience is not idealized as it is in both of the mentioned poems. Thus, the glorious, idealized image of the farm given in "Fern Hill" with all its richness is far from the description of the true condition of the farm in the short story:

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[65]"Poetic Manifesto," pp. 4-5, in Texas Quarterly, pp. 45-53.

[66]P. 100.

> The ramshackle outhouses had tumbling, rotten roofs, jagged holes in their sides, broken shutters, and peeling whitewash; rusty screws ripped out from the dangling, crooked boards; the lean cat of the night before sat snugly between the splintered jaws of bottles, cleaning its face, on the tip of the rubbish pile that rose triangular and smelling sweet and strong to the level of the riddled cart-house roof. There was nowhere like that farm-yard in all the slapdash county, nowhere so poor and grand and dirty as that square of mud and rubbish and bad wood and falling stone...[67]

The time aspects of this short story and "Fern hill" is the same, yet there is not much of the sunshine and merry melody of "Fern Hill" left in this description of poverty and decay. The poverty of the place and its inhabitants is underlined by Annie's reaction when Mrs. Williams, who has come to drop off her son, Jack, declines Annie's offer of tinned peaches with the tea that Annie almost forces upon her in "the best room,"[68] which is normally shut. Dressed in her Sunday best, Annie's defeat is clear: "Annie followed her out of the room. She moved slowly now. 'I'll do my very best, Mrs Williams.'"[69] This stands in sharp contrast to the way she, almost hyperactively, makes the preparations for Mrs. Williams' arrival and in a near panic changes into her Sunday dress forgetting to change her shoes.

The story opens with a description of "uncle Jim's" drinking habits, which is at least one of the reasons why the farm is in this state of dilapidation. Young Dylan and Jim are on their way home from market when they stop outside "The Pure Drop":

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[67]Portrait, p. 8.

[68]Op.cit. p. 10.

[69]Op.cit. p. 13.

> He dragged out a thick wicker basket from a heap of straw in the corner of the cart and swung it over his shoulder. I heard a squeal from the basket and saw the tip of a pink tail curling out as Uncle Jim opened the public door of "The Pure Drop."[70]

Exchanging pigs or piglets for drink in this way, causes Annie's despairing reaction on another night when Jim returns home drunk again: "'There's one pig gone,' she said. 'Oh, why do you have to do it, Jim? There's nothing left now. We'll never be able to carry on.'"[71]

Through the window to the pub on the other side of the passage, he sees four men playing cards in a "smoky, secret room" and drinking "out of brown pint tankards."[72] Thus, from the cart, the innocent Dylan is gazing in on the drinking gamblers who have fallen into experience, without understanding what exactly is happening.

Being left outside the pub in the dark terrifies young Dylan: "A man with spring-heeled boots and a two-edged knife might be bouncing towards me from Union Street."[73] In his terror, he calls on his uncle, but does it "softly so that he should not hear."[74] This frightened, he climbs down from the shaft and steps close to the window, but the blind is dragged down which prevents him from looking into the mysterious world on the other side of the window. The window here plays the same role as that in Joyce's "Evelyn," in which

[70]Op.cit. p. 3.

[71]Op.cit. p. 16.

[72]Op.cit. p. 3.

[73]Op.cit. p. 4.

[74]Ibid.

the girl is sitting "at the window watching the evening invade the avenue;"[75] despite the fact that the two situations are in opposition to each other. In "Evelyn" a girl sits inside looking out, while in "The Peaches" a boy stands outside looking in. The role that the windows play, is that of a transparent separator between two worlds; one which is very real, and one on the other side of the glass which seems less real, like a dream or a fantasy world.

Having thus been shut out from the attractive mystery of the world on the other side of the glass, the boy tries to calm himself down recalling a story that he "had made in the warm, safe island of my bed, with sleepy Swansea flowing and rolling round outside the house."[76] Turning inwards like this, he merely discovers, or remembers, the horrible he-demon of his story "with his wings and hooks, who clung like a bat to my hair." The demon resembles in his appearance the dragons from folk tales keeping the "tall, wise, golden, royal girl"[77] under lock and key until he is beaten by the prince who rescues and later marries the princess winning half the kingdom.

In "The Peaches," the boy's erotic fantasy of this "golden, royal girl" is mixed with his fantasy of being her rescuing prince:

> I tried to remember her true name, her proper, long, black-stockinged legs, her giggle and paper curls, but the hooked wings tore at me and the colour of her hair and eyes faded and vanished like that grass-green cart that was a dark, grey mountain now standing between the passage walls.[78]

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[75]In: Joyce's Dubliners, p. 29.

[76]Portrait, p. 4.

[77]Ibid.

[78]Ibid.

Thus scared out of his own fantasy by his fantasy, he returns to reality in which he is no prince but a frightened boy left alone in the dark passage outside the pub. Yet upon their return to the farm and Dylan's entering Annie's kitchen, he becomes a "royal nephew" standing "among the shining and striking like a prince taking of his disguise" of being "small and cold" and "dead-scared" in the black passage.[79]

In this way, the royal prince and the poor and scared boy, which is the central dichotomy of this story, meet in young Dylan. This dichotomy, the rich versus the poor, or upper class versus working class, also finds expression in the class conflict present in the tension between Annie and Mrs. Williams.

The story is entitled "The Peaches" because this fruit that is reserved for a special occasion, "signifies the aspect of [the] Welsh chapel-going culture."[80] Although the family at the Fern Hill farm was not exactly a part of this subculture, it was still very much influenced by it since the values of the subculture such as its ethic of respectability, responsibility and sobriety, had marked a large part of the Welsh population. For this reason, it is so important for Annie to serve the old tin of fruit and a cup of tea for Mrs. Williams, and to set the table with her finest china and her best table cloth although it is stained, and to wear her best dress though it smells of moth balls and is worn. It is also therefore Mrs. Williams' rejection of them strikes her so hard. It is her entire working class respectability that is rejected by cold Mrs. Williams.

Annie's keeping up appearances and her constant proving her and her family's respectability explain her reaction to Gwilym's offer of cake to Mrs. Williams:

[79]Op.cit. p. 6.

[80]Peach, p. 80.

> 'There isn't a single bit of cake in the house,' she said; 'we forgot to order it from the shop; not a single bit. Oh, Mrs Williams!'[81]

It is naturally untrue that they "forgot" to order cake. They are poor and cannot afford such luxury. This, though, is impossible for Annie to tell Mrs. Williams since it would offend both her respectability and her appearance.

While Annie's disguising of reality is purely secular, Gwilym's is not. On the contrary, he is a young man of about twenty years with strong sexual desires and fantasies of romantic love. His virility and his fantasies, he tries to disguise under his "minister's black."[82] Though aspiring to the church with his makeshift chapel and hymn writing, he gives himself a sexual permission;

> Gwilym was sitting on the seat with his trousers down. He looked small and black. He was reading a book and moving his hands.

He allows himself to masturbate in secret, he has actresses for girlfriends, he enjoys women in general, and his hymns to God are at first written as love poems to girls whose names he simply substitutes with "God" as is clear from this conversation between Dylan and Jack:

> 'I [Dylan] found a lot of his poems in his bedroom once. They were all written to girls. And he showed them to me afterwards, and he'd changed all the girls' names to God.
> 'He's religious.'

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[81] Portrait, p. 12.

[82] Op.cit. p. 8.

'No he isn't, he goes with actresses...'[83]

In his appearance, Gwilym is religious and even aspires to the church. However, at the same time he allows himself to be a secular, sexual creature. Though this is an unusual reconciliation of this dichotomy, it seems that Gwilym has no problems with it, he certainly does not repress his sexuality, as he completely recognizes the ubiquitousness and omniscience of his god, who at the end of the speech is "like a bloody cat."[84]

Since all living things emanate from the same pool of life, class distinction is ridiculous. This is made clear in "The Peaches" by portraying Annie and Mrs. Williams this differently, Annie being the extremely warm, kind, gentle one and Mrs. Williams the exact opposite, moreover it is done with a vicious irony. The carpe diem aspect of this story is further underlined by the humanity with which the aspiring clergyman Gwylim is portrayed, a humanity that contrasts with the usual strictness of that social class the clergy constitutes. "Why," the text seems to ask, "why would the clergy be any different in nature from the rest of us as we all originate in the same source?"

Under Milk Wood

The unusual combination of religious creed and sexuality found in Gwilym is also an aspect of Dylan's play for voices,[85] Under Milk Wood, together with the aspect of the narrator(s).

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[83]Op.cit. p. 16.

[84]Op.cit. p. 10.

[85]"An impression for voices" (Collected Letters, p. 813) as well as "a play for voices," which is now used as the subtitle though there is no manuscript authority to do so, were Dylan's own phrase for this prose work. The phrase covers the nature of the work well since e.g. the stage directions are suggestions to the way the lines are delivered, as for instance "lazily" (p. 54), "in a fury" (p. 55), "with terror" (p. 56), "with horror" and "coldly" (p. 57).

The events of the story of "The Peaches" are seen through the eyes of young Dylan's innocent eyes, whose child world the reader enters. The events in Milk Wood on this spring day are seen through innocent eyes too, but the world entered is not a child's.

Under milk Wood seems to meet the demands of the - extended - unities derived from Aristotle's Poetics of time, place, and action. Yet, the unity of action really is out of place here as the play has no action, nothing is actually *happening*; instead the work reveals and exposes a series of the characters' innermost dreams and thoughts so that their true nature is discovered. It is for this reason that an analysis of the play will rely heavily on characterizations of the characters.

As usual, Dylan plays with the sound and the form and lets the play for voices start with a stage direction suggesting silence. Then, a voice takes the reader or audience back to the garden of Eden before the Fall, saying "to begin with the beginning." The Fall was the consequence of Adam and Eve's gaining forbidden knowledge, falling from innocence into experience.

The title Under Milk Wood is well chosen. "Under" is beneath the surface, it is in the subconscious where much, if not most, of the play takes place. The radio audience have access to the subconscious[86] of the characters in the play, as the first voice tells us, "From where you are, you can hear their dreams:"

[86]In his Poetic Manifesto, p. 6, Dylan admits his interest in dreams and their interpretation by writing that he has "read only one book of Freud's, 'The Interpretation of Dreams' and do not recall having been influenced by it in any way. Again, no honest writer today can possibly avoid being influenced by Freud through his pioneering work into the unconscious ... but not, by any means, necessarily through Freud's own writing."

> Only you can hear the houses sleeping in the streets in the slow deep salt and silent black, bandaged night. Only you can see, in the blinded bedrooms, the coms and petticoats over the chairs, ... Thou Shalt Not on the wall, ... Only you can hear and see, behind the eyes of the sleepers, the movements and countries and mazes and colours and dismays and rainbows and tunes and wishes and flight and fall and despairs and big seas of their dreams.[87]

The "wood" is an accumulation of phalluses, while "milk" associates to the farmland and has, as Peach[88] points out, a sexual connotation, which is justified since the town of Milk Wood at the foot of Llareggub (bugger all spelt backwards) Hill is a "place of love."[89] The sexual connotations and associations of "milk" in a poet so careful in choosing every single word include copulation, birth, growth, semen, and mother's milk and others. Further, the town is situated by the sea, the origin of life.

In this way, the major contrast is drawn even before the play gets started for real. It is the contrast between the repressive Welsh religious creed, their so-called Nonconformity, and sexuality or sexual desire.

The returning voice that introduces the play, introduces too the varied characters who are the inhabitants of Milk Wood. In this way, their lives, thoughts and even obsessions as well as their sexuality and its problematic relationship with or opposition to the general

[87]Under Milk Wood, p. 4.

[88]P. 38.

[89]Under Milk Wood, p. 56.

religious creed, moral code, or tradition that demands the repression of sexual desire are unfolded. Thus the voice comes to serve as the characters' "conscience, a guardian angel."[90]

Old and retired Captain Cat provides a link between the living and the dead, uniting the two realms in his dreams. His dreams are about his drowned seamen and a dead woman acquaintance, Rosie Probert who was his one and only love. Captain Cat dreams about his past almost to the extent he lives in it, however, his dead acquaintances visit him only when he is asleep, or rather it is blind Captain Cat who visits them "Like a cat, he sees in the dark. Through the voyages of his tears, he sails to see the dead"[91]:

FIRST DROWNED

Remember me, Captain?

CAPTAIN CAT

You're Dancing Williams!

FIRST DROWNED

I lost my step in Nantucket.

SECOND DROWNED

Do you see me, Captain? The white bone talking? I'm Tom-Fred the donkeyman ... We shared the same girl once ... Her name was Mrs Probert ...

WOMAN'S VOICE

Rosie Probert, thirty three Duck Lane. Come on up, boys, I'm dead.

THIRD DROWNED

[90]Collected Letters, p. 814.

[91]Under Milk Wood, p. 61.

Hold me, Captain, I'm Jonah Jarvis, come to a bad end, very enjoyable...[92]

Having thus introduced themselves to Captain Cat, the voices of the drowned turn to the pleasures and sights of life as they remember them:

FIRST DROWNED
How's it above?
SECOND DROWNED
Is there rum and laverbread?
THIRD DROWNED
Bosoms and robins?
FOURTH DROWNED
Concertinas?
FIFTH DROWNED
Ebenezer's bell? ...
SECOND DROWNED
And old girls in the snug? ...[93]

It is as if the dead long back to life, while Captain Cat longs for death for only in death will this loss of his be healed.

Thus Captain Cat may be said to represent death, though it is death knowing life

People are moving now, up and down the cobbled street.

[92]Op.cit. pp.4-5.

[93]Op.cit. p. 6.

CAPTAIN CAT

> All the women are out this morning, in the sun. You can tell it's spring. There goes Mrs Cherry, you can tell her by her trotters, off she trots new as a daisy... High heels now, in the morning too, Mrs Rose-Cottage's eldest, Mae, seventeen and never been kissed ho ho... Who's having a baby, who blacked whose eye, seen Polly Garter giving her belly an airing...[94]

Although he is blind, Captain Cat knows everything that goes on in the street or even in the town; he knows life, but he represents death as the Reverend Eli Jenkins represents love. The baker Dai Bread's second wife, he is a bigamist, Mrs. Dai Bread Two is a gypsy and looking into a crystal ball she sees a text that says "God is love."[95] Since Eli Jenkins belongs to the clergy spreading the word of God, this is what he represents, love.

Nevertheless, Eli Jenkins' real interest is his poetry and his "Lifework" is "the White Book of Llareggub."[96] His study is filled with portraits of famous bards and preachers, and his dreams are of the Eisteddfodau,[97] which is the congress of bards holding national competitions of literature, music, etc. That he combines in himself the clergyman and the traditional Welsh bard finds expression even in his appearance:

> "The Reverend Eli Jenkins, in Bethesda House, gropes out of bed into his preacher's black, combs back his bard's white hair ... remembers his own verses and

[94]Op.cit. p. 33.

[95]Op.cit. p. 40.

[96]Op.cit. p. 54.

[97]Op.cit. p. 17.

tells them, softly, to empty Coronation Street that is
rising and raising its blinds."

Having delivered his verses, "the Reverend Jenkins closes the front door. His morning service is over."[98] His service, at least in the morning, is not particularly Christian, instead it is rather secular, praising not God, but "*Llareggub Hill* a molehill seems, / A pygmy to a giant," "Small is our *River Dewi*, Lord, / A baby on a rushy bed." He ends his service by stating that he would live nowhere but in Milk Wood:

A tiny dingle is *Milk Wood*
By golden Grove 'neath Grongar
But let me choose and oh! I should
Love all my life and longer

To stroll among our trees and stray
In Goosegog Lane, on Donkey Down,
And hear the Dewi sing all day,
And never, never leave the town.

Eli Jenkins is a liberal preacher who is not influenced at all or at least only a little by the repressive Welsh Nonconformity. His only comment to Polly Garter's singing is "Praise the Lord! We are a musical nation."[99]

This reaction is only worth mentioning because of the nature of Polly Garter's song. The song is about sexual love:

[98]Op.cit. pp. 20-21.

[99]Op.cit. p. 41

I loved a man whose name was Tom
He was strong as a bear and two yards long
I loved a man whose name was Dick
He was big as a barrel and three feet thick
And I loved a man whose name was Harry
Six feet tall and sweet as a cherry
But the one I love best awake or asleep
Was little Willy Wee and he's six feet deep.

Oh Tom Dick and Harry were three fine men
And I'll never have such loving again
But little Willy Wee who took me on his knee
Little Willy Wee is the man for me.[100]

And later, she continues:

Now when farmers' boys on the first fair day
Come down from the hills to drink and be gay,
Before the sun sinks I'll lie there in their arms
For they're *good* bad boys from the lonely farms,

But I always think as we tumble into bed
Of little Willy Wee who is dead, dead, dead...[101]

[100]Ibid.

[101]Op.cit. p. 49.

This is a love song for her dead lover, Willy Wee, who by far beats the three other lovers. It is laden with heavy sexual associations and a haunting sense of loss like Captain Cat's. Polly Garter's loss is of her one true love who also was the only one knowing how to satisfy her sexually. Tom, Dick and Harry are ordinary people taken at random,[102] this suggests that there have been many other lovers which is also indicated rather explicitly by the "farmers' boys" in whose arms she will be before the sun sets. Captain Cat's loss was also of his only real love "of his sea-life that was sardined with women"[103] which means there were heaps of women and lots of satisfactory sex in his life, the metaphor has its source in Rosie Probert's calling him "Tom Cat,"[104] which refers to his womanizing qualities as in tomcat which is also merely a male cat; his life was "sardined" with women in concordance with the cat metaphor. Yet, he has "I Love You Rosie Probert tattooed on his belly."[105]

Polly Garter's very active sex-life and her fertility, she has many children and loves babies,[106] make her stand in sharp contrast to Mrs. Ogmore-Pritchard who has killed two husbands by her mania for turning out her rooms.

> Now, in her iceberg-white, holily [sic] laundered crinoline nightgown, under her virtuous polar sheets, in her spruced and dust-defying bedroom in trig and trim Bay View, a house for paying guests ... Mrs Ogmore-Pritchard, widow, twice, of Mr Ogmore ... and Mr Pritchard ... who, maddened by besoming, swabbing and scrubbing, the voice of the

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[102]Cf. "Tom" in SOED.

[103]Under Milk Wood, p. 51.

[104]Ibid.

[105]Ibid.

[106]Cf. "Polly Garter has many illegitimate babies because she loves babies but does not want only one man's." (Collected Letters, p. 814).

> vacuum-cleaner and the fume of polish, ironically swallowed disinfectant, fidgets in her rinsed sleep ...[107]

Like Captain Cat, Mrs. Ogmore-Pritchard represents death and only welcomes dead husbands into her cold, spotless home, and although a boardinghouse keeper, she will keep no boarders since they cannot keep her house clean and tidy. Therefore, death will be her only boarder. However, although she wants to and tries to, she cannot reject and keep out the season of love and fertility:

> Mrs Ogmore-Pritchard belches in a teeny hanky and chases the sunlight with a flywhisk, but even she cannot drive out the Spring...[108]

The play deals with the hidden thoughts, feelings, desires, etc. of the inhabitants in the town of Milk Wood; as audience we take a plunge into their subconsciousness and get a sense of these thoughts and desires. What permeates the town is love and sex, it is after all a "place of love" under the surface. The town presents the paradox of innocence and sexuality. However, there is also a sharp sense of time as for instance represented by death, which measures life. That the notion of time and time's passing is central to the play becomes evident when Mary Ann the Sailors' calling out her age through her window every morning, "I'm eighty five years three months and a day!"[109] is taken into consideration together with the recurring voice saying "Time passes. Listen. Time passes,"[110] at least twice. Also there is the pointing out that

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[107]Under Milk Wood, p. 13.

[108]Op.cit. p. 39.

[109]Op.cit. p. 23.

[110]Op.cit. p. 4.

> "The ships clock in the bar says half past eleven. Half past eleven is opening time. The hands of the clock have stayed still at half past eleven for fifty years. It is always opening time in the Sailor's Arms."[111]

This demonstrates oddly the importance of time, for on the one hand time is of no importance in this public house, yet, on the other, it has been for a definite period. A similar odd relationship with the notion of time is found in Lord Cut-Glass who is completely obsessed with time:

> Lord Cut-Glass, in his kitchen full of time, ... listens to the voices of his sixty-six clocks - (one for each year of his loony age) - and watches, with love, their black-and-white moony loudlipped faces tocking the earth away ... His sixty-six singers are all set at different hours.[112]

The only thing all these clocks really count is the age of Lord Cut-Glass, that is years not hours, minutes, and seconds. This demonstrates that time passes, yes, but in particular it demonstrates the arbitrariness of our notion of time and time's measure.

Under Milk Wood is truly a celebration of life, which is why, paradoxically, death is one of the themes of the play. Death is the contrast to life, but it is also a very important part of life. Thus a very powerful way of celebrating life is to acknowledge death and to express the contrast by stating that "I am not dead, therefore I am alive." The theme of death, which helps establish the theme of time, intermingles with the just as dominating themes of love and sex. It is a celebration of life, all that originates from the pool of life, man and nature.

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[111]Op.cit. p. 28.

[112]Op.cit. p. 49.

The carpe diem is a celebration of life that in this play is expressed through a sincere pondering upon what human life is, and upon how human beings deal with their own mortality and mortality in general, how they live their lives in various ways. A pondering, the existence of which is dictated by the realization of individual mortality, the temporariness of life.

Do Not Go Gentle into that good night

It is the passing of time that indicates the temporariness of life, which obligates the living to enjoy every single day of life instead of waiting for death. It is a matter of not accepting death quietly, but instead raging and thus affirming life while dying, the process of which starts at conception.

For this serious theme, Dylan chose a form usually used for light verse and the so-called *vers de société* dealing with events in polite society in a satiric and playful tone. The villanelle consists of five tercets and a quatrain with usually seven syllables in each line. Dylan's villanelle follows this pattern, though the line length varies between eight and ten syllables. The first and third lines of the first stanza are repeated alternately in the succeeding stanzas as a refrain and form the final couplet of the quatrain. Choosing this light, though difficult, form for this serious theme, mirrors the central antithesis of "night" versus "day" in the poem, which stand for death and life:

> Do not go gentle into that good night,
> Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
> Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

"Gentle" means gently so that the line requires the meaning of "do not go gently into death." But death is "good;" this might mean a good end to the natural process of death begun at conception, a good return to the pool of life. Yet it is an end against which we

must rave in madness, “rage” – even “at close of day.”

Setting off in this way with “old age,” the following four tercets deal with four kinds of men who in their respective ways and fields know all there is to know, and who meet death either by not going gently into it or by raging against their ends. The first kind is the “wise men:”

> Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
> Because their words had forked no lightning they
> Do not go gentle into that good night.

Though the philosophers recognize death and recognize the naturalness of it, they despair because their writings have failed to cast light on death. In the following stanza, it is the “good men,” the righteous, the moralists, or maybe those merely thinking they are “good men” who are similarly frustrated by their realizing the frailty of their deeds.

The fourth tercet relates the grief of “the wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight;” that is those who thoughtlessly and wildly enjoyed life. These hedonists grieve as they realize time’s theft.

The final and climatic fifth tercet treats the

> Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
> Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
> Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

“Grave” means serious, yet it is also concerned with tomb and thus in Dylan with womb. Their nearness to death increases their seriousness. Thus they ”see with blinding sight”

meaning that their insight into life's undertakings is dazzling. This "blinding sight" leads to the "blind eyes" in the next line, which following this line of thought could mean shine brightly "like meteors" and through that "be gay."

Having stated all of the above, Dylan turns to his father in his death bed, "on the sad height," asking him to react in one way or other:

> And you, my father, there on the sad height,
> Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.

Concluding Remarks

The above examples of analyses of work by Dylan all show in each their own way celebrations of life. They are not celebrations of the unity between man and nature, although this aspect is present at some level in them, the unity being the common source of origin that I keep referring to as the pool of life. They are celebrations of the period in the circle of life between being part of that pool and death with the automatic return to the pool of life.

A recurring theme in these works is that of time. "Fern Hill," "Poem in October," and Under Milk Wood share an awareness of the limited time allowed us here in life, an awareness not only of death and death's ubiquity and inevitability but also of the passing of time in general. In "The Peaches" too this theme is dealt with, but in this short story it is in the form of the dichotomy of innocence and experience. This recognition of death as part of life is of great importance and of great concern in Dylan's works. The greatness of this, though, is natural since the individual is mortal, while life is immortal. In Under Milk Wood, Captain Cat visits the dead seamen as if they were in a purgatory or, turning outside the Christian sphere, an eternal dimension to the soul. But they are not, he visits them in his dreams.

The works treated above do not make up a complete list of the works that deserve to be treated under this heading or fall naturally under it. For instance, the rest of the short stories of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, poems such as "Poem on his birthday," "Our eunuch dreams," and "Light breaks where no sun shines," belong here with an at length study and analysis of Under Milk Wood and its entire cast of characters, of whom there are more than fifty. It is a matter of prioritizing, I have chosen the above texts and characters from the play on the basis of a wish for clarity.

The reconciliation of dichotomies is not always thematic in the works of the carpe diem. Instead, many of these works only work with one or more central dichotomies, playing one off against the other. This enacting of contrasts is done in a fashion so that the possibility of their reconciliation becomes clear.

Nevertheless, reconciling dichotomies may be thematic too in the carpe diem. This is done, for instance, by stressing the mortality of the individual; the dichotomy of past and present, for instance may be reconciled by calling to life time past in time present.

Most importantly, though, of the carpe diem is the celebration of life as the period in between the two emanations, in all its aspects.

IV. Works on Creation

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life...[113]

Introduction

In the previous chapter, the aspect of the carpe diem of Dylan's works was treated. This aspect covers the period between the emanation from the pool of life and the emanation to the pool of life. In this chapter, I shall concern myself with the poems on creation.

I have already touched upon the aspect of creation in the works of Dylan, in chapter one, which dealt with the establishment of the life circle and the notion of emanation to and from the pool of life. In that chapter, the focus was on the idea of destruction as the basis for creation. In this chapter, the focus will be on creation itself.

However, the "Word" is of such great importance to Dylan that these works on creation come to treat the creation of themselves. They are related to the metafiction, which draws attention to itself as being fiction, by for instance Laurance Sterne's novel The life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman (1759 - 67) and the late 20th century writers, the so-called Postmodernists, as the magic realism of the Argentinian Jorge Luis Borges, or English John Fowles and his novel The French Lieutenant's Woman (1969). The poems by Dylan become a sort of metapoems, not only do they draw attention to their being poems, but they deal with their own creation.

[113] "John": 1:1-4.

As I pointed out in my general introduction to this paper, God is reduced to Mother Goose in the "Author's Prologue" by the intrusion of Jack & Jill into the theme of creation restricting this theme to the creation of a poem, to be a poem about the writing of a poem. In other words, the "Author's Prologue" becomes a metapoem in this way in which Dylan is the creator, God.

Especially when the October wind

At first sight and read, "Especially when the October wind" seems a strange landscape poem. It is fall, the October wind blows and the autumn sun moves like a crab on the horizon. However, the sun ought not to be that low this early; "crabbing" must mean something else. And what about all the references to language, "tower of words," "wordy shapes of women," and "vowelled beeches," etc., how do they fit into an autumn landscape? The answer is simple: they do not:

> Especially when the October wind
> With frosty fingers punishes my hair,
> Caught by the crabbing sun I walk on fire
> And cast a shadow crab upon the land,
> By the sea's side, hearing the noise of birds,
> Hearing the raven cough in winter sticks,
> My busy heart who shudders as she talks
> Sheds the syllabic blood and drains her words.

The October wind is blowing cold in the poet's hair, he walks on the beach and is "caught by the crabbing sun." The "crabbing sun" is at once two different images. First, it is the sun as a crab-catcher that catches the speaker who is a crab since the shape of his shadow is that of a crab. Second, "the crabbing sun" is the setting (or rising) sun that casts the "fire," the red light, on the land upon which the speaker walks.

Walking "by the sea's side," the speaker hears "the noise of birds." This provokes an expectation of the rustling of wings and chirping. However, our expectations are disappointed. Instead of the birds' twitter, we hear "the raven cough in winter sticks," an image of death instead of the one of life that was expected.

The recollection of death makes the speaker's female heart shudder, shed "the syllabic blood" and drain "her words." This heart is not merely full of poetry, it is made from poems as the speaker's blood is "syllabic," containing syllables, which means that words are flowing in the speaker's veins.

That the heart of the speaker is female and the speaker is by the sea point in the direction of creation. The sea is the origin of life as is the womb. Yet nature is dying.

> Shut, too, in a tower of words, I mark
> On the horizon walking like the trees
> The wordy shapes of women, and the rows
> Of the star-gestured children in the park.
> Some let me make you of the vowelled beeches,
> Some of the oaken voices, from the roots
> Of many thorny shire tell you notes,
> Some let me make you of the water's speeches.

Isolated from the rest of the world, the speaker-poet is "shut, too, in a tower of words." What separates him with his female heart out from the life that surrounds him is a "tower of words." Being a poet, his material is language, words, but these get between him and that which is there; they are what isolates him. Therefore, he sees "wordy shapes of women" who walk "like trees," meaning that the women do not move but stand talking, which is one explanation of "wordy," the others being the reference to the previous "tower of words"

which has a similar shape to the trees, as well as being the poet's material. Further, as in the "Author's prologue," the leaves of these autumn trees are poems, thus the "wordy shapes of women" become poetry too.

The last four lines of the stanza continue the tree metaphor, and "'vowelled beeches,' 'oaken voices,' and 'thorny shires' remind us that the tree of Calvary carried the Word, which created the trees of Eden."[114] The stress is on creation in "some let me make you." The "water's speeches" is parallel to the "vowelled beeches."

As trees and women are confused with one another, so are the "children in the park" confused with stars, and thus the children who are playing excitedly in the park are "star-gestured."

The contrast between the relatively young beech trees and the relatively old oak trees anticipates the devotion to time of stanza three:

> Behind a pot of ferns the wagging clock
> Tells me the hour's word, ...

The fourth stanza echos the first with "wind" and "land" repeated in the first and fourth lines, respectively, while the succession of "birds" and "words" is reversed in the fifth and eighth lines:

> Especially when the October wind
> (Some let me make you of autumnal spells,
> The spider-tongued, and the loud hill of Wales)
> With fist of turnips punishes the land,

[114]Tindall, p. 53.

Some let me make you of the heartless words.
The heart is drained that, spelling in the scurry
Of chemic blood, warned of the coming fury.
By the sea's side hear the dark-vowelled birds.

A crab in the first stanza, though, here in the last the speaker-poet is a spider which in appearance is not altogether different. Instead of his hair, it is the land that is punished by the October wind, and this time the punishing is done by the "fist of turnips" as opposed to the "frosty fingers."

In the first stanza, the "syllabic blood" was shed and the words were drained from the poet-speaker's female heart. Therefore, the words are now "heartless" and "the heart" that in the first stanza "warned of the coming fury" is by now "drained." "The coming fury" was the writing of the poem which is "the scurry / of chemic blood" since the "chemic blood" is the ink of the pen with which the poem was written or spelled.

Finally, the "dark-vowelled birds" "by the sea's side" recall the raven's cough of the first stanza both metaphors for death. Both the raven and the "dark-vowelled birds" of death are by the sea, the eternal womb that will always defy death. That is the theme; the defiance of death that the making of a poem is. It is creation's victory over death, which, after all, is not the end to everything but rather a new opportunity of creation.

The spire cranes

In "Especially when the October wind," the isolation of the poet in his "tower of words" was treated. In "The spire cranes," the theme of isolation recurs. A tower of poetic inspiration, it recalls Keats' inspirational nightingale in "Ode to a nightingale;" while a tower of poetry, it recalls Yeats' city of Byzantium in both "Sailing to Byzantium" and "Byzantium:"

The spire cranes. Its statue is an aviary.
From the stone nest it does not let the feathery
Carved birds blunt their striking throats on the salt gravel,
Pierce the spilt sky with diving wing in weed and heel
An inch in froth. Chimes cheat the prison spire, pelter
In time like outlaw rains on that priest, water
Time for the swimmers' hands, music for silver lock
And mouth. Both note and plume plunge from the spire's hook.
Those craning birds are choice for you, songs that jump back
To the built voice, or fly with winter to the bells,
But do not travel down dumb wind like prodigals.

The church spire is the poet's holy and creative tower of words that "cranes," meaning stretching its long neck like a crane, a bird with long legs and a long neck. Dylan's favourite bird, for instance, the heron belongs to the family of the cranes. "The spire cranes" upwards, like the tower of Babel closing in on the sky or heavens, and in a sense so full of words, language, that God thought it necessary to scatter the people "abroad upon the face of all the earth"[115] resulting, according to comparative linguistics, in three different languages and ultimately in the large variety of languages of today. The spire is holy, represents language, and implies both creative and destructive forces.

Since the bird metaphor has already been introduced, the statue on the spire has to be an aviary, a kind of "stone nest" for birds. These birds are "carved" and "feathery," which make them artifacts, poems, a transformation further supported by "throats" as poetry is meant to be read aloud, "throated." As the spire itself is creative, so are the birds that "pierce the spilt sky" marking the union of the below, that which is "spilt," with the above,

[115]"Genesis" 11:9.

the "sky." "Froth" in the following line means, among other things, fermentation, which adds to the sense that these birds - apart from being poems - represent sperm.

Escaping from their imprisonment, "chimes cheat the prison spire." "Pelter" has many meanings, among them is that of the mine worker removing slate which places the poem, or the poet, the speaker in Wales for instance, another is as a form of "pelt" which is the torrential falling of rain or snow. As the latter, "pelter" introduces the water imagery of the following lines. Again, even when "outlaw," water, is something creative, and here the creativity is holy, or "priest." The chimes just escaped from their prison, are "music for the silver lock / and mouth." While silence is golden, speech is silver. Thus the lock of the mouth, the control of speech, of the tongue is silver as is the tongue itself.

Chime, the "note," and bird, the "plume" meaning feather, "plunge from the spire's hook." Though the songs and the poems thus plunge from high above in the creative tower of words, they are hooked to the tower and risk, if not must come, bouncing back.

"Those craning birds" recalls the image of the craning spire stretched out and up so it almost touches the sky. They offer the poet a choice; a choice of language, metaphor. He may choose language and imagery so personal that his poems "jump back / to the built voice," the voice of the creator. Thus, his poems become solipsistic. Or he may write for others than "for you," in which case his poems will "fly with winter bells," meaning that they and their meanings will reach people like the chiming of church bells in the clear, silent, frosty, winter air; that is, without obstruction. Either way, his poems will "not travel down dumb wind like prodigals," a reference to "Luke" 15:11-32 about the prodigal son who was lost and found, the poems will not simply fly away just to return impoverished to their creator.

The Orchards

The holy tower of words appears again in the short story of "The Orchards:"

> The word is too much with us. He raised his pencil so that its shadow fell, a tower of wood and lead, on the clean paper; he fingered the pencil tower, the half-moon of his thumb-nail rising and setting behind the leaden spire. The tower fell, down fell the city of words, the walls of a poem, the symmetrical letters.[116]

This time, however, the tower is not poetic inspiration but the poet's instrument, the pencil, "a tower of wood and lead," as well as a "leaden spire." The "half-moon," a brilliant description of the finger nail elevating the nail to semi-divinity, signals the state of mind of the writer or poet. As in "The Visitor," which I analysed in chapter one, the moon is a symbol of fertility and of creativity through the combination of it with the goddess of fertility, who in the Welsh mythology is Rhiannon. Unfortunately, the moon is merely half. The implication of the poet's moon being crescent is that he lacks inspiration.

Failing to compose anything, the poet drops the pencil on the blank sheet of paper bringing down with it "the city of words, the walls of a poem, the symmetrical letters." The letters are arranged symmetrically in the poem, giving shape, form to it.

The phrase "the word is too much with us" recalls Wordsworth's sonnet "The world is too much with us." However, Wordsworth's sonnet is an attack on the age in which he lived on the grounds that the age has lost its innocence, its connection to nature and thus with the divine creator. This is why "the world" is too great a responsibility to be left "with us." What has already been created, the sonnets states, is in great danger of being destroyed. Dylan's phrase, which implies St. John's "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God," indicates a lack of creative powers. While Wordsworth warns against

[116]Collected Stories, p. 44.

destruction, Dylan warns against the absence of creation. In the latter, the "word," which is the creative force, it is that with which God created light, "firmament"- Heaven, the earth, the plants, and the "living creatures,"[117] is "too much," meaning that nothing good will come from it, if anything at all. Having reached this conclusion, the poet puts down his pencil.

Towards the end of the story, the hero has undergone a development from "an image of man,"[118] through "a folk-man walking"[119] to "Marlais the poet walking."[120] As an "image of man," he is himself the created; therefore, he cannot himself create, be the creator. He cannot create when isolated in his ivory tower. Thus, he has to break out of his isolation and become a "folk-man," a term parallel to "folkland," which, historically, was land that was the property of the common people.[121] In this way, "folk-man" acquires the meaning of a man who is the property of the common people, a man of the people. Then, and only then, he can compose his poetry, and become "Marlais the poet walking," who is allowed once more to be different from the common people. No longer an "image of man," he is now a "man-in-a-picture."[122]

"The Orchards" is so entitled because of the hero's dream about "a hundred orchards on the road to the sea village [having] broken into flame."[123] An orchard is a garden for herbs and

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[117]"Genesis" 1:1-24.

[118]Collected Stories, p. 44.

[119]Op.cit. p. 46.

[120]Op.cit. p. 48.

[121]"Folk" in SOED.

[122]Collected Poems, p. 48.

[123]Op.cit. p. 42.

fruit trees, or an enclosure where these are cultivated. The former includes an indication of the garden of Eden, however weak. Strength is provided by other biblical references, as well as references to "Genesis" in particular, though. There is, first of all, as has already been treated, the reference to the gospel of St. John. Secondly, though serving as a chronology, the Fall of Man is mentioned,[124] the young poet is at one time juxtaposed with virgin Mary,[125] even Eden itself and the crucifix are included, just to name a few of the more obvious.

The poet dreams about the destruction of a place of creation. For an orchard, whether biblical in meaning or not, is a place of creation, for instance of the growing of fruits. Further, elsewhere in Dylan's works trees symbolize words, thus the fruits of the trees may be poems here. This explication is consistent with the poet's dream; in the beginning he dreams about the orchards' burning and he produces nothing, while in the end "the real world's wind came up to kill the fires,"[126] and he finds "the end to the untold adventures,"[127] he begins to write.

Finally, an aspect worth noting is that the uninspired poet of the beginning concentrates on the town, the inspired and composing poet of the end has been reconciled with nature. In the beginning, it says:

> Brave in his isolation, he scrambled to the edge of the slates, there to stand perilously above the tiny traffic and the lights of the street signals.

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[124]"... in all the high noons since the fall of man ..." (P. 46).

[125]Op.cit. p. 45.

[126]Op.cit. p. 49.

[127]Op.cit. p. 48.

> The toy of the town was at his feet. ... It was the image of an infant city that threw his pulses into confusion.[128]

While the last paragraph of the story reads:

> This he had dreamed before the blossom's burning and the putting-out, before the rising and the salt swinging-in, was a dream no longer near these orchards. He kissed the two secret sisters, and a scarecrow kissed him back. He heard the birds fly down on to his lovers' shoulders. He saw the fork-tree breast, the barbed eye, and the dry, twig hand,[129]

which also proves his inspiration prodigal, in the sense that he lost it and found it.

I, in my intricate image

"I, in my intricate image" consists of three parts of each six stanzas. Of the three parts, I shall treat only the first. Generally, the parts intensify in obscurity so that the third part is almost impenetrable. This is the obscurity of which Dylan was so often accused. Nevertheless, even part three has some recognizable elements. The subject is poetry and the creation of poetry.

Since the subject is poetry, the best place to begin is with that which is at the very heart of poetry, and indeed too in Dylan's, namely the image. The first stanza of part one is an attempt to explain what imagery is:

> I, in my intricate image, stride on two levels,

[128]Op.cit. pp. 44-45.

[129]Op.cit. p. 49.

Forged in man's minerals, the brassy orator
Laying my ghost in metal,
The scales of this twin world tread on the double,
My half ghost in armour hold hard in death's corridor,
To my man-iron sidle.

Identifying the speaker is the trouble here. The central word is "I." Does "I" refer to the poet? Or is it the poem itself speaking about its own nature? "I ... stride on two levels," it says. This is the nature of imagery. The first level of the poetic image is the name or descriptive term itself of an object or idea. The word only carries its usual meaning. The other level of the image is the transfer of that descriptive term to an object or idea, from which it differs but to which it is analogous. Thus, poem or poet strides on two levels in its or his "intricate image."

When dealing with poetry, we should expect dualities, dichotomies, double or multiple meanings to words, etc. "Forged," playing on or at least continuing the idea of the two levels of the image, both means "created" and "copied." However, already the simple two-sidedness of the image is extended to a multiple-sidedness, for "forged" also means shaped by heating in fire and hammering, a process used on metals. Since "metal" is a symbol for "flesh" in Dylan, it follows that man is "forged."

"The brassy orator / Laying my ghost in metal" continues this metaphor. "Brassy" means "of brass" or "brass coloured," but it also refers to a shrill and rattling, scratching, chattering, or roaring voice. The "brassy orator" is thus the roaring voice of, perhaps, the poet himself. The "orator" is really the creator of speeches.

At this point, it becomes evident that the "I" of the first line, the speaker, is the poem, not the poet. For it is the poet, the creator, who is "laying my ghost in metal," or who is casting in metal "my ghost," which is the spirit of the poem, in order to give it form, to give it life.

The "twin world," the two levels of imagery, must be balanced: "The scales of this twin world tread on the double." "Tread on the double," suggesting the army talk of marching "on the double," stresses the necessity of keeping the scales balanced between these two worlds. Neither level of the image can get out of hand, nor may the ratio of thesis to antithesis be unbalanced.

"Death's corridor" means life. Being in the middle of the process of being cast in iron, the poem is only a "half ghost" by now, the other "half in armour"is undergoing the transformation from spirit to flesh, life. A poem should never develop in a straight forward line or way. This one sidles like a crab, a continuance of the "armour" metaphor in the previous line along with "man-iron."

Almost parallel in meaning with stanza two, stanza three begins with the exact same five words:

> Beginning with doom in the ghost, and the springing marvels,
> Image of images, my metal phantom
> Forcing through the harebell,
> My man of leaves and the bronze root, mortal, unmortal,
> I, in my fusion of rose and male motion,
> Create this twin miracle.

Creation begins with destruction, "beginning with doom." The "ghost" is "bulb" in the previous stanza, both are somehow clinical, removed from nature. But the "springing

marvels," which in stanza two is "spring unravels," balances the scales again, bringing in the natural world with the marvels of spring, which is the season of creation.

"Image of images," the phrase echoes the first stanza's "Laying my ghost in metal." It is still the poem that is speaking about itself. A true metapoem, this one describes itself as the ultimate image.

The "phantom" that is being transformed into flesh, "metal," is "forcing through the harebell," which recalls "The force that through the green fuse." This unites poetry with nature, which is proved united with man (or vice versa) in "The force that through the green fuse." This idea is followed up in the "man of leaves and the bronze root," which reminds us that we are in a forge. At once in time and out of time, "mortal, unmortal," the poem creates "this twin miracle," which is itself, in its "fusion of rose and male motion" that indicates (human) copulation and conception.

The tower, a central image in "Especially when the October wind," "The spire cranes," and "The Orchards," reappears in this poem. If ever in doubt of the phallic quality of the towers, this doubt is put to rest now in the fourth stanza:

> This is the fortune of manhood: the natural peril,
> A steeplejack tower, bonerailed and masterless,
> No death more natural;
> Thus the shadowless man or ox, and the pictured devil,
> In seizure of silence commit the dead nuisance:
> The natural parallel.

"The fortune of manhood," which was alluded to in the second stanza, is also "the natural peril." In the shape of "a steeplejack tower," the male sexual organ is "bonerailed" and,

interestingly, "masterless," signifying perhaps that it has its own mind, is its own master. "No death [is] more natural" than that which this "tower" brings. It is *la petit mort*, the creative orgasm that leads to conception and birth which results in death.

Leaving Freud aside for a minute, a "steeplejack" is a person who climbs towers carrying out repairs. Thus, and since "tower" also means "word," "a steeplejack tower" is the creation of a poem.

The "shadowless man," a man casting no shadow, is a vampire, living death, while the shadowless "ox" is connected with death through its sterility. The "pictured devil" is fiction. All these three serve nothing but death. This, again, balances the scales between life and death. "In seizure of silence [they, or death can choose to] commit the dead nuisance," an image of masturbation, which is sterile, presents the alternative to the "natural peril" of copulation, the "natural alternative."

> My images stalk the trees and the slant sap's tunnel,
> No tread more perilous, the green steps and spire
> Mount on man's footfall,
> I with the wooden insect in the tree of nettles,
> In the glass bed of grapes with snail and flower,
> Hearing the weather fall.

"Stalk" is the noun but used as verb, so that the imagery of the poem is the force that gives the trees their stalk and the slant tunnel in which flows the sap. The first line recalls once more "The force that through the green fuse." As in "Especially when the October wind," tree is word just as tower is. This means that the imagery is the force that drives the poem.

"Green" is the colour of creation, of growth, of spring. The "tread" that is the most "perilous" is the same as in the previous stanza, namely that of creation. For in the "footfall" of creation follows death.

However, the poem-speaker must at this point combine with the poet-speaker. "Wooden insect" is an artifact, "insect" itself seems a poem as in "Today, this insect." "Wooden" means of wood, which is word. Thus a poem of words is "in the tree of nettles." Because words are sacramental to Dylan, "the tree of nettles" implying, suggesting, Christ on the cross wearing his crown of thorns, indicates the holiness of poetry.

"The poet, embottled in his 'glass bed of grapes,' could be Eucharistic wine or Christ Himself - and the poet as holy wino," is Tindall's suggestion,[130] skipping the very last line. Since this continues the sacramental imagery, I can conjure up no better suggestion.

The sixth and final stanza of the first part is as difficult as the last two lines of the previous:

> Intricate manhood of ending, the invalid rivals,
> Voyaging clockwise off the symboled harbour,
> finding the water final,
> On the consumptive's terrace taking their two farewells,
> Sail on the level, the departing adventure,
> To the sea-blown arrival.

This stanza is packed with images of creation, "manhood" as in stanza four, of destruction "ending,"and of time both mentioned examples and "clockwise." The "invalid rivals" are creation and destruction.

[130]P. 81.

"Intricate manhood" unites "manhood" and "image" of the first stanza. Thus creator and created, poet and poem, are united. In Christian terms, the union of creator and created is an image of eternal life. "The invalid rivals" will find that "the water [is] final." Usually, water represents creation, but here it means death. It is the decay of the flesh; living means dying.

The two lines immediately before the last seem an unbroken chain of images of death; "the consumptive's terrace," "their two farewells," "the departing adventure." While "the sea-blown arrival" may mean either arrival at death since water is "final," or arrival at life, returning to the pool of life.

Though there are lots of unanswerable questions to the last part, in particular to the last two lines of the penultimate stanza and the entire last stanza, the subject of the poem is clear: "I, in my intricate image"is about the making of a poem.

Concluding remarks

St. John and Dylan seems to have agreed upon one thing at least: the creative powers of the word and the word as sacramental. Noah constructed his ark from wood, whereas Dylan constructed his from words. This is what the above works, which represent only a small part of Dylan's metafiction, prove; though not a complete list, these are the works on creation.

When "I, in my intricate image" sinks into obscurity towards the end, it is only natural. For the poem is an image, an image that is developed deeper and deeper, acquiring more and more levels until we as "simple" readers cannot follow it any more. Basically, the first part is the disclosure of level upon level of the metaphor introduced in the very first line, namely that of the metaphor itself.

V. The Holy Metaphor

Introduction

In the previous chapters, there has been a number of references to the Bible. The question remains whether this alone makes Dylan a Christian poet; a religious poet, he certainly is, but what exactly is his religion, his system of belief remains unclear so far as the biblical references go.

In chapter one on the works of emanation, I proved the existence of the pool of life in Dylan's universe. I also showed how life emanates from the pool of life, the emanation called creation, and back to the pool of life, which is called death. Further, I showed that destruction is a precondition for creation. Moreover, I proved Dylan's perception of man's union with nature through the pool of life.

Man's union with nature and the emanation from and to the pool of life constitute together a complete beliefs system. Why does Dylan, then, keep referring to the biblical stories? It is not that he started with some sort of odd atheistic pantheism as his creed, and later became a convert. Atheistic, because atheism is the disbelief in or denial of the existence of God. Pantheism, because this is the belief that God and the universe are identical implying a denial of the personality and transcendence of God; it is also the identification of God with the forces of nature and the natural substances; finally, it is admitting and tolerating all gods.[131]

Does his use of biblical passages and images make Dylan a Christian poet? Certainly not. To Dylan, the Bible is a frame of reference common to his readers. The biblical references in his works are, thus, metaphors. Genesis, which means origin, birth, may also be the

[131] "Atheism" and "pantheism" in SOED.

creation of a poem, not only of the universe. God may be the poet in the role of the creator. Christ may be every man. The image of the crucifixion may represent a number of things, death, resurrection or regeneration. These are only a few examples of Dylan's metaphorical use of biblical passages, texts, and images. Demonstrating this is the aim for this chapter.

Since I have already shown a large number of biblical references in Dylan's works, and since I have explicated them, I shall restrict myself and concentrate on two poems in this chapter; "Vision and prayer" and "Holy spring."

Vision and prayer

This poem consists of two parts of each six stanzas. The stanzas of the first part are shaped like diamonds, while those of the second part are shaped like either hourglasses or wings, dove's wings perhaps like the symbol of Christ. Diamonds reflect light, thus they represent the vision of the title, while the wings (or hourglasses) represent the prayer.

Or so it seems at least, for at a closer look, the two parts say the same. Christianity serves here as metaphor for something secular, yet holy. As elsewhere in Dylan's works, religious metaphor is used for holy secularity.

Who
Are you
Who is born
In the next room
So loud to my own
That I can hear the womb
Opening and the dark run
Over the ghost and the dropped son
Behind the wall thin as a wren's bone?
In the birth bloody room unknown
To the burn and turn of time
And the heart print of man
Bows no baptism
But dark alone
Blessing on

The wild
Child.[132]

We are witness to a birth in this the first stanza. But who is it; "who / are you / who is born"? This question is answered by the two last lines of the stanza; "the wild / child." The question is not answered satisfactorily, though, for who is this wild child? Not necessarily Christ, he is at the very least like Christ; "ghost" and "son" make up two thirds of the holy trinity, which is completed if son and father is one as in the first sonnet of "Altarwise by owl-light."

The Christ-like infant, then, is born on the other side of the "wren's bone" wall. A wren is a domestic bird, thus, the wing shape of the stanzas in part two is suggested, and in stanza two, it is even a "winged wall." This wild child on the other side of the paper thin wall is a holy creation. As such, he is the poem as well as the poet since father is one with the son. Words such as "loud," "hear," and "heart print" which is partly audible heart beat, and partly like a footprint of sound coming through the thin wall further point in the direction of the birth of this child being really the birth of a poem because sound is poetry. That it is "the heart print of man" suggests universality, it is everyman or every poem.

The word "dark" appears twice in this stanza. The pool of life is dark, while emanation from the pool is emanation into light, and birth to be thrown "to bright / Light."[133] "Dark" represents creative force.

When

[132]My attempt to represent the original shape of these stanzas, as well as of those of the second part, is not altogether successful. The diamonds of the first part really ought to be like squares turned so that they stand on one of their four points.

[133]Stanza 2.

The wren
Bone writhes down
And the first dawn
Furied by his stream
Swarms on the kingdom come
Of the dazzler of heaven
And the splashed mothering maiden
Who bore him with a bonfire in
His mouth and rocked him like a storm
I shall run lost in sudden
Terror and shining from
The once hooded room
Crying in vain
In the caldron
Of his
Kiss

If there was any doubt left about the references being biblical and, indeed, to Christ, this is frustrated now in this third stanza by "the kingdom come" and the "mothering maiden," who is Christ's virgin mother Mary. The coming "kingdom" is heavenly if not the Millennium of "Revelation" 20:3. However, in connection with the images of water, "his stream" and "splashed," along with the image of the "mothering maiden / who bore him" and "the once hooded room," the kingdom is more like the womb, the place where creation takes place. Whatever the exact place, it certainly is holy.

Holy, yet it is also frightening. "The wren / bone" has now turned phallic, writhing down it is like the serpent of Eden that is to be tied in the thousand years of this kingdom: "And he laid hold of the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years."[134]

A kiss is usually a display of love. Here, however, it is somewhere the poet may cry "in vain." Further, this act of love that is light and promising is juxtaposed with an image of the dark arts of witchcraft, the "caldron." Kissing is associated with copulation and

[134]"Revelation" 20:2.

therefore creation, but this kiss is different. This kiss is sorrow or pain, the pain of birth or rebirth, or the pain of creating poetry, for instance, which is also a kind of birth.

In
the [sic] spin
Of the sun
In the spuming
Cyclone of his wing
For I was lost who am
Crying at the man drenched throne
In the first fury of his stream
And the lightnings of adoration
Back to black silence melt and mourn
For I was lost who have come
To dumbfounding haven
And the finding one
And the high noon
Of his wound
Blinds my
Cry.

As the poet was lost in the previous stanza "in sudden / terror," he is now struck dumb, confounded in "haven." The word chosen for this is "dumbfounding" that includes "found," which means that he is now a prodigal. On this journey from darkness to light, "haven" is "high noon" of the sun, which explains why "black silence melt and mourn." The sun is "in the spuming / cyclone," "spuming" means frothing which is, as in "The spire cranes," fertilising. It is a fertile sun, son, or Son implying holy creation. The sun is "in / the spin" because it is inside this holly fertile, as well as phallic, "cyclone if his wing."

If sound is poetry, then silence is the opposite of poetry, which means that it is the nonexistent poetry; the absence of sound equals the absence of poetry. The absence of poetry is that which is melted and mourned.

Resurrection comes in stanza five:

I shall waken
To the judge blown bedlam
Of the uncaged sea bottom
The cloud climb of the exhaling tomb

"The judge" is God at the day of the last of judgement, but that he is "blown bedlam" combines the holy city of Bethlehem with a lunatic asylum. It is on this day that the serpent will be let loose again, thus "uncaged," along with those mentally ill. Further the Apocalyptic sea will "give up its dead" and thus too be "uncaged." "The exhaling tomb" is a new womb from which the dead emanate into the after-life, like the

spiral of ascension
From the vultured urn
Of the morning
Of man when
The Land
And

The
Born sea
Praised the sun
The finding one
And upright Adam
Sang upon origin!
O the wings of the children!
The woundward flight of the ancient
Young from the canyons of oblivion!
The sky stride of the always slain
In battle! the happening
Of saints to their vision!
The world winding Home!
And the whole pain
Flows open
And I
Die.

The "spiral of ascension / from the vultured urn" recalls Yeats' "turning and turning in the widening gyre" from the apocalyptic "The second coming." This recollection has been latent ever since, at the latest, stanza three; at this point it is definite. The "vultured urn" is tomb and therefore at the same time womb.

"The morning / of man when / the land / and / the / born sea / praised the sun" is the first morning, which is now also the last, since "the last shall be the first, the first shall be the last."[135] At this point the journey has reached its destination, from darkness we have travelled into light of "upright Adam" in Eden before the Fall, and thus "upright." The last three lines of the previous stanza and the first six of this are an appraisal of the Creation and of creation. These lines make the plainest statement of the theme here; it is the development from the damp darkness of the womb to the fire and light of noon. A theme which is common to Dylan, and the presence of which has been demonstrated previously in this paper. It is the celebration of life.

The "children" are identical with "the ancient / young" who are flying toward the wound representing Christ, thus "woundward flight." However, they may also be the poet's material, his words, in which case it is to him they fly.

The first stanza clearly begins with birth, the last stanza ends as clearly with death : "I / die." The creation, which has been so ecstatic, results in the death of the creator - or at least in the "little death." "The whole pain / flows open / and I / die" is orgasmic after the phallic "world winding home" recalling the writhing down of the wren bone in the third stanza, compare this with the furious stream and the "lightnings of adoration"in stanza four. Once more the dichotomy of tomb and womb is reconciled.

The stanza opening the second part is, then, shaped like either a wing or an hourglass or both and has as its junction the "carrion" "birds"

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        bearing
The ghost
   From
The ground.
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[135]"Matthew" 20:16.

Still being born, the poet, "the ghost," is still on his way towards light. Thus the ascent of the last stanzas of the first part has left him in the dark. The vultures of stanza five have failed to carry him all the way to his journey's end.

The "burial song / of the birds of burden," the bestial birds that are carrying him, implies birth through the *dylanesque* relationship between womb and tomb, which really are the two sides to the coin.

In stanza two, the poet prays for resurrection:

That he who learns now the sun and the moon
Of his mother's milk may return
Before the lips blaze and bloom
To the birth bloody room
Behind the wall's wren
Bone and be dumb
And the womb
That bore
For
All men
The adored
Infant light or
The dazzling prison
Yawn to his upcoming.
In the name of the wanton
Lost on the unchristened mountain
In the centre of dark I pray him

Continuing the prayer the father started in the first stanza, he talks about his son who is learning about night and day, "the sun and the moon," which means partly learning all there is to know and partly getting to know the dichotomies as night and day, birth and death, etc. The dichotomies are reconciled in "his mother's milk" that contains everything he needs, all the necessary nutrition as well as knowledge, for the time being; that is, while he is still an infant.

"May my son," the poet prays, "who at this moment gets what he needs from his mother's milk, someday return to the birth-bloody room." No longer the new-born upon his return, the occasion is rather the son's becoming a father too. In this way "the lips [that] blaze and bloom" represent the female genitalia. Thus the "womb" is a general womb, belonging at once to his own mother and to the mother of his children. This reading is supported by the conjunction "the womb / that bore / for / all men." The "adored / infant light" is an image of Christ the baby, who once more is every man as infant. Nevertheless, this "adored / light" may also be a "dazzling prison" of restriction and danger. Yet, the father wishes for his son that he may "yawn to his upcoming," which means find his future safe, since yawning implies the safety of mother's embrace.

"Wanton" is a good word having multiple meanings. Of the eight meanings listen in the SOED, at least three are relevant here. The first is that of the undisciplined, ungoverned, and childishly cruel or unruly boy. This boy, who is also carefree, the second meaning of "wanton," cannot be anything but "lost on the unchristened mountain." Wanton meaning carefree recalls the boy of "Fern Hill." This undisciplined and carefree boy is sexually promiscuous, the third meaning, thus too he must be "lost" in the Christian sense, finding himself in the "unchristened mountain."

Not yet really found, but rather "dumbfound," this prodigal, "wanton" son belongs among those who have not been christened yet. These "unchristened," too, find themselves on the mountain which is "in the centre of dark".

"I pray him," the poet continues;

> That he let the dead lie though they moan
> For his briared hands to hoist them
> To the shrine of his world's wound
> And the blood drop's garden.

The "world's wound" is that of Christ on the cross, so he to whom this prayer is directed is Christ. However, since he occupies "the shrine" of this wound as well as "the blood drop's garden," the poet is Christ. His hands are like a thorny bush, "briared," Therefore, the Christ-poet can hear the dead "moan" their desire to be delivered. The "briared hands" could also be the suffering hands of the poet, who suffers working his processes as Christ suffered. Then, "the blood drop's garden" is the paper upon which the poet writes, his blood dripping from his wounded hands.

Stanza four is a dark, but concrete elaboration of the third, thus the dead that long to be hoisted by Christ's hands in the third, are "common Lazarus" whom Christ woke from the dead[136] in the fourth stanza.

> And the star of the lost the shape of their eyes.
> In the name of the fatherless
> In the name of the unborn

The first line recalls the first line of the first wing, "In the name of the lost," which is continued in the next two lines reminding us of the holy trinity. This time, though, it is the fatherless and the unborn, instead of the ususal father and son that mark this as a prayer.

> May the crimson
> Sun spin a grave grey
> And the colour of clay
> Stream upon his martyrdom
> In the interpreted evening

"Crimson" is a shade of red, so the sun that is spinning a "grave grey" is setting. "The colour of clay" in connection with "his martyrdom" suggests God, the Creator and father, juxtaposed with Christ, the Son, but father and son are one. The "interpreted evening"

[136]"John" 11-12

partly underlines that it is dusk, partly forces us to return to the idea of poetry that needs to be interpreted is in need of holy metaphor. Thus, God is poet, the Creator.

"And the known dark of the earth amen," fittingly ends this prayer. The "known dark of the earth" is the poet's creativity, like the pool of life is dark. However, the prayer is resumed in the last stanza with

```
I turn the corner of prayer and burn
     In a blessing of the sudden
   Sun. In the name of the damned
      I would turn back and run
          To the hidden land
           But the loud sun
             Christen down
                The sky.
                    I
               Am found.
```

Coming from darkness, the light that burns the poet, the central "I,"is that towards which he was travelling, his "blessing." The "in the name of the..." lines of the previous stanza have now turned into "in the name of the damned." This place of light is not what he was looking for after all. "The hidden land" is the land laying in darkness of creation from which he came and to which he wants to return now. It is the process of creation - and not life - for which he, the poet, really burns.

That the sun is "loud" suggest that it represents the poem for poetry is sound; naming his universe, the poet-creator christens the sky. Having gone through the processes of creation and development, the poet finally becomes the true prodigal and is "found."

Nevertheless,

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      ... My voice burns in his hand.
   Now I am lost in the blinding
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One. The sun roars at the prayer's end.

Since creator and created are one and the same, "my voice" and "his hand" both belong to the poet, signalling a new journey's beginning, so the poet is lost again, this time, though in "the blinding / one" who is light as saviour. Appropriately, the "sun," son, and Son having been "loud" all through the poem, now "roars" of creativity and in celebration of "the prayer's end," the completion of the poem. The poem completed, the poet's task of creation is fulfilled. Holy metaphor is needed in dealing with holy matter; poetry is holy, language and words are holy, and these are part of life which is holy too.

Holy spring

The poem "Holy spring" is motivated by one the German nightly air raids during Word War II, however, it is not a poem about the war. Instead, it celebrates holy life, the joy of wakening after a night of air raids to see the holy sun's, or holy nature's creating of a new, and holy day. Holy metaphor is necessary for this purpose.

The poem consists of two twelve-line stanzas each of which is a 17th century conceit. The first is the conceit of the hospital, the second is that of the sun.

O
Out of a bed of love
When that immortal hospital made one more move to soothe
The cureless counted body,
And ruin and his causes
Over the barbed and shooting sea assumed an army
And swept into our wounds and houses,
I climb to greet the war in which I have no heart but only
That one dark I owe my light,

Call for confessor and wiser mirror but there is none
To glow after the god stoning night
And I am struck as lonely as a holy maker by the sun.

The "bed of love" is like a "hospital" that is eternal, or "immortal," a word that also applies to the "bed of love" because of the creative qualities of this. Further, bed is the hospital for the "cureless" whose days, dust, or "body" are "counted" meaning that whoever is in this hospital bed is mortal, even dying. Although this body is incurable, "one more move to soothe" it may be carried out. The "bed of love" begins as metaphorical womb, but ends as a death metaphor; yet another example of the *dylanesque* rhyming of womb with tomb.

"The barbed and shooting" refers to the trenches of the Great War, only here, these are made out of the "sea." This sea has "assumed an army;" "assumed" means "received into heaven," a well-hidden biblical reference, it also means "having taken the shape of." This sea of aeroplanes up in the sky, or heaven, causes the "ruin." That "assumed" is a biblical reference is backed by "wounds" recalling Christ's wound and his teachings on charity, the love of one's fellow-men.

"Out of a bed of love ... I climb," it says, "to greet the war," contrasting love with war and thus light with darkness, creation with destruction, and life with death, the central dichotomies in Dylan's works.

"The war in which I have no heart but only / That one dark I owe my light" is cryptical. The speaker is not committed to this war; unless he is committed to it by his evil, "dark," side which is also the source of his "light" or creative side. In this way, the war is now made internal as a war between the dark forces and the light ones. It is essentially the same conflict as that which prevails between the bed as a place of love and as a place of death.

This war, internal as well as external, helps him, nurses him as in a hospital, emerge into the light "after the god stoning night / ... [he is] struck as lonely as a holy maker by the sun." Seeing the planes on the dark sky dropping their bombs as Zeus'es throwing flashes of lightning, the speaker is "struck" by one of these flashes of light like "The holy maker" is struck "by the sun." In this way, the speaker and the holy creator are united in one who is "lonely." Further, this speaker-creator, poet, is "struck" finding that his "call for confessor and wiser mirror" gets no answer because he is now, after the raid, "lonely."

No
Praise that the spring time is all
Gabriel and radiant shrubbery as the morning grows joyful
Out of the woebegone pyre
And the multitude's sultry tear turns cool on the weeping wall,
My arising prodigal
Sun the father his quiver full of the infants of pure fire,
But blessed be hail and upheaval
That uncalm still it is sure alone to stand and sing
Alone in the husk of man's home
And the mother and toppling house of the holy spring,
If only for a last time.

"No" opens this stanza telling us that this is not a praise for spring. "Gabriel" is in "Luke" 1:26-38, the Annunciation, the angel telling the virgin Mary that she will conceive in her womb, which is a promise of creation and salvation. The "radiant shrubbery" refers to "Exodus" 3, in which God shows himself to Moses in the form of a burning bush with the promise of better, more prosperous times in the land of the Canaanites. This is not a celebration of "spring time" being "all" holy creation and promise.

The burning bush is juxtaposed with burning London, "the woebegone pyre" so that the fire in London becomes holy too. Even if "the morning grows joyful / Out of" the holy fires of London, and "the multitude's sultry tear turns cool on the weeping wall," referring to the Wailing Wall of Jerusalem, this is not a celebration of the sunrise on this spring morning after a night of air raids.

The "arising prodigal / Sun the father" carries a multitude of meanings. A spendthrift of its bounty, it is a returning wanderer that brings light, dawn, and spring to the otherwise dark world. As "sun the father," it is God, the Creator, or Nature as the fathering creator. As Son, it is Christ, the recreator, renewer. It is also a phallus, as the "arising" "sun the father," which is an image of the penis going erect. The allusions to the Trinity are plenty, especially because of the unity of father and son. In this way, it is also the poet himself rising from his "bed of love," as the creator of light.

"His quiver full of the infants pure of fire" refers to "Psalms" 127:4-5: "... so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them..." The "infants pure of fire" recall "Ceremony after a fire raid." The fire is the creative fire of the sun after a dark night of death. And yet, this is not really worth celebrating, either.

"But" starts the next line carrying a promise of disclosure; "but blessed be hail and upheaval," the dark dangers of the night that made the poet able "to stand and sing alone" - although "uncalm still" - his creative powers being regenerated, though "if only for a last time" for tomorrow he may have been killed in another nightly air raid. For now, however, "no praise to spring, but blessing to that which brought divine inspiration," the poet says.

In the first stanza, the poet's creative powers are hospitalized and are on their deathbed. They are miraculously cured by the nightly raid, "that one dark I owe my light." In stanza two, his "prodigal" creative powers are celebrated through holy metaphor.

Concluding remarks

Dylan was a religious poet, but he was not a Christian one despite his massive use of Christian metaphor. All being part of the same substance, nature, life, and above all poetry was holy for him. In order to celebrate these in his poetry, he needed holy metaphor which he found in the Bible.

Moreover, the biblical references help the interpretation of his works, as they helped him communicate his messages, rendering superfluous the private imagery otherwise so popular in his day.

VI. Conclusion

The almost complete lack of political, or at least politically conscious, works is striking considering the period in which Dylan wrote them. Of all his works, only one poem is political. This is "The hand that signed the paper." However, the poem is neither particularly left nor right wing in ideology, rather it puts itself in opposition to tyranny, from contemporary political dictatorship to that of God.

About Dylan's political conviction, Glyn Jones writes that

> when I [Glyn Jones] met him [Dylan] in London, he was wearing the reddest red tie I had ever seen and he explained it by saying he was about to join the Young Communists. I pointed out that he had already passed the upper age limit for membership of this organization. ... He did not appear unduly cast down at this information, perhaps even a little relieved, and I never heard that he pursued his intention to the extent of joining the adult section of the party.[137]

Unlike his contemporaries, Dylan, it would seem, did not have a stern political standpoint. This put together with the fact that he received no other formal education than what he got at the Swansea Grammar School unlike W. H. Auden, for instance, who took a degree in English at Oxford, resulted in a role as outsider. Dylan never joined the leftist, and so-called Modernist, Auden Gang, or Pylon school, of the 1930s that included writers such as Louis Macneice, C. Day-Lewis, Stephen Spender, and more loosely associated Christopher Isherwood. While the Pylon school massively used industrial imagery, Dylan primarily went to nature and the Bible for imagery.

[137] The Dragon Has Two Tongues, p. 189.

Neither concerned with political nor artistic fashion, Dylan never quite focussed on being an outsider as the writers of the New Apocalypse did. This movement, named after the title of their first published collection from 1940, mainly defined themselves negatively from the outset. They defined themselves as being against an otherwise general literal tendency, namely that of the Pylon school, they did not belong to this gang. "Freedom from matter," J. F. Hendry writes in the introduction, "is eternally impossible, and leads to the reaction of mechanistic-materialism,"[138] for which he sees the Pylon school as exponents. The "freedom from matter" is described for instance as Cesanne's attempt "to free himself from the object"[139] an attempt that resulted in his becoming a slave of it.

While Dylan may easily be associated with this opposition to Auden's "mechanistic-materialism," he does not fit into what Hendry proposes instead, though this is what so many critics have made him do.

Hendry's proposal opposing the "mechanistic-materialism" offers a return to the "organic" literature of William Wordsworth. "Apocalyptic writing," Hendry states, is ... concerned with the study of living, the collapse of social forms and the emergence of new and more organic ones."[140] Stressing organic, a term used multiple times in his introduction, this recalls Wordsworths "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads of 1800 calling for the "organic unit." Wordsworth's movement, Romanticism, may be seen as arising as an opposition against the Industrialisation of the 18th and early 19th centuries. Hendry states rather frankly that his movement opposes what may be termed the industrialisation of art; that is what the Pylon school stood for. Thus, this movement may be, and has been, called Neo-Romantic.

[138]Hendry: The New Apocalypse, p. 12.

[139]Ibid.

[140]Op.cit. p. 9.

Concerned with "the study of living," the subject of all artists on one level or other, as well as with

> seeking and finding the optimum living synthesis of man and exterior world; the fusion of man and object, ... the fusion of man and government through the collapse of totalitarianism ... fusion of man and art, by bringing art to actual life,[141]

Dylan carries this out in a manner different from this movement and with a different ideology as his basis as I demonstrated in both chapters II and III; although, admittedly, he did write a few poems in this Neo-romantic style too.

By the time of the publication of The White Horseman in 1941, this Neo-romantic movement has turned towards Surrealism in their attempt to differ from the still prevailing Pylon school, as G. S. Fraser writes is his introduction:

> The New Apocalypse, in a sense, derives from Surrealism, and one might even call it a dialectical development of it: the next stage forward. It embodies what is positive in Surrealism, 'the effort ... to realize some of the dimensions and characteristics of man's submerged being'.[142]

However, they are still against Auden and his gang and claiming to be Romantics:

[141]Op.cit. p. 15.

[142]In: Hendry: The White Horseman, p. 3.

> The Auden group were in what, in a rather special sense, one may call a classical tradition, and the Apocalyptics are what, again in a rather special sense, one may call romantics.[143]

Although some of Dylan's works appear in the publications of the Apocalyptic movement, he did not want to be associated with them, and there is no reason to do so other than a desperate desire to classify him at all. This may be the most obvious literary classification for him, although Dylan only fits poorly into this "box," being neither a pure Romantic, a pure Neo-romantic, nor a pure Surrealist, yet he was indeed inspired by both the Romantics and the Surrealists as well as by the 17th century Metaphysics, and pointing towards future currents as Postmodernism. As I have demonstrated in this paper, there are far too many works one needs to put aside and forget in order to restrict Dylan to one single literary or artistic current.

What can be said, however, is that Dylan had his own view upon life to which he remained loyal all through his career. The notion of the pool of life from and to which life emanates is at the heart of Dylan.

The pool of life is the force, if qualifying for that label at all, that reconciles the dichotomies. The reconciliation is done by pointing to the common origin and to the substance that is shared by all living things. Thus, man and nature are essentially the same, so are life and art, or man and art, black and white, etc. for they all emanate from the same source, the pool of life.

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[143]Op.cit. p. 25. The "Romantics" is the term that covers the writers of the litererary movement of particularly the 19th century termed Romanticism; representatives of this current are William Wordsworth, S. T. Coleridge, John Keats, etc.

Destruction, death, is the prerequisite for creation, conception and birth. Creation is dependent on material. Thus, since creation is an emanation from the pool of life, there must be substance present in the pool for creation to take place. This substance comes from the emanation back into the pool of life, which is destruction or death. This is the circle of life in Dylan's universe. Although the individual is mortal, life is immortal. In death, it returns to the pool from which it will emanate into life once more. This is resurrection to Dylan.

The time spent away from the pool of life plays an equally important role in Dylan's works. This time is most often spent pondering on the mortality of the individual, and the awareness of death that the individual gradually gains. The obtaining of this recognition of death, of death as part of life, and the temporariness of life, is often shown by Dylan as a fall from childish innocence into adult experience.

The New Apocalyptic writers thought they had to make a "fusion of man and art, by bringing art to actual life."[144] Dylan does not need to bring "art to actual life," for art is a part of life and takes part in the circle of life. So, too, is language - the material for Dylan's own art. Therefore, when Dylan writes about creation, the work very often turns out to be about the creation of a poem specifically. In this way, the rather large amount of metafiction among Dylan's works comes into being.

Dylan was in a way deeply religious, though certainly not a Christian. What, then, was sacramental to Dylan? The answer is life, life in all its aspects, stages in the circle, and forms. Thus, creation is holy, nature is holy, man is holy, language, the words are holy, and also poetry, and art in general, is holy. In dealing with holy subject matter, holy metaphor is needed. For this, Dylan turns to the Bible.

[144]Hendry: The New Apocalypse, p. 15.

References to biblical passages and usage of biblical metaphors suit the treatment of holy subject matter. However, this is not Dylan's only use of the Bible in his works. Above all, the biblical stories are used as a frame of reference that is common, in a conscious or unconscious way, to most Westeners, at least, Christian or not. The Bible is excellent for this use because of the heavy influence of Christianity on the Western world that has been building up during the last two millenia or so. A biblical reference is a reference to the, European, cultural history.

Though a declared non-believer, Dylan found use of the biblical stories for practical purposes, namely that of easing the explication of his "truth" being the pool of life, which replaced God as the centre. There is, of course, no centre in the circle of life, but the importance of the notion of the pool of life makes it the natural centre of attention. It is in this pool of life which is central to the circle of life, that the dichotomies of life are reconciled.

I have not found sufficient space for treating and analysing all of Dylan's work here. One of the works with which I have not dealt is the Spenserian sonnet sequence of "Altarwise by owl-light." Most critics seem to have an opinion about these ten sonnets, only too rarely does one agree completely with another. I do not think it necessary to explain and analyse the at times rather obscure content of the sequence in terms of the zodiac as Elder Olson does.

Instead, and without going into further detail, I believe that "Altarwise by owl-light" provides an intricate view into the cyclical world of Dylan. Its movement is from birth to death, and resurrection through the consequential return to the pool of life, over growth and the gaining of sexual awareness.

In my general introduction to this paper, I analysed "Author's prologue," or rather, I *began* an analysis of that poem. That task is now completed, as this paper may be read as one, single long in depth investigation and analysis of that one poem. As I stated then, it serves as prologue to Collected Poems, but, written as his last published poem, it serves as en epitaph too. As an epitaph it ought to include all the aspects of Dylan's work, which it does with very few exceptions. Even "The hand that signed the paper," Dylan's one political poem, fits into the theory of the circle of life with the central pool of life reconciling the dichotomies.

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