

DYLAN

You willed us words, some smoking with green fire,  
Your poems wrought of Welsh farm muck and sun;  
Some rolled like rivers off your tongue when read  
Aloud, some reveled in the windfall light.

But we crave more than fallen fruitshine grounded  
By predicted pull. Your hinted secrets  
Got us hoping gravity was conquered,  
At least outwitted in a poem's while.

Your sacred touches here and there deployed  
A guard our youth was not prepared to challenge.  
Now in later years a few of us  
Who love prosodic art have lost our awe.

By dint of driven light, its currents hot  
As working compost, plowing with your pen  
You sometimes dug up sprouting golden grain,  
But failed to prune Medusa tendrils, stop

Their coiling back upon the source. They flourished,  
Tightened on your pulse, shot through your head,  
Betrayed you and your readers with excess.  
Your words, your tools, became their own excuse.

An old professor said, "Clip random lines,  
Insert them here or there in other pages:  
Not missed from where they're taken, not suspect  
Where they're put. That's Dylan's damning shame."

It's not that readers have to understand  
Each passage cultivated in the mulch  
Of centuries. But final harvest should  
Produce a hearing of the heart, a bell.

You rang the chimes enough to make us want  
Them more, gave us the grassy boy beneath  
The apple boughs, advised the father, dying.  
But somewhere in between the whelping phrases,

The sung-to chains, the breath you made us hold,  
Your lines succumbed to convolution's call,  
A mantra flashing with those brilliant beams,  
But disembodied, pasted on, not of, the whole.

(cont.)