

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.)

Your cadence hurries blood and leads us on,
Your tongue attracts then strands your lovers, opens
Doors to weary puzzles hung in shadows.
Drunk on the taste, the sea-blown sound of words,

You laid aside your compass, let them lead.
Sometimes they beached you tenoring their lyrics,
Your drowning mind uncertain what to keep.
Beneath those waves, the two-legged bait was you.

And yet for all your flaws, you keep us coming
Back. You trip us with those hidden nooses,
Dare us troll again where we can't see--
To plunge with sharper hooks and deeper eyes.

Dear Dylan, from your weedy earthy banks,
Surrealistic colors mix with music
Despite the alien notes no scale contains.
Perhaps no one should ask for more than that.

--Glenna Holloway