



## IN THE WHITE GIANT'S THIGH

by DYLAN THOMAS

Through throats where many rivers meet, the curlews cry,  
Under the conceiving moon, on the high chalk hill,  
And there this night I walk in the white giant's thigh  
Where barren as boulders women lie longing still

To labor and love though they lay down long ago.

Through throats where many rivers meet, the women pray,  
Pleading in the waded bay for the seed to flow  
Though the names on their weed grown stones are rained away,

And alone in the night's eternal, curving act  
They yearn with tongues of curlews for the unconceived  
And immemorial sons of the cudgeling, hacked

Hill. Who once in gooseskin winter loved all ice leaved  
In the courtiers' lanes, or twined in the ox roasting sun  
In the wains tanned so high that the wisps of the hay  
Clung to the pitching clouds, or gay with anyone  
Young as they in the after milking moonlight lay

Under the lighted shapes of faith and their moonshade  
Petticoats galed high, or shy with the rough riding boys,

Now clasp me to their groins in the gigantic glade,

Who once, green countries since, were a hedgerow of joys.

Time by, their dust was flesh the swineherd rooted sly,  
Flared in the reek of the wiving sty with the rush  
Light of his thighs, spreadeagle to the dunghill sky,  
Or with their orchard man in the core of the sun's bush  
Rough as cows' tongues and thrashed with brambles their buttermilk  
Manes, under his quenchless summer barbed gold to the bone,

Or rippling soft in the spinney moon as the silk  
And ducked and draked white lake that harps to a hail stone.

Who once were a bloom of wayside brides in the hawed house  
And heard the lewd, wooed field flow to the coming frost,  
The scurrying, furred small friars squeal, in the dowse  
Of day, in the thistle aisles, till the white owl crossed

Their breast, the vaulting does roister, the horned bucks climb  
Quick in the wood at love, where a torch of foxes foams,  
All birds and beasts of the linked night uproar and chime

And the mole snout blunt under his pilgrimage of domes,

Or, butter fat goosegirls, bounced in a gambo bed,  
Their breasts full of honey, under their gander king  
Trounced by his wings in the hissing shippen, long dead  
And gone that barley dark where their clogs danced in the spring,  
And their firefly hairpins flew, and the ricks ran round —

(But nothing bore, no mouthing babe to the veined hives  
Hugged, and barren and bare on Mother Goose's ground  
They with the simple Jacks were a boulder of wives) —

Now curlew cry me down to kiss the mouths of their dust.

The dust of their kettles and clocks sings to and fro  
Where the hay rides now or the bracken kitchens rust  
As the arc of the billhooks that flashed the hedges low  
And cut the birds' boughs that the minstrel sap ran red.

They from houses where the harvest kneels, hold me hard,  
Who heard the tall bell sail down the Sundays of the dead  
And the rain wring out its tongues on the faded yard,  
Teach me the love that is evergreen after the fall leaved  
Grave, after Belovèd on the grass gulfed cross is scrubbed  
Off by the sun and Daughters no longer grieved  
Save by their long desirers in the fox cubbed  
Streets or hungering in the crumbled wood: to these

Hale dead and deathless do the women of the hill  
Love forever meridian through the courtiers' trees

And the daughters of darkness flame like Fawkes fires still.

NOTE. — The preceding lines compose the first part of a poem, "In the White Giant's Thigh," which is intended to be a part of a long poem, "In Country Heaven," which is in preparation. I mean, by "in preparation," that some of the long poem is written down on paper, some of it is a rough draft in the head, and the rest of it is radiantly unworded in ambitious conjecture.

The plan of this long poem-to-be is grand and simple, though the grandeur will seem, to many, to be grandiose, and the simplicity crude and sentimental.

The godhead, the author, the first cause, architect, lamp-lighter, the beginning word, the anthropomorphic bawler-out and blackballer, the quintessence, scapegoat, martyr, maker — He, on top of a hill in Heaven, weeps whenever, outside that state of being called His country, one of His worlds drops dead, vanishes screaming, shrivels, explodes, murders itself. And, when He weeps, Light and His tears glide down together, hand in hand. So, at the beginning of the poem-to-be, He weeps, and Country Heaven is suddenly dark. Bushes and owls blow out like candles. And the countrymen of Heaven crouch all together under the hedges, and, among themselves, in the tear-salt darkness, surmise which world, which star, which of their late, turning homes in the skies has gone forever. And

this time, spreads the heavenly hedgerow rumor, it is the Earth. The Earth has killed itself. It is black, petrified, wizened, poisoned, burst; insanity has blown it rotten; and no creatures at all, joyful, despairing, cruel, kind, dumb, afire, loving, dull, shortly and brutishly hunt their days down like enemies on that corrupted face. And, one by one, these heavenly hedgerow men who once were of the Earth, tell one another, through the long night, Light and His tears falling, what they remember, what they sense in the submerged wilderness and on the exposed hairbreadth of the mind, of that self-killed place. They remember places, fears, loves, exultation, misery, animal joy, ignorance and mysteries, all you and I know and do not know. The poem-to-be is made of these tellings.

And the poem becomes, at last, an affirmation of the beautiful and terrible worth of the Earth.

It grows into a praise of what is and what could be on this lump in the skies.

It is a poem about happiness.

I do not, of course, know how this first part of the poem called "In the White Giant's Thigh," will, eventually, take its place in that lofty, pretentious, down-to-earth-and-into-the-secrets, optimistic, ludicrous, moony scheme. I do not yet know myself its relevance to the whole, hypothetical structure. But I do know it belongs to it.

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