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The Force Is With You: Dylan Thomas's Force as it Exists in his Poetry and Drama

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of English
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in English

by
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August 2004

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Keywords: Dylan Thomas, *Under Milk Wood*, "The Force," "A Process," Llareggub

ABSTRACT

The Force Is With You: Dylan Thomas's Force as it Exists in his Poetry and Drama

by

Josh Archer

In Dylan Thomas's poetry, he refers to an inexorable, amoral force that exists within the universe. This force exists in all things, yet cannot be manipulated. His first collection, *18 Poems*, serves as the premier source for defining and understanding the existence of this force. Two poems in particular, "A Process in the Weather of the Heart" and "The Force that Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower," provide the most comprehensive examination of the force. However, his idea of the force is not confined to his poetry. During the last years of his life, he completed a play titled *Under Milk Wood*, which explores the treatment of the force. Within the play Thomas presents life as it exists in the small, seaside town of Llareggub. The town and its inhabitants are subject to the force, which results in the characters' unique eccentricities.

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my students, past and future

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Dylan Thomas, one of the most colorful poets in the English language, is known throughout the world for his literary achievements as well as his notorious behavior. Thomas not only wrote poetry but lived a poetic life. Although he was irresponsible and his behavior was flagrant, most people fell in love with Thomas. As William York Tindall explains, “he was our bourgeois idea of what a poet should be. Wallace Stevens looked and acted like an insurance man. Thomas looked and acted like a poet” (4). His words and explosive imagery intrigue his readers and challenge them to explore the depths of his poetry. Poetry is an exuberant expression of life and Dylan Thomas represents every aspect of it

Born on the 27th of October, 1914, in Swansea, Wales, Thomas was the only son and younger child of D. J. Thomas and his wife Florence Hannah. Both sides of the family were rural farmers, but the land they occupied was not in general a part of the rich farming country. Instead, it proved more suitable for grazing sheep and cattle, which was considerably less profitable (FitzGibbon 1). His rural background presented Thomas with close ties to the land and created a heightened awareness of an inexorable, amoral force driving the universe.

Thomas’s middle class childhood was filled with illnesses that ultimately rendered him unfit for National Service in 1939. As a result, he spent most of his time reading and writing. He began writing poems at the age of eight, and by the age of eleven he had contributed good verses to the Swansea Grammar School magazine. Thomas owed much of his education to his father who instilled in him the love of the English language. His father was, in fact, a lover of poetry who had made several failed attempts at establishing himself as a poet. His library was filled with rich collections of English poetry and the family participated in several readings of Shakespeare’s plays and the English poets. It was for this reason that by the age of fifteen Dylan Thomas had become a formidable literary critic (Ackerman 24-5).

An academic failure, Thomas left school at the age of seventeen to begin reporting for the *South Wales Evening Post*. However, he spent most of his time discussing art and politics with his friends at the town’s local pubs. There, he began to

drink, but at the same time he developed a keen sense of his surroundings. His increased awareness and sensitivity to his surroundings led him to observe people carefully noting their vivid and interesting characteristics (Ackerman 29-30). In the heart of Swansea Thomas began to take full advantage of his environment, which ultimately instilled in him an uncanny ability to portray rural life with accuracy. His fascination with pastoral life surfaced in his cast of uniquely eccentric, yet realistic characters in his play *Under Milk Wood*.

While working as a reporter, Thomas also worked as a writer on books, theatricals, and other cultural subjects for the weekly *Herald of Wales*. His continued involvement in literature fueled his desire to become a poet. During the period between 1930 and 1934, he began writing extensive drafts of poems in penny exercise notebooks, now commonly known as the *Buffalo Notebooks*. Within these notebooks Thomas exhibited his spiritual crisis, a search for identity, and perhaps most importantly, his ideas on mysticism (Korg 13-4).

Thomas's literary career began to take shape in 1934. Shortly after getting an early version of "And death shall have no dominion" published in a London periodical, he published his first short story, "After the Fair," in *New English Weekly* on March 15th (Korg 11). In December of 1934, when Thomas was only twenty, he compiled eighteen of his notebook poems and published his first collection, *18 Poems*. This collection became an almost instant success and immediately established Thomas on the literary scene. Although critics were slow to review *18 Poems*, an anonymous reviewer for the *Morning Post* critiqued the collection under the headline "A New Poet." The reviewer found fault in his monotony of rhythm and language but was impressed by "close, constricted, dark poems, individual but not private" (FitzGibbon 124-5). More reviews followed this inaugural critique and by February of 1935, a well-known critic, Desmond Hawkins, wrote enthusiastically in the weekly *Time and Tide* that Thomas's first collection "is not merely a book of unusual promise; it is more probably the sort of bomb that bursts not more than once in three years" (FitzGibbon 125). *Spectator*, *New Verse*, and *Times Literary Supplement* all published favorable reviews that launched Thomas's career as a poet (FitzGibbon 125). His success as a poet seemed inevitable.

The significance of his first collection of poetry is due not only to the fact that it was his premier collection but also to the poet's first comprehensive expression of his conception of the amoral power that drives the universe. He was aware at an early age of the existence of an inexorable, non-human force that controls the universe, yet he found difficulty understanding it. Therefore, he devoted the majority of his time to writing and understanding it. In an interview with *New Verse* Thomas explained that it was his "use of the medium of poetry to express the causes and forces which are the same in all men" that distinguishes him from ordinary men (FitzGibbon 143).

18 Poems provides a means to understanding Thomas and his obsession with this force. In fact, thirteen of the eighteen poems appearing in his first collection refer to the inexorable, amoral force that creates the cycle of life and death. The poems concerning the force include "I See the Boys of Summer," "When Once the Twilight Locks No Longer," "A Process in the Weather of the Heart," "Before I Knocked," "The Force that Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower," "Where Once the Waters of Your Face," "If I Were Tickled by the Rub of Love," "When, Like a Running Grave," "From Love's First Fever to Her Plague," "In the Beginning," "Light Breaks Where No Sun Shines," "I Dreamed My Genesis," and "My World Is Pyramid." Although the work as a whole concerns itself with this amoral force, two of the poems appearing in this collection devote themselves exclusively to its description. "A Process in the Weather of the Heart" describes the "process" that affects everything in the universe. This process is responsible for change and initiates the life and death cycle. In addition, "The Force that Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower" identifies the cause of this "process" by identifying the force. Thomas concludes that an inexorable, amoral force drives the universe.

In 1937 Thomas married Caitlin Macnamara in Penzance and the couple moved to Laugharne, Wales, a little fishing village that became their permanent home. The couple stayed here most of the time but frequently lived other places during World War II. In fact, Laugharne would become the fictional sea-side town that is the setting of *Under Milk Wood*. Thomas's poetry turned outward during this period, focusing on his marriage, the birth of his first child, and the people and places of the Welsh countryside. During the period between his marriage to Caitlin and 1941, he published *The Map of Love*, *The World I Breathe*, and *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* (Korg 19-21). In

Autumn of 1941, the Thomases moved to London where Dylan found work for the BBC as a script writer and reader. While staying in London, he began writing his own film scripts, which led him to consider other literary genres. Years would pass without Thomas composing a single poem. Nevertheless, he published *Deaths and Entrances* and *Selected Writings* in 1946 and received popular reviews. Although poetry was his passion, he began focusing his efforts towards writing scripts (Kershner 520).

During the last years of his life, Thomas moved the family to the Boat House in Laugharne, Wales. In 1949, Thomas began extensive work on a radio play entitled *Under Milk Wood*. Thomas toured America several times reading his poetry and promoting his nearly completed dramatic work. While on his last American tour in 1953, Thomas hurriedly completed *Under Milk Wood* and participated in its inaugural stage performance. However, his chronic illness accompanied by his excessive drinking created medical problems that required immediate rest. While still touring in America he fell into a coma and died four days later on 9 November 1953 at St. Vincent's Hospital in New York. Thomas's body was sent back to Laugharne and buried in St. Martin's Churchyard (Korg 21-25).

Of Dylan Thomas's publications, *Under Milk Wood* received the most critical attention in recent years. It acquired particular significance being his last completed work; however, its unique style of dramatic prose also secured interest. It challenged the conventional notions of theatre and is distinguished by the density, sonority, and expressiveness of its language (Magill 1923). Although Thomas is chiefly a poet, he surfaced as a successful playwright with only one completed play.

The text of *Under Milk Wood* was a bestseller, the British edition selling twenty-five thousand copies within six months after Thomas's death. A year later it was in its seventh British impression (Ferris 311). Aside from the extensive sales, *Under Milk Wood* received critical acclaim. David Daiches reviewed the play admiring Thomas's characterization:

[He put] into simple yet powerful and cunning words a day in the life of a Welsh village, with each character rendered in terms of some particular human weakness or folly. Unlike Eliot, Thomas accepted man as he was: he had a relish for humanity. By the end of his life he had learned to be

both poetically honest and poetically simple – a difficult combination, especially in our time ...” (469)

Yet another critic compared Thomas to an established literary giant and praised the individuality of his characters: “what we remember is not plot but portraiture, not the actions of people but the people who commit them ... they are not, like characters from Dickens, real figures too frequently flawed with a paste-board front or a card-board facet: one feels they are flesh and blood throughout” (Stanford 457). Another review in the *New Yorker* cited Thomas’s “brilliant images skimmed off the top of his unbelievably rich inspiration” (Balliett 132). Each of these reviews focused on the individuality of the characters, on his precise portrayal of humanity.

Under Milk Wood captures life in a small, seaside town. Its cast is full of characters that interact with each other throughout the length of one full day. Its subtitle, *A Play for Voices*, emphasizes the play’s central focus on each character’s voice coming together to represent all of humanity. As the play opens, two narrators take the reader through the town introducing each character through his or her dream. By the end of the day, each character is shown to the fullest degree revealing a common underlying human existence.

Since Thomas’s death in 1953, many critics have approached *Under Milk Wood* as an Arcadian pastoral play focusing on its abundance of consequence-free love. David Holbrook, a perceptive and widely read critic, has written the longest and most careful discussion on the play in his chapter entitled “A Place of Love” that appears in his book *Llareggub Revisited: Dylan Thomas and the State of Modern Poetry* (Lerner 276-7). Although critically in-depth, his approach is too quick to criticize Thomas’s characterization claiming that many of the characters’ eccentricities would never exist in the real world. In fact, Holbrook takes a comic approach to the characters’ eccentricities. He has most recently included a chapter entitled “Laughing Delightedly at Hate” in his book *Dylan Thomas: The Code of Night*. Laurence Lerner, another equally important critic, also focuses on the sexuality in the play. In his essay entitled “Sex in Arcadia: ‘Under Milk Wood,’” he compares *Under Milk Wood* to Tasso’s *Aminta*, the most celebrated pastoral drama, and Guarini’s *Pastor Fido*. In his essay Lerner believes that *Llareggub* is the modern-day Arcadia. Still, other critics, most notably Frank Magill, see

a connection of *Under Milk Wood* with Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*. Most essays that compare Thomas's play with Wilder's center on their limitation to life in a small town. *Under Milk Wood* transpires during the length of one full day, which critics have compared with James Joyce's *Ulysses*. However, *Under Milk Wood* does not focus on one central hero but rather centers on the town as a whole.

Although many critics have written about *Under Milk Wood*, the idea that the town is subject to the powerful flow of energy coursing through the universe has largely been unexplored. The individuals in the town are controlled by an overriding impulse that is a result of the force that Thomas describes in his poetry. Most of Thomas's early poems focus on the process affecting the universe. Through an intense quest for identity, Thomas concludes that the relentless, amoral force drives this process. Because Thomas's early poems are existential, the force and his search for individuality are the major concerns in his early poetry. In his later poems, Thomas turns away from an obsession with the force and begins to address universal experiences of life. Some of the subjects in his later poems include his marriage to Caitlin, their wedding anniversaries, the birth of their first child, the death of his father, and the aftereffects of war. Although Thomas never completely abandons his idea of the force and existence in general, his early poems are the vehicles by which the reader is introduced to this inexorable, amoral force that controls the universe. As William Arrowsmith observes, the typical problem described in the poems of his first collection is the reconciliation of the individual with the force: how can a man or woman have a history or destiny apart from the force?" (469). Therefore, the characters in the play are, in a sense, flowers driven through their own green fuses over which they have no control. They experience the same problem of reconciliation with the force. By examining the two most comprehensive poems in Thomas's first collection, *18 Poems*, we can establish his near-obsession with the force and then show its existence within the text of *Under Milk Wood*.

CHAPTER 2

THE FORCE THAT DRIVES THE POEMS

Throughout many of Dylan Thomas's poems, the idea that an amoral, uncontrollable force controls the universe emerges. This force results in a process that creates changes within the individual and the outer world of nature. The existence of the process proves the force's presence. Thomas describes this process in many of his poems. In fact, William York Tindall refers to many of his poems as "process poems" (34). In *18 Poems* Thomas seeks to describe the existence of a process of change, then moves to define the underlying cause of this process. Therefore, it is important first to examine his idea of process to reveal the existence of the force. By understanding the process we can begin to illustrate the force. One of these "process poems" that devotes itself entirely to the process is "A Process in the Weather of the Heart." Like many of Thomas's poems, it follows a strict pattern, in this case, alternating stanzas of six and three lines respectively. In "A Process" Thomas describes the duality of the force by coupling opposites. The poem recognizes that life and death are integral parts of the process that create a cycle. In "A Process in the Weather of the Heart," Thomas illustrates the force as it affects the speaker and his surroundings.

Thomas recognizes that the process causes change. Although the force is intangible, Thomas is aware of its existence through these changes. Stanza one describes the duality as it exists internally:

A process in the weather of the heart
Turns damp to dry; the golden shot
Storms in the freezing tomb.
A weather in the quarter of the veins
Turns night to day; blood in their suns
Lights up the living worm. (1-6)

The opening line-and-a-half restates the title and reveals that the process exists "in the weather of the heart" and "turns damp to dry." The weather indicates the state or current condition of the heart. Ralph Maud notes that "weather" is an effective "process" word claiming that if the inner processes of life and death are contained in the words "damp" and "dry," then the state of the processes at any time will be "the weather" (59). Thus, the

heart dries out and loses its vitality. As a result the body cannot sustain life. The similarity of “dries” to “dies” reinforces the relationship between life, death, damp, and dry. This juxtaposition of opposites formulates the dominant idea that death and life are a result of the same process.

The next line-and-a-half continues to describe the duality through sex. The “golden shot” refers to the sperm as it “storms in the freezing tomb.” Tindall claims that “every tomb in Thomas is also womb,” so that this creates an image of procreation (41). Opposites are paralleled as the “golden” sperm violently rushes into the “freezing” womb to fertilize the egg. The pairing of “golden” and “freezing” further illustrates the duality of the process. On one hand it is “golden” while on the other it is “freezing.” “Storms” sustains the stanza’s dominant theme of weather and “tomb” reminds the reader that life and death are integral parts of the process. Because sex is a process of creating, for Thomas it also becomes a process of destroying. “The life-creating of the sex act symbolizes the beginning of another process of death” (Neuville 18). The child who is created through procreation is also subjected to this process and will die as a result. Although the reader is reminded that death results from life, the dominant image in this line-and-a-half is life.

The next line-and-a-half illustrates the process through changes. The force is personified as “weather” keeping with the stanza’s dominant imagery. This “weather” changes “night to day.” This could mean a dawning of enlightenment as well as the dawning of a new day, but it definitely echoes the first creation of light from darkness. Therefore, the image here is again life. It is also important to note that this idea of process occurs in “the quarter of the veins.” “Quarter” here means residence indicating that the process occurs within the body. This tendency to see the process internally reinforces the idea that the speaker is continually subjected to the force.

The last line-and-a-half of the first stanza is a bit obscure. Because Thomas illustrates the duality of the force through a pattern of alternating images of life and death, the image here must be of death. The image of “blood in their suns” suggests that the process turns the sun into blood. This recalls the apocalyptic chapters of the Bible and suggests death. However, this image must be coupled with the remainder of the phrase. It is this blood that “lights up the living worm.” “Light,” here used as a verb, means burn;

therefore, the image is complete. The blood, which is the vital source of life, burns in the living worm. Considering the stanza's sexuality, the image of the "living worm" is phallic. Thus, the same penis that produces the life-giving sperm also burns the blood that fuels the erection and, therefore, dies. With a concluding image of death, the alternating pattern is set for the rest of the poem. By establishing that the process incorporates both life and death, Thomas illustrates the amoral nature of the force: it fuels life as well as death.

Thomas continues with this idea in the next stanza. Although half as long, the stanza delivers both aspects of the process: "A process in the eye forwarns / The bones of blindness; and the womb / Drives in a death as life leaks out" (7-9). Again, it is important to notice that this process occurs within the body. In the first line-and-a-half, the speaker realizes that the mere presence of the force predicts changes. Through the process of change, the eyes will lose their sight and the individual will become blind.

Again, opposites are paired in the stanza to illustrate the duality of the force. The speaker knows that blindness and death are inevitable changes. The next line-and-a-half restates the ongoing theme that enforces the subject: life and death as integral parts of the process. It is the process in the womb that "drives in a death." "Drives" here indicates bringing to a specific condition; therefore, the womb brings about death by bringing about life. This phrase simply means that with birth comes death. As the "life leaks out" of the penis, it fertilizes the egg and creates a new cycle of life and death. Again, sight and blindness correspond with life and death in the previous stanza to illustrate the duality of the force.

In the third stanza, Thomas begins to parallel the workings of the force as it occurs within the human body with the outside world at large. In the comparison between the inner world of the body and the external world of nature, Thomas best illustrates the duality within the process:

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 half drops down,

Slow in a sleeping wind. (10-15)

The opening juxtaposition of dark and light seems absurd, but this is a result of the process. Again, the force is personified within the poem as “weather.” “Light” here should be interpreted as that which makes sight possible. Simply put, half of the eye’s light is darkness. “Darkness” does not have to suggest the absence of light. It may as well refer to the absence of color. Therefore, this line-and-a-half suggests that the absence of color composes half of sight. By deduction, this also means that color composes the opposite half.

The next line-and-a-half reveals a similar situation: “the fathomed sea / Breaks on unangled land.” Although “fathom” refers to a short measurement, here it takes on its Old English meaning of outstretched arms (*Merriam-Webster*). Therefore, the sea that reaches out to the land and to the fisherman as well is met by an “unangled” vacant land. Although it appears to be ironic, the paring of opposites is another result of the process that demonstrates its amorality.

The next line-and-a-half continues to illustrate the duality inherent in the process. “The seed” refers to the egg as well as the sperm cell, each with the potential to create life. Although seed here refers to the egg and sperm, the metaphor connects the internal world of the body with the external world of nature. However, since the creation is subject to the process, it “forks half its fruit.” While “forks” is a positive, vigorous action, it only delivers half of its product (Maud 58). The metaphor of the tree describes the seed’s potential to produce a “forest,” albeit a pubic forest, but as a result of the duality of the process, “half drops down / Slow in a sleeping wind.” This realization reinforces the idea that death and life are integral parts of this process. As the sperm and egg unite to create life, they also create death.

Stanza four continues to describe the process as it exists within the internal and external worlds. It is a continuation of the idea expressed within stanzas one through three. In the first line-and-a-half, we see previous images resurfacing to describe the process: “A weather in the flesh and bone / Is damp and dry” (16-17). Again, the combination of “damp” and “dry” illustrates the duality of the force. This line-and-a-half echoes almost exactly the first line of the poem. Earlier it is the process in the heart that turns damp to dry; however, now we see that the process in the flesh and bone is both

damp and dry. Here, we are moving towards an inability to distinguish between the two states. Take, for instance, the next line-and-a-half: “the quick and dead / Move like two ghosts before the eye” (17-18). Again, the eye cannot distinguish between the two different states of being. “There is no difference between the living and the dead, both are ghosts” (Neuville 18). Everything is subjected to this process so that it becomes almost impossible to recognize the distinction. The “quick” refers to the living, while the “dead” obviously refers to the dead. As noted before, living and dying are dual aspects of the process. However, because both are equally subject to the force and are temporarily forms of constantly changing matter, they “move like two ghosts before the eye” (Korg 57). The observation that life and death are subject to the force emphasizes the idea that the force is an inexorable, universal force that controls everything.

The final stanza of the poem turns toward the process as it exists on a larger scale. The previous four stanzas illustrate how the process exists within the internal world of the body and the external world of nature. As Korg states, “The first four stanzas illustrate the tendency of Thomas’ poems to imitate the timelessness by circling repetitively about their centers, but the final stanza moves on to an expansion of meaning” (57). Thus, we see the process occurring outside of the body:

A process in the weather of the world
Turns ghost to ghost; each mothered child
Sits in their double shade.
A process blows the moon into the sun,
Pulls down the shabby curtains of the skin;
And the heart gives up its dead. (19-24)

The first four stanzas illustrate the effect of the force on a microcosmic scale: the body. However, the last stanza turns toward the existence of the process on a macrocosmic scale: the world. The use of the same imagery illustrates the effect of the process: “A process in the weather of the world / Turns ghost to ghost.” Again, “weather” refers to the condition, in this case, of the world. This turning of ghost to ghost is the alternation of spirit and matter (Korg 57). As in the earlier stanza, the living and the dead are equally subjected to the force and become integral parts of this cyclic process, which is reinforced in the next line-and-a-half. Every child or person who is living is also dying as

a result of the process. This belief echoes the line “Time held me green and dying” that appears at the end of one of Thomas’s most beloved poems “Fern Hill.” In this case the force is personified by Time. Although the poet (and each mothered child) is young and alive, each moment that passes brings him closer to his death, even during the carefree years of adolescence. As we shall see, Thomas continues to personify the force as Time, which is indicative of its independence.

The last three images of “A Process” describe the end of the process through death on a macrocosmic scale. The moon being blown into the sun derives from the apocalyptic chapters of the Bible ultimately referring to death. In the next image, the process causes the pulling down of the shabby curtains of the skin. This image echoes Wilfred Owen’s “drawing-down of blinds” and Emily Dickinson’s “And then the windows failed – and then / I could not see to see.” Each metaphor refers to death through the final closing of the body’s eyes. The last image closes out the poem as the “heart gives up its dead.” Although the last stanza includes mostly pessimistic images of death, the cyclic nature of the process promises renewal and life maintaining the balance of the force (Korg 57).

The poem as a whole describes the existence of a process that exists in the internal world of the human body as well as in the external world of nature. It is universal, affecting all matter whether living or dead. Life and death are integral parts behaving in a cyclic manner. With life comes death and vice versa. Although this process exists independently of man and nature, it proves the existence of an amoral force: “The reiterative structure of ‘A Process in the Weather of the Heart’ presents existence in the form of a single ambivalent entity, as it appears to the mystic” (Korg 57). This “single ambivalent entity” that Korg refers to is the force. Because the force controls everything, it is responsible for the existence of the process.

With the “process” illustrating the existence the force, we can now turn to Thomas’s description of the force itself. Of the poems appearing in Dylan Thomas’s first collection, “The Force that Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower” provides the most comprehensive description of the force that is inherent in all things. The structure of the poem is similar to “A Process” in that it adheres to a strict formal pattern, five-line stanzas with a concluding couplet at the end of the last stanza. Sprung rhythm gives the

poem an overall impression of a rising and falling movement, which is consistent with the imagery presented in each stanza (Neuville 20). Through “A Process” Thomas determines that the force exists in both the natural world and the internal world of the body, but it fails to discriminate. It is not something that can be called upon, yet it is what drives the universe. The point that the force controls everything is made in each stanza with the first stanza referring to flowers and trees, the second to mountains and rivers, the third to water, wind, and sand, and the fourth to the stars, so that the poem as a whole encompasses the entire universe (Davies 29).

As in “A Process,” Thomas sees life and death as integral parts of this force. Thomas illustrates this connection in the first stanza of the poem:

The force that through the green fuse drives the flower
Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees
Is my destroyer.
And I am dumb to tell the crooked rose
My youth is bent by the same wintry fever. (1-5)

Thomas restates the title as the first line of the poem to stress the idea that the force itself is explosive, driving the flower through the “green fuse.” G. Giovanni interprets the “fuse” as a metaphor referring to the flower’s stem (59). Although this is plausible, Thomas is focusing on the explosive power of the force. Therefore, his use of “fuse” should be interpreted as the fuse used in igniting an explosion, such as with dynamite. Perhaps Giovanni recognizes the similar structure of the stem and the fuse, but his metaphor limits the image to the visual. Thomas uses “green” to illustrate the fuse’s vitality, which stresses the idea that the power of the force is explosive. It is through the “green fuse” that this force ignites and explodes driving the flower to exist.

In the second line of the poem, the speaker connects himself to the natural world. He is aware that the same force that drives the flower “drives [his] green age.” Again, “green” suggests vitality and, in this case, youth. Therefore, the force infuses the speaker with the vitality of youth, and, in a sense, he or she becomes a flower through which the force exhibits control. As William York Tindall notes, “‘green age’ (youth) wears the [same] green-ness of the fuse” (40). The same explosive force exists in the speaker as it does in the flower. Thomas sustains the explosive dynamic imagery by concluding that

the force “blasts the roots of trees.” It is this same explosive force that destroys the tree at its most vital part. The speaker is aware that this destructive force is also “[his] destroyer.” The sudden change in the length of the line emphasizes the power of the force (Napierkowski 101). Again, the speaker recognizes that the force fails to discriminate between the natural world and himself, and in doing so reveals the dual nature of the force. By giving and taking life, the force is indifferent; it exists in everything, yet is amoral. As Giovanni notes, the theme consists of the notion that life and death are a result of the same cause – “The force,” which he feels is obscurely associated with God (59). Although the possibility exists, Thomas does not mention God in the poem. Instead, Thomas’s description of the force is similar to Shelley’s description in “Mont Blanc.” Within the first stanza, Shelley suggests that this powerful force is amoral:

The everlasting universe of things
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,
Now dark – now glittering – now reflecting gloom –
Now lending splendour, where from secret springs
The source of human thought its tribute brings
Of, waters, - with a sound but half its own. (1-6)

Along with Thomas, Shelley sees the duality of the force. It can be dark and gloomy or glittering and resplendent at any given moment. Shelley’s light and dark correspond with Thomas’s life and death. This correspondence suggests that the force is nondiscriminatory and, therefore, is not associated with the orthodox Christian idea of God. Most religions, including Christianity, view God as virtuous and moral. Because this force inherent in all things is amoral and indifferent, it cannot be associated with the traditional idea of a Christian God. This force, which Shelley describes as power, is “the still and solemn power of many sights, / And many sounds, and much of life and death” (128-9).

In stanza four of “Mont Blanc,” Shelley illustrates the amorality of the force:

Power dwells apart in its tranquility
Remote, serene, and inaccessible:
And *this*, the naked countenance of earth,
On which I gaze, even these primeval mountains

Teach the adverting mind. The glaciers creep
Like snakes that watch their prey, from their far fountains,
Slow rolling on; there, many a precipice,
Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power
Have piled: dome, pyramid, and pinnacle,
A city of death, distinct with many a tower
And wall impregnable of beaming ice.
Yet not a city, but a flood of ruin
Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky
Rolls its perpetual stream. (96-109)

Shelley uses the glacier, a symbol for the power, to symbolize the amoral nature of the force. Like the glacier, the force has the ability to fertilize the valleys or destroy them with floods. Here, as with Thomas, the pairing of opposites illustrates the duality of the force.

The refrain in “The Force” explores the inability to explain this mysterious force. The speaker exclaims, “And I am dumb to tell the crooked rose / My youth is bent by that same wintry fever.” Notice that the speaker is “dumb.” Thomas uses “dumb” in its literal sense: an inability to speak. Tindall explores this refrain more precisely. He suggests that Thomas uses “dumb” to mean “silent, inarticulate, incapable of telling or else, according to the American slang that Thomas loved, foolish: I should be foolish to try to tell or I should be inarticulate if I tried” (40). S. F. Johnson views the speaker’s inability to explain this phenomenon as a communication barrier between himself and the natural world. Johnson believes that the refrain emphasizes the speaker’s humanity, his ability to communicate complex meanings only to other humans (60). Although this interpretation is relevant, the refrain also expresses the speaker’s inability to detach himself from the force and describe it objectively. In “Mont Blanc” Shelley suggests that “All things that move and breathe with toil and sound / Are born and die; resolve, subside, and swell. / Power dwells apart in its tranquility / Remote, serene, and inaccessible” (94-7). Like Thomas, Shelley recognizes that with birth comes death, and although this force exists in all things, it remains unapproachable. The speaker in “The Force” along with the “crooked rose” is constantly subject to the process. Thomas is aware of its existence, yet

he becomes inarticulate when trying to explain it. As Shelley characterizes it, the force derives from the “secret strength of things” (139).

Even though the speaker cannot communicate with the rose, the force is present and is the cause of their similar fate: “[his] youth is bent by the same wintry fever.” The speaker characterizes the rose as “crooked,” which has a negative connotation. The rose is a common symbol for beauty, so when it is described as “crooked,” it leaves the reader with a negative feeling (Napierkowski 102). Looking at the poem in progress sheds some light on this matter. According to the August 1933 *Buffalo Notebook*, Thomas originally used the adjective “eaten” to describe the state of the rose: “And I am dumb to tell the eaten rose / How at my sheet goes the same crooked worm” (Maud 67). In this case “eaten” definitely illustrates death and decay. However, it seems possible that the speaker may be describing it as naturally branched. If so, then “bent” simply refers to its being subjected to the force. However, it seems unlikely that Thomas did not intend the negative connotation to suggest that the rose is diseased or dying. Then, the “crooked rose” appears to be an allusion to William Blake’s “The Sick Rose.” Blake realizes that this force is responsible for the rose’s sickness; however, the force is personified as “the invisible worm / That flies in the night / In the howling storm” (2-4). The same force that is responsible for wilting the rose is “bending” the speaker’s “green youth.” Thomas’s choice of “wintry fever” translates this explosive force into human terms: a fever. Johnson clears this apparent contradiction by noting that a fever can be wintry since it hastens aging and death just as frost hastens vegetative age and death (60). Thus, both lines of the refrain suggest death.

In the next stanza, Thomas duplicates the pattern set forth in the previous stanza. Although the stanza is similar syntactically and in its organization, the focus shifts from a comparison of the human body and the biological world to the comparison of the human body and the geological world (Napierkowski 102). Again, the poet makes connections between the human world and the natural world through this explosive force:

The force that drives the water through the rocks
Drives my red blood; that dries the mouthing streams
Turns mine to wax.
And I am dumb to mouth unto my veins

How at the mountain spring, the same mouth sucks. (6-10)

Notice that Thomas presents the natural world first. It is this force that causes the streams as well as the speaker's blood to flow. The blood is red, symbolizing its vitality. It is the force that drives life onward "through the rocks" and through the speaker's arteries and veins. Water and blood are similar in character, which makes this analogy simple and effective. As Giovanni points out, water is a traditional symbol of life (59). Blood is the source of human life, whereas water is the source of natural life. Therefore, the force gives life by driving the water and the blood.

As in the earlier stanza, the dual nature of the force is presented in the next line-and-a-half. After describing how the explosive force drives life, the speaker recalls how it can also eradicate life. The same force "dries the mouthing streams" and turns the speaker's blood to wax. Again, as in "A Process" the similarity of "dries" to "dies" reinforces their connection to each other. The "mouthing streams" refers to the stream's mouth where it flows into another body of water; therefore, rather than being destroyed at the source as with the trees in the earlier stanza, it dries before it reaches its destination (Napierkowski 102). The stream cannot sustain life without flowing water just like the human body cannot survive without blood circulation. Johnson explains that the metaphor of turning blood to wax refers to the coagulation of the blood after death (60). Therefore, the hardening of the blood is like the drying of the stream. Each results in death and decay.

The refrain echoes that of the previous stanza. Again, Thomas uses "dumb," but in connection with the infinitive "to mouth" describing the speaker's inability to explain this explosive phenomenon. In this case, however, it is a part of himself, his veins, that he is unable to inform. The veins are the parts of the body that return the deoxygenated blood to the source. Again, the refrain illustrates his inability to explain the phenomenon of the force rather than an inability to communicate. The speaker realizes that "at the mountain spring the same mouth sucks." By using the phrase "mountain spring," the speaker reinforces the idea of a source of pure water. Because the water here is pure, it is also extremely vital, as in the speaker's green age and red blood. The water in the streams runs down from the mountain making it the primary source of life. However, this mouth which spews forth the vital water also "sucks" the water back into its mouth. Therefore,

this “mouth” works against gravity and proves its independence by reversing the flow of the stream. Because the force controls all things, it is not subject to the laws of physics. “Mouthing” may simply mean that the stream sucks the water from the spring and into its flow. Although this seems plausible, it must be examined using the analogy, which is with the heart. The heart is like the mountain spring in that it purifies. Because the speaker cannot “mouth unto [his] veins,” the streams are like veins returning deoxygenated water to the source so that it can be purified. The spring that normally circulates the vital water can also absorb it. In this interpretation, the mouth that sucks withholds life taking on a vampirish quality (Napierkowski 102). The force’s dual nature is again revealed and remains indifferent.

The third stanza continues to describe the juxtaposition of life and death:

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. (11-15)

In this stanza, Thomas gives a human shape to the universal force by personifying it as the hand (Haberer 257-8). The first line of the stanza is a biblical allusion to the pool at Bethesda. In John chapter 5, an angel of God comes down at certain times and troubles the water in the pool. Once the angel “whirls” the water, it becomes holy and has the power to heal sickness and disease. This metaphor describes the healing aspect of the force. Yet, as in the other stanzas, this life-giving characteristic of the force is paralleled with its destructibility. The same force, personified by the hand, also “stirs the quicksand.” Quicksand, being damp, may appear similar to quick sand draining in an hourglass, but its effect is much different. The pool has the potential to give life whereas quicksand has the potential to drown life. Therefore, the force has the capability to “whirl” the pool and give life or “stir” the quicksand and remove life.

In the next line-and-a-half, the speaker describes how this same force that “ropes the blowing wind / Hauls my shroud sail.” Although the idea of blowing wind may have negative connotations, the image of sailing suggests that this force harnesses the potential energy by “roping” it with sails. As in sailing, “roping” the wind changes the wind’s

potential energy into physical, useful energy. This metaphor describes a productive, positive aspect of the force. Nevertheless, the dichotomy of the force is revealed in the next line. The sailing imagery is reinforced by the idea that the speaker becomes a ship when the force pulls his “shroud sail.” Holbrook explains that “the sail is meant to become a shroud, identified with the sail ‘hailed’ by the ‘hand’” (*Llareggub_64*). Thomas uses “shroud” in several ways. “Shroud” could refer to any of the ropes leading from the masthead of a ship to the side used to support the mast or it could refer to the cloth placed over a dead body. In keeping with the parallels, Thomas uses the word to evoke the image of death.

The stanza’s two-line refrain echoes the earlier refrains. In this case the speaker is “dumb to tell the hanging man / How of my clay is made the hangman’s lime.” The refrain is connected with the stanza by its rope imagery. The hanging man literally refers to a person hung at the gallows and, more importantly, evokes an image of death. The speaker and the hanging man are still subject to the force even though the speaker is alive and the hanging man is dead. The force exists in the “hanging man” as well as the speaker, yet the speaker is unable to divorce himself and explain the force. “This line looks back from a future when the speaker will be clay, part of the lime-filled pit where the hangman disposes of his victims” (Napierkowski 103). Living is again connected with death in that the lime that is used to accelerate decomposition has components of life.

The fourth stanza of the poem is the most difficult to interpret, perhaps because it is the most obscure. Again, it describes the duality of the force, but it presents the images in an unfamiliar manner. It does not use the syntactic formula of the previous stanzas whereby the force that does A also does B (Davies 29). However, because the overall structure of the poem has been set, the poem must follow some sort of pattern set in the previous stanzas:

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. (16-20)

The punctuation in the first line differs from the previous stanzas in that a semicolon isolates this line so that the first four syllables of the second line are no longer connected to it (Napierkowski 103). Therefore, the first line must be read as a whole. In this line the force is personified by “the lips of time.” Again, we see Thomas using Time to represent the force. “Lips” here refers back to “mouth” in the previous stanzas and accompanied by “leech” takes on the its earlier vampirish quality. Therefore, the force sucks at the fountain head removing the source of life. As many critics have noted, this line also has definite sexual connotations. M. L. Rosenthal sees this as a sexual analogy working towards a cosmic scale (209). Alice Van Wart echoes Rosenthal’s claim stating that the images within this last stanza are purely sexual (Napierkowski 114). Therefore, the lips become the outer region of the vagina and the fountain head with its phallic connotation becomes the penis. However, the proposition forwarded by this image symbolizes the powerful yearning of all mortality to clasp and become impregnated by the life force, and as the poem reveals, this results in humanity’s willingness to create a timeless paradise beyond death as a consolation for its mortality (Rosenthal 210).

Although the previous stanzas begin with a positive image of life, this stanza opens with a negative image of death and decay. Because the pattern of alternating counter-statements has been set, the next image must be a positive image of life. Therefore, the next two lines refer to a life-giving image. However, the opening images of love dripping and gathering contradicts the somber images of death thus far accumulated as it initiates a movement of recovery (Haberer 258). Because the sexual imagery has been determined, the love that drips and gathers refers to the spilling of semen and the actual act of sex. The semen drips out of the penis and gathers inside the vagina combining with the egg to create a living being. Since semen ejaculated during sex combines with the egg to produce a living being, this reading is consistent with the pattern set in the previous stanzas. Thus, if the dominant imagery of this stanza is sexual, then the “fallen blood” must also have sexual connotations. Van Wart reads the “fallen blood” as suggesting both the hymen breaking and the menstrual cycle (Napierkowski 114). However, it also seems possible that this may refer to Christ’s blood fallen on the cross. Nevertheless, there is a possessive reference to the body of some obscure woman – at once the mother’s body and the Other Sex – whose identity cannot be determined even

if the poem is placed in the intertextual sequence of Thomas's early poems (Haberer 258). Therefore, the "fallen blood" must refer to the act of giving birth. Although the "fallen blood" has negative connotations, it implies a positive act of giving life through the losing of the body's vital blood. Although the female in question loses some of her vital blood, the resulting birth "shall calm her sores."

As with the earlier stanzas, the refrain deals with the speaker's inability to explain this phenomenon. In the previous stanzas, the speaker is unable to tell the crooked rose, his or her own veins, and lastly the hanging man. There seems to be some sort of pattern developing where the refrains balance each other. At first, the speaker cannot communicate to the external world the workings of this force. Then, the refrain shifts to the internal world in the second and third stanzas. Therefore, adhering to the pattern of balance, the speaker turns back to the external world, the weather's wind. With the reversal of pattern in the opening part of the fourth stanza, we expect a reversal in the refrain. "The earlier refrains show something that is created ('rose,' 'veins,' 'man') succumbing to a destructive force ('wintry fever,' the sucking mouth, 'hangman's lime')" (Parshall 65). Because these earlier refrains deal with the negative, destructive aspect of the force, we expect this refrain to focus on the positive, creative aspect. According to Davies, "it is time, and the pressure of time . . . that has caused man fancifully to invent the concept of 'heaven or eternity'" (29-31). Therefore, what Thomas seems to be saying is that through time humans have created this idea of "a heaven" where pain, decay, and death do not exist. Thus, the negative, destructive power if the force succumbs to the positive, creative aspect of "a heaven." Korg points out that it is "a heaven" rather than just heaven that time ticks around the stars. This suggests that within a limited concept of death, there is a limited concept of immortality that escapes this notion of death (Korg 67).

Within this last stanza, we see a coming together of the idea expressed in the earlier stanzas. This stanza, however, sets itself apart in the syntax and movement. None of the violent images in the previous stanzas appear in this last stanza and the tempo is considerably slower, owing to the break occurring after the opening line (Parshall 65). The break sets the reader up for the final refrain that closes out the poem: "And I am dumb to tell the lover's tomb / How at my sheet goes the same crooked worm" (21-2). As

with the earlier refrains, the speaker is again unable to articulate an understanding of the force. This refrain differs in that it does not immediately follow a stanza of paralleled aspects of the force. Instead, it follows the refrain of the previous stanza and serves to illustrate the cyclical nature of the force. The “lover’s tomb” becomes the perfect symbol for the combination of the aspects of the force by combining the lover (life) with the tomb (death). However, “lover’s” is the adjective describing the tomb so that this image is one of destruction and death. As Tindall has already noted, every womb is tomb, so therefore, we can conclude that every tomb must also be a womb. Then, we can read this image as sexual, referring to the mother’s womb. Then, the “sheet” becomes the bed sheet and the “crooked worm” becomes the phallic symbol for the penis. However, read literally, the “lover’s tomb” is the grave, the “sheet” is the shroud, and the “crooked worm” is the coffin-worm. The “crooked worm” also reverts back to the worm of Blake’s poem, the cause of the rose’s sickness. This reading leaves us with a final image of death, consistent with the ending in “A Process.” Still, there is another possibility in this last refrain. The “crooked worm” may refer to the poet’s hand. Then, the “sheet” becomes the ordinary sheet of paper on which the poem is composed (Tindall 41). The act of writing used as an example of creation should not come to the reader as a surprise. Throughout many of Thomas’s poems, we see the poet as creator becoming the central subject of the poem. According to Davies,

The same self-consciousness occurs in an early short story, “The Orchards:” “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 thumbnail rising and setting behind the leaden spire. The tower fell, down fell the city of words, the walls of a poem, the symmetrical letters.
(31)

Therefore, all three meanings seem plausible and adhere to the balance of creation/destruction. “The final refrain marks an abrupt return to a ghastly evocation of the process of death and decay similarly at work in all bodies – whether already dead or still alive” (Harberer 258). Nevertheless, the point that the speaker is stressing is that life and death are integral parts of the force and, at the same time, are subject to it. Both are equally active and revolve around one another in this cyclical notion of balance.

Although the speaker is aware of its existence through changes that are occurring, he or she is still unable to explain to the interior and exterior world the workings of the force.

At the conclusion of “The Force,” Thomas presents the reader with his idea of the force. This force is the creative and destructive power behind the process and controls everything. The poem begins with an image of life and ends with an image of death keeping with the cyclical pattern of balance. Although the poem ends on a somber note, it is a reminder that even death will not bring an escape from the force (Parshall 65). However, as in Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*, hope is not lost in that through death comes life and the cycle continues throughout eternity.

Thomas’s poetry serves as an entrance to understanding his dramatic prose. By illustrating his obsession with the force in his poetry, we can deduce that this obsession carries over into his dramatic prose. The majority of his early poetry seeks to define and determine the existence of the force as it exists in the universe. In “A Process” Thomas realizes that the process affecting everything in the universe proves the existence of the force. Once the force’s existence has been proven, Thomas devotes his energy to describing it. Concluding that the force exists and is the driving force behind the “process,” Thomas asserts that this flow of energy has a universal control over all things. Not only does Thomas determine that the force controls him, but he also notices that the force controls his environment as well. By determining that the force exerts its control over everything, we can deduce that the same force controls the characters in the play and their environment. Therefore, the thoughts and actions of the characters in the play are a result of the force. Because the force is universal, no one can escape its control. Some of the characters in the play are aware of the force and they embrace its effects on them. Others, however, do not seem to recognize the force and they try to escape its control. Knowing that the force is amoral, Thomas presents the effects without condemning the character in question. With the dominant idea of creating a town that is subject to the powerful flow of energy that controls the universe, Thomas undertakes the workings of the force and illustrates its existence on a smaller scale apart from himself.

CHAPTER 3

THE FORCE THAT DRIVES THE PLAY

Under Milk Wood is subtitled *A Play for Voices* and these voices depict a town full of unique characters. In fact, many of these characters are considered eccentric. However, these eccentrics are not debased, but instead celebrated. *Under Milk Wood* describes one complete day in the life of the fictional seaside town of Llareggub. The town is referred to as “the place of love” and becomes a variant of the Edenic, pastoral world often referred to in many of Thomas’s later poems (Middleton 389). The only objective view of the town comes from the voice of a guidebook:

Less than five hundred souls inhabit the three quaint streets and the few narrow by-lanes and scattered farmsteads that constitute this small, decaying watering-place which may, indeed, be called a ‘back-water of life’ without disrespect to its natives who possess, to this day, a salty individuality of their own. The main street, Coronation Street, consists, for the most part, of humble, two-storied houses many of which attempt to achieve some measure of gaiety by prinking themselves out in crude colour and by the liberal use of pinkwash, though there are remaining a few eighteenth-century houses of more pretension, if, on the whole, in a sad state of disrepair. Though there is little to attract the hillclimber, the healthseeker, the sportsman, or the weekending motorists, the contemplative may, if sufficiently attracted to spare it some leisurely hours, find, in its cobbled streets and its little fishing harbour, in its several curious customs, and in the conversation of its local ‘characters,’ some of that picturesque sense of the past so frequently lacking in towns and villages which have kept more abreast of the times. The River Dewi is said to abound in trout, but is much poached. The only place of worship, with its neglected graveyard, is of no architectural interest. (26)

The Edenic world of Llareggub is not the principal subject; the inhabitants of the town surface as the “characters” reveal themselves through their dreams, thoughts, and actions. These characters present “human life in many moods, in its variety and abundance” (Jones 9). The dominant theme is that Thomas depicts the town and its environment as

subject to the flow of inexorable, amoral, and universal energy that ties the populace to the natural world by making them vehicles for the expression of this energy.

Many critics have criticized *Under Milk Wood* because of its lack of action; however, Henry Wells reminds the oversensitive critic that “drama is not essentially plot, as Aristotle suggested, nor is it essentially theatrical as the public of about 1900 generally supposed” (440). Although action is clearly subordinate to the characters’ thoughts, wishes, and dreams, the play is not without some action: the townspeople interact with each other, gossip, sing songs, and generally go about their business (Kershner 523).

As the play opens, the First Voice introduces the reader to the town:

It is Spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bibleblack,
the cobblestreets silent and the hunched, courtiers’-and-rabbits’ wood
limping invisible down to the sloeback, slow, black, crowblack,
fishingboat-bobbing sea. The houses are blind as moles (though moles
see fine to-night in the snouting, velvet dingles) or blind as Captain Cat
there in the muffled middle by the pump and the town clock, the shops
in mourning, the Welfare Hall in widow’s weeds. And all the people of
the lulled and dumbfound town are sleeping now. (1)

As Diane de Anda points out, “all these images of darkness prepare us to enter the world of the unconscious, the dream worlds of the inhabitants of the sleeping town to ferret out the desires and the shadows that lie beneath the appearances of their waking hours” (15). These unconscious desires are not merely the manifestations of the force but are the driving force behind the town. These dreams are introduced by the First Voice, supplemented by the Second Voice, and dramatized by the voices of the characters themselves. The First and Second Voices serve as intermediaries between the reader and the sleeping inhabitants of the town. As the First Voice speaks softly, he or she reminds the reader that only “*your* eyes are unclosed to see the black and folded town fast, and slow, asleep” (2). The reader is again reminded to listen and look because “from where you are, you can hear their dreams” (3). Through the two narrators, the reader is transported into the subconscious world of the inhabitants where these dreams reveal the control that the force has over the characters. Their dreams are manifestations of the force that Thomas describes in much of his poetry. This force drives the people of the town to

behave in a uniquely eccentric manner. As Cynthia Davis summarizes, “the progress of the day shows the effect of the unconscious on the conscious lives of the characters, and their reactions to its presence” (79). Thus, the play serves as an illustration of the control and the resulting effect that the force has on each of the inhabitants of Llareggub. Each character reacts to his or her nature as defined in the dream sequence and we see two types of reactions to this force: either the characters embrace their underlying desires and accept the fact that they are controlled by the force or the characters attempt to suppress their desires and resist the force’s control. Nevertheless, both are reactions and results of the force.

The First and Second Voices introduce the reader to Captain Cat, “the retired blind seacaptain [who is] asleep in his bunk in the seashelled, ship-in-bottled, shipshape best cabin of Schooner House” (3). While lying in his bunk asleep, Captain Cat dreams of his long lost life as a Captain on the sea. Chief among the characters in his dreams are the voices of five of his drowned shipmates. All of the voices introduce themselves and Captain Cat recalls their deaths. As the dream continues, each of the drowned interacts with Captain Cat, remembering the magnificence of life through the things they most enjoyed. Captain Cat listens as each of the dead asks questions about different aspects of life. By dreaming of the dead, Captain Cat remains locked in the past. At the conclusion of the dream, he sympathizes with the dead by exclaiming, “Oh, my dead dears!” (6). Most importantly during this dream sequence the Second Drowned mentions Rosie Probert. As the Second Drowned tells the reader, he and Captain Cat shared her once, but as we shall see, it is Captain Cat who is in love with her.

As the dawn approaches, a faint distant bell-note is heard in the distance. It is Captain Cat who “pulls the townhall bellrope ... announc[ing] to-day with his loud get-out-of-bed bell” (27). After Captain Cat rings the townhall bell, he goes back to his home at the Schooner House. While sitting in his window he hears the school bell ring and children’s voices as they scatter off to school. Speaking to himself, Captain Cat identifies each of the townspeople by the sound of their feet on the cobbles. Perhaps this heightened sense of sound is a result of his blindness. Nevertheless, Captain Cat has an amazing awareness of the townspeople as they go about their business. Captain Cat becomes the narrator through the first part of the morning replacing the First Voice as the principal

narrator. By becoming the narrator, Captain Cat submerges himself into the present. This tendency to escape the past is a direct reaction to the force. Because Captain Cat dreams of the past, he makes it a point to unlock himself from those desires by interacting with the present. By narrating the events of the town to himself, Captain Cat is able to escape the influence of the past. However, as much as he tries to suppress the control of the force, it drives his thoughts and actions and soon the “sun and green breeze ship Captain Cat sea-memory again” (53).

As the afternoon slowly passes, the First Voice again takes the reader into the Schooner House and into Captain Cat’s daydream. Sitting by his open window to the sea, Captain Cat sleeps and voyages into the past:

Earringed and rolling, I Love You Rosie Probert tattooed on his belly,
he brawls with broken bottles in the fug and babel of the dark dock bars,
roves with a herd of short and good time cows in every naughty port and
twines and souses with the drowned and blowzy-breasted dead. He weeps
as he sleeps and sails. (75)

Here, again, we see Captain Cat remembering the past and interacting with it as if it were the present. Of all the voices in his dream, he recalls Rosie Probert’s most dearly. Although fleets of men have “anchored” in her before, she softly speaks to Captain Cat alone as the one love of his life. During their poetic interchange, the extent of their love becomes apparent. Captain Cat calls her his “tart,” “cosy love,” and his “true sweetheart” (77). In reply she calls him her “little deck hand,” “favorite husband,” “honey,” “daddy,” and her “pretty sugar sailor” (77). De Anda sees Rosie Probert as purely an anima figure giving her a timeless quality and becoming Captain Cat’s eternal lover beckoning “come on up boys” (23). It is the vitality of this love stemming from the force that drives Captain Cat. The force exhibits its control affecting him so strongly that he weeps for her in his sleep crying “come back, come back” (78).

When the town is wrapped in the darkness of dusk, Captain Cat climbs back into his bunk. The First Voice tells the reader what we already know: “through the voyages of his tears, he sails to see the dead” (92). Again, he voyages into his dreams to interact with the dead, most importantly Rosie Probert. In his dreams Captain Cat experiences the vitality of love and this drives him to remain eternally locked in the past. Captain Cat is

aware of this vital force and acts accordingly to his nature as revealed in his dreams (Davis 84). Because the force controls both the living and the dead, it allows Captain Cat and Rosie Probert to interact with each other. They are similar in that both forms of matter are equally subject to the force.

Many of the characters introduced in the play appear in pairs. Such is the case with Miss Myfanwy Price and Mr. Mog Edwards. Although the couple is not wedded, they express a love for each other that is unsurpassed in all of Llareggub. In fact, Annis Pratt calls them the play's quintessential lovers (162). Because both of the lovers are subject to the force's control, this vital love for each other is a result of the force. The First Voice introduces the reader to Miss Price first while she is asleep in her home on Cockle Row. The First Voice tells us that Miss Price dreams of

her lover, tall as the town clock tower, Samson-syrup-gold-manned,
whacking thighed and piping hot, thunderbolt-bass'd and barnacle-
breasted, flailing up the cockles with his eyes like blowlamps and
scooping low over her lonely loving hotwaterbottledbody. (7)

Intense sexual imagery is prevalent in her description of Mr. Edwards. Her love for him is evident by the way she describes his body. Her vision of Mr. Edwards arises from her personal unconscious desire for powerful passion, vitality, and strength (Davis 78). She glamorizes Mr. Edwards in her dream to the extent that he becomes the perfect representation of man.

Although Miss Price is alone in her bed, she is not alone in her dream. As she is dreaming of her lover, Mr. Edwards, he addresses her in his dream and confesses:

I am a draper mad with love. I love you more than all the flannelette and
calico, candlewick, dimity, crash and merino, tussore, cretonne, crepon,
muslin, poplin, ticking and twill of the whole Cloth Hall of the world. I
have come to take you away to my Emporium on the hill, where the
change hums on wires. Throw away your bedsocks and your Welsh wool
knitted jacket, I will warm the sheets like an electric toaster, I will lie by
your side like the Sunday roast. (7)

As with Miss Price, Mr. Mog Edwards's dream is filled with the vitality of love and is also an expression of the same unconscious desire for powerful passion, vitality, and

strength (Davis 78). He expresses his love with such intensity that it becomes the premier focus of his life. Although he is a draper, his love for Miss Price exceeds that of any love that he has for the different types of elegant material. In fact, he can only relate his love for her in terms of his profession. His love overrides his duties to his profession and he becomes a lover instead of a draper. As with Miss Price, the force instills within him a desire to achieve this idealized love, and this desire for that love controls his thoughts and actions.

Miss Price is so overjoyed by Mr. Edwards's response that she tells him that she will "knit you a wallet of forget-me-not blue, for the money to be comfy. I will warm your heart by the fire so that you can slip it in under your vest when the shop is closed" (7-8). Their dreams become an exchange of vows as the two engage in one another's love. In fact while Mr. Edwards is apparently starting to propose to her she interrupts him with "yes, Mog, yes, Mog, yes, yes, yes" (8). David Holbrook sees this as an allusion to Molly's affirmation of love in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (*Llareggub* 215). Although Molly has just had an affair, she is lying beside Leopold Bloom in bed and thinking of the time that he had asked her to marry him. As she remembers that day on Howth, she explodes affirming her love to him:

I was a flower of the mountain yes when I put the rose in my hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red yes and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well him as another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes. (Joyce 643-644)

Therefore, like Molly Bloom, Miss Myfanwy Price is affirming her love and acceptance to which Mr. Edwards replies, "And all the bells of the tills of the town shall ring for our wedding" (8).

As the morning begins, we see Miss Price wearing her pretty pink housecoat and Mr. Mog Edwards wearing his butterfly-collar and straw-hat ready to start the day. As with Captain Cat each of the two lovers spends the day reacting to the inexorable, amoral

force. While Mr. Edwards stands at the doorway of his Manchester House, he sizes up the townspeople for their flannel shirts and blouses, but his thoughts are with Miss Price. As he stands there measuring-up the town, the image of her still resonates fresh in his mind from the dream and he secretly whispers to himself “I love Miss Price” (42). The First Voice explains that he bellows this to himself behind the darkness of his eye reminding the reader that his love remains hidden in the unconsciousness of his mind. Recall that in “A Process” the force exists internally in the weather of the eye and that darkness is half of its light. Therefore, we can conclude that the force exists “behind the darkness of his eye,” creating his obsession for an idealized live. Just as in his dream, thoughts of his love for Miss Price become the focus of his day and he sets aside his duty as the town’s dressmaker.

The postman’s daily delivery begins on Coronation Street. After delivering the mail to Bay View, Mrs. Rose Cottage’s house, and The School House he skips the Beynon’s and goes on to Mr. Edwards’s (Rea 535-7). When Willy Nilly arrives at Manchester House, the first thing out of Mr. Edwards’s mouth is “Have you got a letter from *her*?” Of course, he is referring to Miss Price. As we soon find out, their relationship exists only in correspondence, which serves as a protective device ensuring that their love remain pure and intact (de Anda 20). On request, Willy Nilly summarizes the letter:

Miss Price loves you with all her heart. Smelling of lavender today. She’s down to the last of the elderflower wine but the quince jam’s bearing up and she’s knitting roses on the dollies. Last week she sold three jars of boiled sweets, pound of humbugs, half a box of jellybabies and six coloured photos of Llareggub. Yours for ever. Then twenty-one X’s. (46)

Mr. Edwards, exalted to hear from her, immediately gives Willy Nilly his letter of response. He begs Willy Nilly to give her the letter immediately; however, Willy Nilly stops by the Post Office, which also happens to be his home. Upon arriving home his wife, Mrs. Willy Nilly, steams open Mr. Edwards’s letter to Miss Price and reads it aloud:

Beloved Myfanwy Price my Bride in Heaven, I love you until Death do us part and then we shall be together for ever and ever. A new parcel

of ribbons has come from Carmarthen to-day, all the colours in the rainbow. I wish I could tie a ribbon in your hair a white one but it cannot be. I dreamed last night you were all dripping wet and you sat on my lap as the Reverend Jenkins went down the street. I see you got a mermaid in your lap he said and he lifted his hat. He is a proper Christian. Not like Cherry Owen who said you should have thrown her back he said. Business is very poorly. Polly Garter bought two garters with roses but she never got stockings so what is the use I say. Mr. Waldo tried to sell me a woman's nightie outsize he said he found it and we know where. I sold a packet of pins to Tom the Sailors to pick his teeth. If this goes on I shall be in the poorhouse. My heart is in your bosom and yours is in mine. God be with you always Myfanwy Price and keep you lovely for me in His Heavenly Mansion. I must stop now and remain, Your Eternal, Mog Edwards. (54-5)

Notice again the sexual imagery surrounding his image of her sitting in his lap all dripping wet. His desire for her is clearly laid out in his dreams and because this desire will never be quenched in the physical sense, their union must take place in this surreal dream world. However, as de Anda points out, even though in his dreams she appears as an erotic mermaid, she remains an ideal of unreachable purity symbolized by the white ribbon he wishes to tie in her hair (20).

At this point it becomes apparent that Miss Price and Mr. Edwards will never consummate their love for each other. Their love exists only in their minds. "Moreover, as the persona is their sole existence at this point, they are unable to do anything other than go through the external motions of lovers, as some real touching in a physical sense or at the level of the Self is incomprehensible" (de Anda 20). Interestingly, as de Anda continues to point out, the only time a union between the two is foreseen is after their death. However, they are not discouraged because the force controls both the living and the dead. As with Captain Cat, a relationship is possible even in death.

We do not see Miss Price and Mr. Edwards again until the close of the play. At the end of the day, the First Voice tells us that "Mr. Mog Edwards and Miss Myfanwy Price happily apart from each one another at the top and the sea end of the town write

their everynight letters of love and desire” (93). “Oh, my Mog, I am yours for ever,” she exclaims as she looks around her room that he will never enter. “Come to my arms, Myfanwy,” he replies as he hugs his lovely money to his heart.

Although for Miss Price and Mr. Edwards their daily routines involve domesticity and commerce respectively, their unconscious desire for a pure and vital love dominates and drives their lives. This desire is a result of the force. They are happy remaining apart from one another keeping this ideal love from becoming stale and unwanted. As Lerner puts it, “their love is perfect because unattainable, like that of Marvell’s lovers ... or they are like two Proustian lovers who have agreed to keep away from each other in order to achieve the perfect love” (274). Jones believes that Miss Price and Mr. Edwards are the happiest people in the town because they have an idea of perfection (5). This idea of perfection is a result of the force. Each of the two lovers dreams of an ideal love and this vision of a vital love drives them to accept their eccentric love as it is: happily apart.

The force controls both Mr. Edwards and Miss Price and causes the two to act accordingly. Their desire for love is ultimately a result of the force. Because they do not have any control over the force, they accept without question their unfulfilled love for each other. Their passionate desire for love accompanied by their lack of fulfillment illustrates the duality of the force. Fortunately for them the force controlling them has a positive effect, but as we shall see, not every character in the play is so lucky.

The next character that the First Voice introduces to the reader is Jack Black. Although a minor character in the play, the passion evident in his dreams presses this character deep into the reader’s mind. Again, the First and Second Voices take the reader inside the unconscious mind and into his dream. As the First Voice leads the reader up to Black’s house, the narrator emphasizes the darkness by repeating dark images. As we are beckoned to drift up the dark, the narrator describes the street as “sea-dark,” the “dark night” seesaws like the sea, and we find ourselves in the “bible-black airless attic over Jack Black” who is sleeping “alone and savagely” (8). These images of “darkness” along with the suggestion provided by his name establish Jack Black as a dark character. Because the duality of the force is its defining characteristic, we are not surprised that this dark character follows Mr. Edwards and Miss Price.

The Second Voice describes his dream of “chasing the naughty couples down the grassgreen gooseberried double bed of the wood, flogging the tosspots in the spit-and-sawdust, driving out the bare bold girls from the sixpenny hops of his nightmares” (8). According to Grooms, “sixpenny hops” is slang for cheap village-hall dances where the floors are mostly sawdust and “tospots” is slang for heavy drinkers (“Notes”). However, his actions are in vain since he is reacting to the force’s control over the “naughty couples.” As anticipated, his dream is a nightmare filled with horrifying images of sin: promiscuity, heavy drinking, and dancing. Loudly in his sleep he screams “Ach y fi,” which is a Welsh expression of disgust (Grooms “Notes”). Therefore, Jack Black is driven by the desire to rid Llareggub of sinful pleasure. As we shall see, the force creates an unconscious desire to punish “naughty couples” throughout the remainder of the day.

We next see Jack Black during the morning hours working in his cobbler’s shop. The Second Voice tells the reader that “Spring this strong morning foams in a flame in Jack Black as he cobbles a high-heeled shoe for Mrs. Dai Bread Two, the gypsy, but he hammers it sternly out” (53). Because the force controls the seasons, Spring becomes a representation of the force. Again, the connotations surrounding the words that the Second Voice uses to describe Jack Black and his actions are harsh and powerful, exemplary of his passion against “naughty couples.” Thomas’s use of “flame” emphasizes the intense rage burning inside of Black. The Second Voice tells us that Jack Black hammers “it” out, grammatically referring to Spring, but there is the obvious reference to the shoe. Thus as Jack Black hammers out the shoe, he also hammers out Spring within himself. Spring is the season of rebirth, growth, and love, but for Jack Black it becomes the season of sin celebrated by these “naughty couples.” The fact that Spring is burning in a flame inside of him suggests that he, too, begins to experience that same feeling that he so despises stirring within himself. For this reason alone, he “sternly” hammers it out. While he hammers the high-heeled shoe he voices his contempt saying, “There is *no leg* belonging to the foot that belongs to this shoe” (53). According to Grooms, a person who does not have a leg is said to be drunk or lazy, both characteristics that Jack Black despises (“Notes”). As we know at this point, Dai Bread has two wives: Mrs. Dai Bread One and Mrs. Dai Bread Two. We never really know if Dai Bread has indeed legally married the two women, so we must use the prefix Mrs. as

an indication that they are, in fact, legally married. Jack Black's reaction to Mrs. Dai Bread Two is not so much attributed to the fact that her marriage is polygamous, although it certainly has its effect. Rather, Black's contempt for her is a result of her sensuality. The images describing Mrs. Dai Bread Two are coarse and slovenly (de Anda 19). When the reader is first introduced to Mrs. Dai Bread Two, she is described as:

gypsied to kill in a silky scarlet petticoat above my knees, dirty pretty knees, see my body through my petticoat brown as a berry, high-heel shoes with one heel missing, tortoiseshell comb in my bright black slinky hair, nothing else at all but a dab of scent, lolling gaudy at the doorway, tell your fortune in the tea leaves, scowling at the sunshine, lighting up my pipe. (33)

All of these images indicate that Mrs. Dai Bread Two reveres pleasure like a Dionysian worshipper. "The allusion to darkness symbolizes a forbidden sensuality that, in fact, makes her a constant temptress who goes about 'dressed in only a bangle'" (de Anda 19). It is this sensuality and seductiveness that fuels Jack Black's vehement reaction. He is haunted by his unconscious desire to rid Llareggub of sinners as alluded to in his dream. He cannot concentrate on his work because the force's control intensifies his passion against "naughty couples."

As Davis points out, the characters speak more and more explicitly in terms of their submerged motives as dusk approaches (86). At the close of the day when the town is covered in dusk, Jack Black "prepares once more to meet his Satan in the Wood" (87). "Satan" is the personification of sin. As alluded to in his dreams, Jack Black seeks to uncover any "naughty couples" engaging in sin. Again, the images used to describe Jack Black as he gets ready signify the passion and intensity of his quest: "he grinds his night-teeth, closes his eyes, climbs into his religious trousers ... and pads out, torched and bibles, grimly, joyfully, into the already sinning dusk" (87). These images portray Black as an overzealous witch hunter out to rid the Wood of indecency. It is important to note that although his task is grim, he finds joy in his quest. The dichotomy reflects the duality of the force. He is reacting to the unconscious desire that has been evident in Jack Black throughout the day. On his way out the door he exclaims, "Off to Gomorrah!" signifying

that he believes Llareggub to be the Biblical city of Gomorrah known for its wickedness and sin.

As the First and Second Voices take the reader into another character's dream, we are introduced to Evans the Death who is the town's undertaker. Although solemn in his profession, Evans the Death "laughs high and loud in his sleep" (9). During his dream, he transforms himself back to his childhood fifty years ago running downstairs to steal a fistful of snowflakes and currants. According to Grooms, these are the two key ingredients in making traditional Welsh biscuits ("Notes"). After the child Evans steals the snow and currants, he "climbs back into bed to eat them cold and sweet under the warm, white clothes" (9). This juxtaposition of cold, sweet, and warm signifies the gratification of living as well as the duality of the force. As a child, he cannot wait until his mother prepares the Welsh cakes; he seeks the immediate pleasure and selfish gratification of eating them freshly picked under the warmth of the covers. Although his childish antics are pleasurable and satisfying, they cause his mother to cry. Therefore, he is ashamed by his immediate rush for self-gratification and this unconscious desire to act reservedly drives Evan the Death throughout the rest of the day.

Although we do not see much more of Evans the Death, we are given one snapshot of him early in the morning. Outside as Spring makes its way through the streets, the First Voice tells us that Llareggub is "wildfruit and warm" evoking the images of selfish gratification of his dream. Aware of Spring's influence, he presses "hard with black gloves on the coffin of his breast in case his heart jumps out. Where's your dignity," he scolds himself harshly (52-3). Again, Spring is the personification of the force, so we see Evans acknowledging the presence of the force within himself. Evans the Death reacts against his inner desire which creates a conflict within himself. David Holbrook actually sees this as the character divided against himself (*Dylan* 232). However, this is not so much a division against himself but rather a reaction to the force. As Davis has already pointed out, the characters address their conflict with their unconscious desire as the day progresses. Therefore, when Evans the Death scolds himself, he is directly considering his inner conflict. This conflict is the same conflict that Thomas addresses in his early poems. His desire to engage in the pleasures of life causes him to press hard against his chest to quiet the yearning of his heart reminding himself to act dignified by

exemplifying a formal reserve of manner. Davis agrees that this most clearly shows the continuing, although hidden, existence of the force as Evans the Death tries to repress his non-rational fears and desires (82).

As the First and Second Voices take the reader through the town's dreams revealing their underlying desires, we arrive at Mister Waldo's pink-eyed cottage next to the undertaker's. Mr. Waldo is the town's rabbit-catcher, barber, herbalist, catdoctor, and quack who sleeps alone with his black boots neat in his washing-basin, his hat hung above the bed, and a milk stout beer with a slice of cold bread pudding under his pillow. Dripping from the spilled beer and pudding from the night before, he dreams snapshots of his life, all of which involve careless behavior and women. Time is not an issue since the characters in his dream are from different parts of his past. First, he dreams of his mother playing "little piggy" with each of his toes. Each little piggy goes away until the last little piggy goes "wee wee wee wee all the way home" (10).

At this point in the dream, Mr. Waldo happily escapes back to the innocence of adolescence, where again we see a character escaping reality. However, the happy innocence is quickly destroyed by the appearance of Mrs. Waldo, which indicates a shift in time. In fact, there is an almost total absence of time as his childhood and marriage occur simultaneously (Davis 79). Here, Thomas does an excellent job of weaving voices creating a conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Waldo. With the mention of home, Mrs. Waldo enters the dream screaming "Waldo! Waldo!" abruptly interrupting his adolescent escape (10). She scolds his behavior repeating "Oh, what'll the neighbors say" (10). At this point, Thomas interweaves the opinions of the neighbors into the dream as they carry on a conversation with each other regarding Mr. and Mrs. Waldo:

FIRST NEIGHBOR. Poor Mrs. Waldo

SECOND NEIGHBOR. What she puts up with

FIRST NEIGHBOR. Never should have married

SECOND NEIGHBOR. If she didn't had to

FIRST NEIGHBOR. Same as her mother

SECOND NEIGHBOR. There's a husband for you

FIRST NEIGHBOR. Bad as his father

SECOND NEIGHBOR. And you know where he ended

FIRST NEIGHBOR. Up in the asylum
 SECOND NEIGHBOR. Crying for his ma
 FIRST NEIGHBOR. Every Saturday
 SECOND NEIGHBOR. He hasn't got a leg
 FIRST NEIGHBOR. And carrying on
 SECOND NEIGHBOR. With that Mrs. Beattie Morris
 FIRST NEIGHBOR. Up in the quarry
 SECOND NEIGHBOR. And seen her baby
 FIRST NEIGHBOR. It's got his nose
 SECOND NEIGHBOR. Oh, it makes my heart bleed
 FIRST NEIGHBOR. What he'll do for a drink
 SECOND NEIGHBOR. He sold the pianola
 FIRST NEIGHBOR. And her sewing machine
 SECOND NEIGHBOR. Falling in the gutter
 FIRST NEIGHBOR. Talking to the lamp-post
 SECOND NEIGHBOR. Using language
 FIRST NEIGHBOR. Singing in the w.
 SECOND NEIGHBOR. Poor Mrs. Waldo. (10-2)

At this stage of his dream, the reader learns a lot about Mr. Waldo from the gossip between the two neighbors. The neighbors suggest that Mr. and Mrs. Waldo married out of necessity most likely as a result of a pregnancy. They also accuse him of impregnating a married woman, Mrs. Beattie Morris, along with selling Mrs. Waldo's furniture to buy alcohol. Overall, the neighbors portray Mr. Waldo as an insensitive, poor, drunk, and adulterous husband who uses foul language and sings in the bathroom (Grooms "Notes"). Although early in the dream sequence, Mr. Waldo's unconscious selfish and careless nature begins to surface. This continual nagging from women creates an unconscious fear of them.

During the first part of his dream, Mr. Waldo's wife and neighbors criticize him for his reckless behavior. When Mrs. Waldo tearfully exclaims "Oh, Waldo, Waldo!" he insensitively replies, "Hush, love, hush. I'm *widower* Waldo now" (12). This immediate dismissal of his wife and her feelings emphasizes his selfish nature and his willingness to

escape responsibility. He only cares for and about himself, and he is inconsiderate of his actions on others. This denotes another time shift in his dream and his mother reappears screaming “Waldo, Waldo!” (13). Just like his wife, Waldo’s mother worries about the neighbors’ perception of his behavior. Here, we have a third and a fourth neighbor gossiping and, more importantly, criticizing the child Waldo:

THIRD NEIGHBOR. Black as a chimbley

FOURTH NEIGHBOR. Ringing doorbells

THIRD NEIGHBOR. Breaking windows

FOURTH NEIGHBOR. Making mudpies

THIRD NEIGHBOR. Stealing currants

FOURTH NEIGHBOR. Saw him in the bushes

THIRD NEIGHBOR. Playing mwchins

FOURTH NEIGHBOR. Send him to bed without any supper

THIRD NEIGHBOR. Give him sennapods and lock him in the dark

FOURTH NEIGHBOR. Off to the reformatory

THIRD NEIGHBOR. Off to the reformatory

TOGETHER. Learn him with a slipper on his b.t.m. (13-4)

Although we do not know the sex of the neighbors, we can assume from the dialogue that they are, in fact, women. What they reveal is that even as a child, Mr. Waldo engages in reckless behavior. Among other things he has broken windows, stolen berries, and skipped school. His behavior is so careless that the neighbors finally settle on sending him off to the reformatory to be locked up. Again, the continual nagging and criticizing by women haunt him, but his actions result from the force’s continual control to which he has no control. Therefore, his wife’s nagging and criticizing only fuels his careless attitude towards women.

After the neighbors suggest punishment for the young Waldo, another mother appears in his dream screaming, “Waldo, Waldo! What you doing with out Matti?” (14). This part of the dream sequence occurs during his adolescence. During this sequence, the child Waldo and another young boy solicit Matti Richards, a young girl from the neighborhood, in a kissing game:

LITTLE BOY. Give us a kiss, Matti Richards.

LITTLE GIRL. Give us a penny then. (14)

Presumably the little boy is the young Mr. Waldo and the little girl is Matti Richards. However, after this exchange between the young Waldo and Matti Richards, the time frame of the dream again shifts to an older Waldo undoubtedly playing the same game on a larger scale: prostitution:

FIRST WOMAN. Lips is a penny (14)

At this point in the dream, an unknown preacher enters and begins reciting wedding vows. As the preacher begins to wed Mr. Waldo and Matti Richards, four other women introduce themselves and it becomes apparent that Mr. Waldo has married each of them:

PREACHER. Will you take this woman Matti Richards

SECOND WOMAN. Dulcie Prothero

THIRD WOMAN. Effie Beven

FOURTH WOMAN. Lil the Gluepot

FIFTH WOMAN. Blodwen Bowen

PREACHER. To be your awful wedded wife (14-5)

Obviously, Mr. Waldo has married and divorced each of these women up to his current wife Blodwen Bowen. Because none of his marriages seem to work, we can infer that Mr. Waldo has exemplified his childish behavior throughout each of his four other marriages. In fact, his behavior probably received much criticism from each of his other wives, creating a network of women who haunt his unconscious thoughts. Because he cannot control the force, these women only frustrate any efforts to change. His play on “awful wedded wife” reaffirms his lack of respect for the sanctity of marriage. The dream closes with the young Mr. Waldo screaming “No, no, no!” (15). With the dream sequence over, Mr. Waldo’s self-centered nature is revealed in its entirety along with his underlying fear of women. This negativity illustrates the indifference of the amoral force. Whereas Mr. Edwards’s and Miss Price’s experience with the force is positive, Mr. Waldo’s experience is negative.

The next time that we see Mr. Waldo is during breakfast. The First Voice tells us that Mr. Waldo wearing his “bowler and bib gobbles his bubble-and-squeak and kippers and swigs from the saucebottle” (34). The important thing to note is that immediately

upon waking, Mr. Waldo reaches for the bottle. Alongside his breakfast of fish is the saucebottle, obviously referring to alcohol. From the moment that he awakes, Mr. Waldo seeks to satisfy his unconscious desire for pleasure and escape from the fear of women. Mr. Waldo seems to accept that the force controls his thoughts and actions, but the women in his life will not accept this as an excuse. As a result his desire for self-gratification enhances.

After finishing his breakfast, Mr. Waldo approaches Willy Nilly's on his morning post office route. Sitting at his open window, Captain Cat becomes the narrator. Upon hearing quicker feet approaching, he recognizes Mr. Waldo hurrying off to the Sailor's Arms to have his usual "pint of stout with a egg in it" (46). Along the way, Captain Cat notices that the footsteps stop and he deduces that there must be a letter for him. He overhears Willy Nilly tell him that it is another paternity summons. This confirms that Mr. Waldo has, in fact, committed adultery and gotten another woman pregnant. Upon hearing the news from the postman, Mr. Waldo quickly hurries along to the Sailor's Arms and calls out "Quick, Sinbad. Pint of stout. And no egg in" (47). Mr. Waldo begins his day by drinking at the pub; after all "it is always opening time in the Sailors Arms" (41). Therefore, as soon as the day begins, Mr. Waldo quenches his unconscious desire by having a drink at the bar.

As Mr. Waldo sits at the bar, we see him getting drunk and slandering women, characteristics of his nature revealed in his dream. While Mr. Waldo sits at the bar drinking his stout, he notices Reverend Eli Jenkins making his morning rounds and listens as Sinbad dotes over Gossamer Beynon. Before Sinbad can begin, Mr. Waldo orders him to fill up his drink because he is "on the treacle to-day" (61). Apparently, Mr. Waldo really feels the need to get drunk by the afternoon. Sinbad fills up the drink and tells Mr. Waldo about his love for Gossamer Beynon. He believes her to be "a lady all over" (61). Upon hearing this comment Mr. Waldo thinks of a woman as soft as Eve and as sharp as sciatica and replies, "No lady that I know is" (62). Without love-struck eyes he refuses to grant Sinbad an agreement and his fear of women manifests itself in his snide comment.

As night darkens the town, we find Mr. Waldo still sitting at his corner of the Sailors Arms. Apparently he has been sitting there drinking since earlier in the morning.

While sitting in his corner, Mr. Waldo begins to sing a personal song that reveals aspects of his life. During the song, he recalls living in Pembroke City as a young boy working as a chimneysweeper making no more than a sixpence a week. He admits that “all the fare that I could afford / Was parsnip gin and watercress” (91). This verifies the fact that the force has been present in him since his youth. It is important to note that he foolishly spent his money on a “dish of watercress / And a jug of parsnip gin” (91). This confirms the neighbors’ gossip that even as a young boy he engaged in this selfish, foolish behavior. Having spent all of his weekly earnings on watercress and booze, he walks around the city poor and barefoot in the snow. Again, this illustrates his selfish behavior. However while walking through the city, a young woman stops him and begs him to “come and sweep my chimbley” (92). The sexual tone of this request becomes clear when she blushes at him admitting that “nobody’s swept my chimbley / Since my husband went is ways” (92). Therefore as Mr. Waldo sits drunk at his corner of the bar, he relishes the memory of his sexual encounter.

As the First Voice closes out the play, he or she tells the reader that “Mr. Waldo drunk in the dusky wood hugs his lovely Polly Garter under the eyes and rattling tongues of the neighbors and the birds, and he does not care” (94). Aroused by the memories of past sexual encounters and fueled by an extensive amount of alcohol, Mr. Waldo quenches his desire for selfish pleasure by ending the night in another woman’s arms. More so, Mr. Waldo’s compulsive promiscuity is a compensation for his fear of women, a direct reaction to his underlying desire revealed in his dream (Holbrook, *Dylan* 238). Mr. Waldo is a pleasure-seeker bound to attain his goal of selfish enjoyment. As the First Voice tells us, he does not care what the others think about his behavior; he is giving in to his unconscious desire for pleasure. Furthermore, he does not care because he accepts the fact that he is subordinate to the amoral force coursing through the universe. Before we leave the scene, Mr. Waldo “smacks his live red lips” as a sign of his accomplishment. As in “The Force” red symbolizes vitality, which is a characteristic of the force. The force that is responsible for his nature drives Mr. Waldo throughout the day. Therefore, Mr. Waldo’s sexual rampage and intense alcoholism become solutions to his identity revealed by his subconscious mind in his dream (Holbrook, *Dylan* 240). Nonetheless, Mr. Waldo embraces the force that drives him.

Mrs. Ogmores-Pritchard is the next character that the First Voice introduces. As with all of the characters, we first meet her in her subconscious dream. The First Voice reveals her nature in a description of her room. Phrases such as “iceburg-white,” “holily laundered,” “virtuous polar sheets,” and “dust-defying bedroom” identify Mrs. Ogmores-Pritchard as a very devout and clean woman, after all cleanliness is next to godliness. The First Voice also tells us that Mrs. Ogmores-Pritchard is twice widowed. As she fidgets in her sleep, she wakes in a dream to Mr. Ogmores and Mr. Pritchard lying “ghostly” beside her in bed. Recall that the living and the dead are equally subject to the force, which allows this interaction to occur. After nudging their sides, she wakes the two men by shouting out orders. “Soon it will be time to get up. Tell me your tasks, in order,” she exclaims and the two ghosts of her dead husbands systematically review the day’s chores. “Although she is childless, in her dreams (her unconscious) she re-enacts her relationships with her dead husbands, treating them as children whose daily lives must be continually shaped by her, as indicated by their dialogue of orders and immediate compliance” (de Anda 17). Her experiences are negative, yet they generate from the same force. Just like Captain Cat, Mrs. Ogmores-Pritchard interacts with the past where the dead become living characters that she can control. Therefore, the underlying desire that drives her throughout the day is dominance. Like the surrounding environment, she is subject to the force’s control, which creates an unconscious desire for control.

We see the extent of her control through the way that she commands and treats her husbands. For instance, Mr. Ogmores “must put [his] pyjamas in the drawer marked pyjamas” and Mr. Pritchard “must dress behind the curtain” (16). Her controlling nature leads her to abandon her role as a nurturing wife and assume the role of a suffocating hypochondriac (de Anda 17). For example, Mr. Ogmores must blow his nose in the garden and burn the tissue afterwards to prevent any germs from spreading. Also, she demands that he boil the drinking water because of germs (17). Thus, we see her compulsive concern with hygiene creating a hatred for domesticity which inevitably hides the death of emotion and vitality in a neurotic suburban home (Holbrook, *Dylan* 235). Although her actions are deplorable, we must remember that the force controlling her is amoral and nondiscriminatory. Everything in her dream is under her control. Even the sun is under the powerful dominance of Mrs. Ogmores-Pritchard: “And before you let the sun in, mind

it wipes its shoes” (de Anda 17). Mrs. Ogmores-Pritchard’s desire to control every aspect of life to ensure that it is just as she wants it reveals itself through her dream. In her dream she exerts and demands control over everything even down to the smallest detail as a reaction to her inability to control the force.

This over-bearing dominance surfaces in Mrs. Ogmores-Pritchard as the day progresses. The extent of her cleaning is known throughout the town. Captain Cat warns Willy Nilly on his way to deliver the mail that “she swabs the front glassy. Every step’s like a bar of soap. Mind your size twelveses. That old Bessie would beeswax the lawn to make the birds slip” (43). Her desire to achieve supreme cleanliness leads her to control those around her including Willy Nilly who wears a glove to knock on the door. Willy Nilly delivers a letter and explains that a gentleman wishes to stay at her house for a couple of weeks while he studies different birds. Mrs. Ogmores-Pritchard quickly denies his request claiming that the man would “come home at all hours covered with feathers.” She goes on to say that she doesn’t want “persons in my *nice clean* rooms breathing all over the chairs ... and putting their feet on my carpets and sneezing on my china and sleeping in my sheets” (44). It is evident that Mrs. Ogmores-Pritchard does not want anyone in her home for fear that he or she will get the house dirty. Even after Willy Nilly interrupts with assurance that the gentleman will not breathe on any of her furniture, she dismisses the request. Her fear of becoming dingy distorts her perception to the point that she finds fault in everyday human activities, such as breathing. She will not let any boarders into her house because she cannot control their actions. This is ironic because Mrs. Ogmores-Pritchard lives in the town’s boarding house. Although her home is available for rent to boarders, her suffocating hypochondria will not allow anyone in the house. She slams the door in Willy Nilly’s face and goes back to the kitchen to polish the potatoes. This behavior pattern exemplifies the extent with which the force exerts its control

We next see Mrs. Ogmores-Pritchard after dusk. The First Voice describes her as she quickly seals all of her sea-view doors and draws the germ-free blinds at the first drop of dusk. Through her immediate reaction to the dusk, we see her readiness to protect the house against any intruding germs. Her controlling nature is again made evident as she sits in her hygienic chair and wills (commands) herself to a cold, quick sleep. Once Mrs.

Ogmore-Pritchard submerges into an unconscious sleep, the First Voice explains how Mr. Ogmore and Mr. Pritchard, who have been planning Mrs. Ogmore-Pritchard's destruction, reluctantly sigh and cautiously crawl into her clean house. Their reluctance to enter the house is evident in their insisting that the other husband enter first:

MR. PRITCHARD. You first, Mr. Ogmore.

MR. OGMORE. After you, Mr. Pritchard.

MR. PRITCHARD. No, no, Mr. Ogmore. You widowed her first. (85)

However, they cannot escape Mrs. Ogmore-Pritchard's control just as she cannot escape the force's control and her deceased husbands ooze through the keyhole "with tears where their eyes once were" (85).

As she addresses her husbands, the First Voice points out the acid love in her voice and the two men each hope that the "acid love" is not for him. This acid love is a direct result of the force upon her. As she explains that she loves them both, Mr. Ogmore and Mr. Pritchard shriek with horror. As in her previous dream, she commands that the men recite their tasks in order before going to bed to which Mr. Ogmore and Mr. Pritchard immediately obey: "We must take our pyjamas from the drawer marked pyjamas" (86). Mrs. Ogmore-Pritchard coldly demands that they must then take them off. This request is the only hint of sexuality and of a sexual relationship between herself and her husbands, which is described as acidic and cold (de Anda 17). For Holbrook, their hatred of domesticity results in a fear of sexual role reversal and the two men express a fear of woman and woman's sexual demands (*Dylan* 235). Perhaps this fear is the reason that her husbands shriek with horror when instructed to come to bed. Also, her increasing dominance and cold, acidic love is the reason that Mr. Ogmore, at least, had to turn elsewhere for pleasure (50). Mrs. Ogmore-Pritchard's dominance exerts itself over every aspect of her life. She reacts to her lack of control over the force by rendering her environment under her control.

Gossamer Beynon is the next character that the First Voice introduces to the reader. She is the local schoolteacher and the daughter of Butcher Beynon, the town's butcher. In her deep sleep she "daintily ferrets under a fluttering hummock of children's feathers in a slaughter-house that has chintz curtains and a three piece suite" (18). It seems odd that the slaughterhouse of her dreams would have chintz curtains attempting to

coordinate with a three-piece suite (an obvious play on suit), but, as we shall see, this represents her conflict with her inner desire.

The First Voice uses animal imagery to describe her and the components of her dream: she ferrets under a hammock of feathers to find a small rough ready man with a bushy tail winking in a paper carrier (18). These animal images present in her dream allude to the instinctive, sexual side of her subconscious mind that is under-developed and, therefore, repressed (de Anda 21). It is important that the First Voice uses “ferrets” to indicate that she is, in fact, searching for something that is hidden within her subconscious. This something is the instinctive, sexual aspect of her persona. De Anda explains that most of these animal images in her dream refer to mythological creatures that have definite sexual connotations. Furthermore, the central image of the rough, ready man with a bushy tail refers to the mythological satyr, which is the symbol of lust and immorality (de Anda 21). This central image represents the underlying desire that exists within Gossamer Beynon’s unconscious mind supplanted by the force as a means of control. It becomes obvious that she is willing to embrace this aspect of her subconscious when she sighs, “At last, my love” (18). However, Gossamer Beynon’s job as the town’s schoolteacher presses the belief upon her that she must suppress this uncontrollable desire in order to be the sophisticated professional that she aspires to be. As the day progress, Gossamer struggles to fight back this subconscious desire to express her sexuality by seeking an identity apart from the amoral force.

After leaving Gossamer Beynon’s dream, we venture down the road to Organ Morgan’s house. Hinting at his personality by his name, Organ Morgan is the town’s musician, the organist. As the First Voice guides us into his dream, we immediately hear him scream “Help.” As we go deeper into the dream, Organ Morgan tells the reader that

there is perturbation and music in Coronation Street! All the spouses are honking like geese and the babies singing opera. P. C. Attila Rees has got his truncheon out and is playing cadenzas by the pump, the cows from Sunday Meadow ring like reindeer, and on the roof of Handel Villa see the Women’s Welfare hoofing, bloomed, in the moon. (18-19)

It becomes obvious that music dominates his dream. In fact, the people in the town's central street are combining to make music. Aside from the babies singing opera, the spouses are "honking." "Honk" may refer to the sound of geese, but the focus here is on the verb rather than the noun. Therefore, "honking" refers to the sound relating to the sound of a horn. P. C. Attila Rees is also making music by playing the cadenza, a brilliant improvisation, with his police club. Even the animals of the town are joining in the music. The cows are ringing like reindeer, an obvious reference to Santa's bells, and the roof of Handel Villa, another reference to music, is "hoofing" to the beat. When all of these seemingly unattractive noises are combined, the result is music to Organ Morgan's ears. In fact, everything is in relation to music. Therefore, the force exhibits its control over Organ Morgan through an obsession with music.

As soon as Organ Morgan awakes, we see the force beginning to take its effect on him. The First Voice tells the reader that he walks to his bedroom window and begins playing chords on the windowsill. Although he is not playing the organ, he is still involved in the act of making music. Playing music is the first thing that we see Organ Morgan do once he gets out of bed and it sets the stage for the rest of the day.

The next time that we hear anything concerning Organ Morgan is through Captain Cat's voice as he overhears the town going about on its early morning routine. While he listens as the town makes its early morning rounds, he overhears organ music in the distance. Captain Cat immediately replies, "Organ Morgan's at it early. You can tell it's Spring" (48). Recall that Spring refers to the force. We see Spring's influence on Organ Morgan, but more importantly, we notice that he moved from playing the windowsill to playing the organ. Because Organ Morgan is driven by music, it is not surprising that making music is the first thing that he does in the morning.

As Captain Cat continues to listen to the women of the town gossiping, he overhears them talking about Organ Morgan and his wife. Although the women reenact a conversation with Mrs. Organ Morgan, the focus of the conversation is on Organ Morgan himself. The Third Woman recalls asking Mrs. Organ Morgan how her husband is doing. The Second and Third Woman provide the reader with her answer:

SECOND WOMAN. it's organ organ all the time with him

THIRD WOMAN. up every night until midnight playing the organ (52)

Again, the answer to the gossiping ladies' question comes as no surprise to the reader. From their response, we can gather that Organ Morgan plays the organ all day, from the time he wakes up in the morning until midnight, the period that spans the entire length of the day in the play. His continual playing affects his wife physically: "you look dead beat," replies the first woman commenting on Mrs. Organ Morgan's appearance. Of course, there is the obvious play on the word "beat." At the end of this gossip sequence, we actually hear Mrs. Organ Morgan complain of her husband's continual organ playing: "Oh, I'm a martyr to music" (52). Describing herself as a martyr clearly shows the extent of his music playing. Music consumes his entire day to the extent that Mrs. Organ Morgan becomes a constant sufferer for the sake of music. At this point, it is clear that Organ Morgan is subject to the force that controls everything in the universe.

As the day edges towards the afternoon, we see Mr. and Mrs. Organ Morgan sitting down to a flatfish brunch. Although it does not seem unusual that the couple enjoys a late afternoon meal, it is a direct result of Organ Morgan's music playing. Because playing music is the first thing that consumes Organ Morgan, the couple must wait until he is finished to have their morning breakfast, which is more like an afternoon brunch. While the two are sitting at the table Mrs. Organ Morgan tells her husband about seeing Polly Garter again last night with Mr. Waldo. In between big gulps of flounder, she recalls the different men that Polly has been with in the past. Among them is Bob Spit, a midget she claims is no bigger than a baby. However, the two boys that she had with him are agreeable and Mrs. Organ Morgan cannot decide which she likes best. After pondering the subject for awhile, she asks Organ Morgan which of the two boys he likes best. His reply is not the least bit surprising: "Oh, Bach without any doubt. Bach every time for me" (71). Of course, he is referring to the famous classical musician, revealing that he has not been listening to a word that his wife has been saying. Instead, he has been consumed by his thoughts of music, which illustrates the power of the force. Music has such a strong influence on Organ Morgan that it occupies his entire thoughts leaving no room for any others. After scolding him for not listening, she repeats the phrase "It's organ organ all the time with you" reinforcing what we already know and she bursts into tears. Music has become the central focus of Organ Morgan's life, shutting out even his

closest companion, his wife. Even though she is his wife, the force does not discriminate and, therefore, she is not given any special merit.

The next time that we hear of Organ Morgan is late at night near the end of the play. Nearing the end of the day, Organ Morgan heads to the chapel to play the organ as he does every night of his life. Recall that the women of the town have already revealed that he plays the organ until midnight. On his way there he passes Cherry Owen who is resting on a tombstone on his way home after downing a few pints at the Sailors Arms. As he passes Cherry Owen, he does not recognize him. Instead, the First Voice tells us that he sees Bach lying on that tombstone. Whether this is a result of intoxication the reader is left to speculate. Nonetheless, the key is that he sees Bach, the symbol of musical greatness, which is a direct result of the force's control. Passing by he yells "Johann Sebastian" to which the drunken Cherry Owen replies "Who?" "Johann Sebastian mighty Bach. Oh, Bachfach," he replies reinforcing his inability to distinguish his subconscious desire from reality (93). This inability to distinguish echoes stanza four of "A Process." Organ Morgan is so caught up in his subconscious inner desire that he refuses to see the external world as it really exists. The force exerts such control over Morgan that he experiences a hallucination. Again, because the force controls both the living and the dead, Morgan interacts with Bach as though he is there in the flesh. To him, everything is music and everything revolves around music. The driving force that made itself known in the subconscious dream has taken hold of Organ Morgan and drives his every thought and action. Therefore, the distress that Organ Morgan dreams about is the stems from the force's control over him.

The next couple that the First Voice introduces is Mr. and Mrs. Floyd. Because the reader is not taken inside the dream world of the Floyds, we cannot derive the vehicle for the force's control. In fact, this is the only time that we see Mr. and Mrs. Floyd together throughout the rest of the play. Later, Mrs. Floyd is overheard talking to Nogood Boyo about some flatfish. All that we know of the couple is that they are sleeping "as quiet as death, side by wrinkled side, toothless, salt and brown, like two old kippers in a box" (19). Although we do not see the force's control over the Floyds, we know that the force does not discriminate, which confirms the force's control over them.

As the reader is taken past Mr. and Mrs. Floyd, we arrive high above Salt Lake Farm, home of Mr. Utah Watkins. Descending into his dream, the First Voice reveals that all night long he is counting “wife-faced sheep as they leap the fences on the hill, smiling and knitting and bleating just like Mrs. Utah Watkins” (19). It is obvious that discontent for his farm life, and in a sense life in general, becomes the central subject of his dream. All night long he counts these sheep as they bleat “knit one slip one [,] knit two together [,] pass the slipstitch over...” (19). The wife-faced sheep become the representation of domesticity, which Mr. Utah Watkins feels an intense discontent. This underlying feeling of discontent for his domestic farm life reveals itself with the progression of the day.

It is interesting to note that Utah and Salt Lake are American names that Thomas uses in the play to illustrate discontent. Rea explains that when Thomas gave a lecture at the University of Utah, there arose a distance between himself and the students that he could not overcome. He is quoted as saying that to go West “with clean, white lectures and a soul” is to go to one’s doom (Rea 535). Perhaps this discontent with the American Western University results in his use of these American names to illustrate a feeling of total discontent.

The only other time that we see Mr. Utah Watkins is later in the afternoon on his farmstead. As he tends to his livestock, his underlying hate for his domestic farm life becomes overwhelmingly obvious. It is the Second Voice who explains that “Farmer Watkins in Salt Lake Farm hates his cattle on the hill as he ho’s them into milking” (82). The Second Voice, the more objective of the narrators, tells the reader straightforwardly that Mr. Utah Watkins hates his cattle. Although farming is his method of making a living, he utterly cannot stand the animals. This hatred of his animals is a direct result of his discontent with the force’s control. Because he cannot control the force, he chooses not to embrace it, but rather remain in conflict with it. The stage note tells the reader that he is in a fury when he screams “damn you, you damned dairies!” (82). As a result of his conflict with the force, he fuels his intense anger. Ironically, a cow kisses him immediately after his exclamation. In an effort to retort he shouts a command for his dog to “bite her to death!” (82). At this point we can see the extremity with which Farmer Watkins hates his domestic farm life, but the discontent continues. Ironically, the dog to which he screams this order is deaf and in turn smiles and licks his hands. Disgusted by

the failed attempt to get the dog to bite the cow, he turns to the cow and orders her to “gore him, sit on him, Daisy!” (83). The harshness of these commands reveals the extent with which the force’s control fuels his hatred of his animals. First, he damns the cows to hell, then wishes that they would get bitten to death, and finally pleads for the cow to gore the disobedient dog. Each of these methods of dying is extremely brutal and painful, expressive of the intensity in his underlying discontent. We see the extent that he treats the animals by the Second Voice’s use of “slaves” to describe them. Once Bessie Bighead, the farm’s hired help, arrives to relieve Farmer Watkins, we see him cursing through the farmyard on a carhorse. Unsurprisingly, he yells, “gallop, you bleeding cripple!” (84). The hate that manifested itself in his dream erupts in outbursts as Mr. Utah Watkins tends to his farm. Disgusted and unsatisfied, he curses and hates every aspect of his domestic farm life. Although the character of Farmer Watkins is despicable, we cannot condemn him or his actions. As with each character, he is controlled by the nondiscriminatory, amoral force, which happens to appear negatively in his case.

As the First Voice takes us through the town, we arrive at the home of Ocky Milkman, the town’s milkman, who is drowned in sleep in Cockle Street. In his dream, Ocky Milkman empties his milk churns into the Dewi River and whispers “regardless of expense” (19). The force creates an underlying desire for money. In his dream we see him taking his milk churns and emptying the contents into the river. The significance of the dream is that he does this regardless of expense. Therefore, we can conclude that the force drives him through a pursuit for financial wealth. The First Voice reinforces this idea by revealing that Ocky Milkman is “weeping like funeral,” apparently as a result of his lost commodity. His pursuit for financial gain inspires the milkman to behave according to the control of the force.

In between the dawn and the afternoon, Ocky Milkman makes his daily route delivering milk to the townspeople. Sitting in his open window of the Schooner House, Captain Cat provides the narration through Milkman’s route. After hearing organ music in the distance, he hears the rattle of milk-cans coming down the street. Immediately, he recognizes that it’s Ocky Milkman on his round. “I will say this,” Captain Cat explains, “his milk’s as fresh as the dew” (48). Although this sounds like a compliment, it turns out that the milk in the cans is, in fact, half dew. Here, we can see the workings of the force

as he tries to profit as much as possible. In order to make a little extra money, Ocky Milkman waters down the milk so that he can increase the amount. Of course, he does not lower the price with the lowered quality; that would not result in any profit increase. Therefore, it becomes obvious that Milkman waters-down his product as a direct result of his pursuit of a financial profit. As Milkman passes by Captain Cat, he mutters “snuffle on, Ocky, watering the town” (48). Although his willingness to cheat his customers is repulsive, we must remember that the inexorable, amoral force is controlling him.

The only time that we actually see Ocky Milkman is on his morning delivery route. However, we do learn a little something about him through the gossiping neighbors. According to the First and Second Woman, no one has ever seen Mrs. Ocky Milkman because “he keeps her in the cupboard with the empties” (51). There is much speculation as to why she never leaves the house, but the only plausible explanation lies in his underlying desire for profit. Perhaps he is afraid that she will tell the townspeople that he dilutes the milk in order to gain some profit, but it seems likely that the town would be able to taste the difference in the quality. Nonetheless, it must have something to do with his obsession with money, and because she is supposedly kept in the cupboard with the empties, she must not be profitable. This explanation is consistent with his desire for profit and seems to be the best possible answer. Nevertheless, Ocky Milkman’s behavior is a direct result of the underlying control of the force.

Next door to Ocky Milkman lives Cherry Owen. Oddly, during the dream sequence the narrator tells us that he lives next to Milkman on Cockle Row. However, later in the play the First Voice tells us that Mr. and Mrs. Cherry Owen’s one bedroom home is on Donkey Down. Rea clears this apparent contradiction by claiming that “a few days before he [Thomas] went to the New York hospital where he died, he sent his last revisions, which chiefly concerned Cherry Owen, to the *Mademoiselle* editors, and the revisions were incomplete. This would account for Cherry Owen’s two places of residence” (539). Nonetheless, in his dream he “lifts a tankard to his lips but nothing flows out of it” (20). A tankard is a tall, one handled glass most notably used for drinking alcohol. Immediately, it is clear that Cherry Owen likes to drink. In fact, drinking to get drunk drives his existence. After realizing that his glass is empty, Cherry Owen shakes the glass and it turns into a fish. Not surprisingly, he drinks the fish. Although the

inclusion of a fish in the dream seems a bit obscure, it is an allusion to the expression to drink like a fish (de Anda 19). The desire to drink and get drunk becomes synonymous with Cherry Owen throughout the day.

During breakfast we see Mr. and Mrs. Cherry Owen “sitting down to last night’s supper of onions boiled in their overcoats and broth of spuds and baconrind and leeks and bones” (36). The emphasis is not on the breakfast, but rather the conversation that takes place at the table. While the two are sitting at the table, Mrs. Cherry Owen points to a smudge on the wall beside the picture of Auntie Blossom and tells Cherry that is where he threw the sago (dry starch) the night before during a drunken rampage. “You only missed me by a inch,” she explains. Upon hearing the news he replies, “I always miss Auntie Blossom too” (36). This amusing comedic reply is an attempt to overlook the seriousness of his behavior (Holbrook, *Dylan* 233). His reply causes Mrs. Cherry Owen to question his memory:

remember last night? In you reeled, my boy, as drunk as a
deacon with a big wet bucket and a fish-frail full of stout and
you looked at me and you said, ‘God has come home!’ you said,
and then over the bucket you went, sprawling and bawling, and
the floor was all flagons and eels. (37)

The extent of his alcoholism is revealed in Mrs. Cherry Owen’s recap of the events the night before. Not only do we see him come home staggeringly drunk and throw his food against the wall, but also his lack of remorse becomes evident in his reference to himself as God. Instead of an apology, his only concern is for himself: “was I wounded?” (37). Ignoring the question Mrs. Cherry Owen continue to discuss the extent of his drunken behavior:

MRS. CHERRY OWEN. And then you took off your trousers and you
said, ‘Does anybody want a fight!’ Oh, you old baboon.

CHERRY OWEN. Give me a kiss.

MRS. CHERRY OWEN. And then you sang ‘Bread of Heaven,’ tenor
and bass.

CHERRY OWEN. I always sing ‘Bread of Heaven.’

MRS. CHERRY OWEN. And then you did a little dance on the table.

CHERRY OWEN. I did?

MRS. CHERRY OWEN. Drop dead!

CHERRY OWEN. And then what did I do?

MRS. CHERRY OWEN. Then you cried like a baby and said you were a poor drunk orphan with nowhere to go but the grave.

CHERRY OWEN. And what did I do next, my dear?

MRS. CHERRY OWEN. Then you danced on the table all over again and said you were King Solomon Owen and I was your Mrs. Sheba.

CHERRY OWEN. And then?

MRS. CHERRY OWEN. And then I got you into bed and you snored all night like a brewery. (37-8)

Holbrook points out the irony in Cherry Owen's pulling down his trousers and asking if anyone wants to fight instead of asking if anyone wants to have sex. It is all but obvious that Cherry Owen mistakenly fumbled the wrong f-word in his attempt for sexual gratification. Traditionally, we think of someone wanting to fight as taking off a jacket instead of a pair of trousers, so the drunken miscue is clearly made evident and the alcoholic accepts the fight as a solution to his desire (*Dylan* 234).

The extent of his drunkenness is observed in its fullness at the completion of their conversation. His erratic behavior should create anger or concern, but as it happens, Mrs. Cherry Owen loves it, recalling the events with enjoyment rather than as a scold or a martyr (Lerner 273). In fact, the stage note tells the reader that the two laugh delightedly together. Perhaps, Mrs. Owen has an unprecedented notion of the force's amoral existence and its failure to discriminate. This would explain her willingness to understand and her reluctance to condemn. Nonetheless, Mrs. Cherry Owen functions as a companion for the drunken Owen as well as becoming an extension of her husband's drinking buddy. Moreover, she relates to the sober Cherry Owen by reliving the adventures shared with the drunken Cherry Owen (de Anda 19). Their relationship is comfortable in regards to Cherry Owen's underlying desire for drunkenness as it

manifests itself daily in his behavior. Again, he is not condemned for his behavior because he does not have any control over the force that drives him.

Cherry Owen appears again shortly after dusk as he makes his way, unsurprisingly, to the Sailors Arms. The First Voice tells us that he “goes off happy as Saturday to get drunk as a deacon as he does every night” (88). There are two key elements in the First Voice’s narration. First, we hear that he is happy as he goes off to the bar. This happiness is a result of his succumbing to his inner desire and embracing the force’s control. He is happy because he knows that the Sailors Arms sells his beloved alcohol. Secondly, and again coming as no surprise, the First Voice tells us that he does this every night.

On his way to the bar, Cherry Owen admits that his wife has two husbands: “one drunk and one sober” (88). This juxtaposition of opposites reinforces the force’s duality. She hypothetically replies, “Aren’t I a lucky woman?” Although one would think that this has a sarcastic tone, she follows it by admitting that she loves them both.

Upon arriving at the Sailors Arms, Owen is greeted by Sinbad Sailors who asks, “What’ll you have?” (88). He replies, “too much,” and his night of excessive drinking begins as the night falls on the town. Here, we see that Owen is well aware of his alcoholism, as he purposely sets out to drink more than enough. While Owen sits at the bar, the First Voice tells us that the drinkers in the bar drink to the failure of the Dance. Cherry Owen claims that “dancing isn’t natural,” and the First Voice reveals that he has already drunk seventeen pints of Welsh bitter beer. This extraordinary amount of alcohol is supplemented by the shortness of time during which he has downed these pints. Also, keep in mind that these are pints, sixteen ounces of beer, compared to the usual, single serving of only twelve ounces. We can only assume that he continues to drink at this enormous pace because the next time that we see him he is resting on a tombstone at Bethesda on his way home. Apparently too drunk to continue, Cherry Owen takes a break from the now daunting task of walking home. It is important to notice that Cherry Owen is so drunk that he is taking the wrong way home. In order to rest on a tombstone he needs to exit the Sailors Arms on Coronation Street, which is in the opposite direction of his house. Regardless of the fact that Thomas put him on two different streets, both Cockle Row and Donkey Street are on the other side of the Sailors Arms. Nevertheless,

this illustrates the extent of his drunkenness. He has drunk to the point that his sense of direction is skewed, resulting in his taking the long way home. Therefore, Cherry Owen demonstrates perhaps more than any of the other characters in the play the extent to which the universal, amoral force drives him. As a result of the force, Owen runs from the consciousness of sobriety every night of his life.

P. C. Atilla Rees is the town's police officer and another one of the characters whom we do not know much about. The First Voice takes the reader into his house where we see him lump out of bed still asleep and drag out his helmet from under his bed. Although we observe his actions, the First Voice never takes the reader into the actual content of the dream. However, as he is getting out of bed, a voice from deep within his sleep warns him that "you'll be sorry for this in the morning" (20). Whatever "this" is the reader is left to speculate, but it causes him to heave-ho back into bed. Therefore, the force uses fear to drive Rees's thoughts and actions.

All that we really know of Rees outside of this sequence is that his wife is buried in the graveyard at Bethesda. Perhaps he is haunted by her death and the mere thought of waking scares him back to sleep. Since we are not given any more about him, this seems to be a plausible explanation. However, we do see P. C. Atilla Rees getting out of bed in a fury only to go make sure that the sea is still there. Because the sea symbolizes death for Captain Cat, this symbolism applies to Rees as well (Davis 82). Therefore, fear surfaces as the vehicle for the force's control.

We have already seen Willy Nilly delivering the mail on his route and it comes as no surprise that he dreams of delivering the mail. In his dream the First Voice tells us that he "walks fourteen miles to deliver the post as he does every day of the night" (20). Although his profession appears to be the driving force behind Willy Nilly, it is curiosity and the opportunity to keep track of everyone's business that keeps him in the profession. He is the stereotypical postman who noses through everyone's mail. We already know that Mrs. Willy Nilly steams open the mail and this is how the couple stays up-to-date on the town's business. When Willy Nilly delivers the mail, he also reports any news circulating through the town. Lerner sees his deliveries as an excuse for chatter (269). However, he already knows the contents of the letter before he gives it to the person, so it is more than just an opportunity to chat with the neighbors. For instance, when he

delivers the letter to Mrs. Ogmores-Pritchard addressed from Builth Wells, he already knows that a young man wishes to reside at her house while he studies birds. How else could he have known this unless he had previously read the letter? Mrs. Ogmores-Pritchard is not the only one. Upon delivering the mail to the Pugh's, he informs Mrs. Pugh of his previous encounters with the other neighbors, but Mrs. Pugh is only concerned with the package. After abruptly cutting Willy Nilly short, she inquires as to the contents of the package hinting that she is aware that he goes through their mail. Immediately and without hesitation he explains that it is a book called *Lives of the Great Poisoners*. Furthermore, when Willy Nilly arrives at Manchester House, he recites (not reads) the letter sent to Mr. Edwards from Miss Price. As Mr. Waldo passes he hands him a letter explaining that it is another paternity summons. Although this is the last stop that we see Willy Nilly make on his mail route, we can safely assume that this continues with every house in the town.

Willy Nilly is not entirely to blame for intruding in on the town's privacy. In fact, Mrs. Willy Nilly admits during breakfast as she stands over her boiling kettles that she is ready to steam open the mail. Perhaps, this is the reason that every night of his dreams Willy Nilly spans his wife. However, there are some definite sexual connotations as she whimpers by his side, "Don't spank me, please, teacher" (20). Here, we see a little bit of role-playing intermixed with her punishment. Nevertheless, both characters are subject to the force that drives them to intrude in on the town's business.

We hear from the couple again after Willy Nilly receives the reply letter from Mr. Mog Edwards. Unable to contain his curiosity, he rushes home to his wife so that she can steam open the letter. Once he arrives at his home, Mrs. Willy Nilly takes the letter and holds it over the boiling kettles releasing the seal. Once the letter is open she reads aloud the contents to her anticipating husband. Immediately after hearing the contents of the letter, Willy Nilly heads back out to complete his mail route. Therefore, the force controls the Nillys through their continual curiosity. Again, we interpret this behavior negatively, but it is the amoral nature of the force that is responsible.

With the First Voice serving as escort through the dreams of the town, we systematically arrive at the Sailors Arms where Sinbad Sailors sleeps over the taproom. Although we do not descend directly into the dream, the First Voice tells us that as he

dreams he hugs his pillow whose secret name is Gossamer Beynon. From this clue we can gather that Sinbad is dreaming of Gossamer, and as the day continues, it becomes obvious that his desire for her drives his thoughts and actions.

During breakfast, Sinbad draws a pint of beer and looks at the ship's clock. Half past eleven is opening time, but the hands of the clock have remained at half past eleven for the past fifty years. Just before sipping his beer, he toasts to himself: "Here's to me, Sinbad" (41). Although the drink does not drive Sinbad, it serves as a reaction to his love for Gossamer. As we shall see later, he feels inadequate and this results in his willingness to begin the day with a drink.

Shortly before the afternoon we see Sinbad Sailors serving Mr. Waldo his pints of beer. Without any prior mention of her Sinbad confesses to Waldo that he "dote[s] on that Gossamer Beynon" (61). Thus, we can conclude that he has been thinking of her this entire morning. His continual thoughts of her exemplify the amount of control that the force has on Sailors. He even claims that if only his grandmother would die he would ask Gossamer to marry him. Here, the extent of the power that his desire has on him becomes clearly evident.

Shortly after serving Mr. Waldo, Sinbad sits by the window watching Gossamer Beynon pass by. All of the men in the street and in the bar undress her with their eyes. Sailors, lost in a daydream, imagines placing his hands on her thighs. As she passes by, Sinbad is taken aback by her modest and proud demeanor, and the Second voice claims that this "icemaide[n] daughter [is] veiled forever from the hungry hug of his eyes" (68). Seemingly defeated, Sinbad grieves to his Guinness and wishes that she was not so educated. As we can see, Sinbad is overwhelmed by his desire for her and again turns to the drink to ease the pain of his apparent inability to gain her love. The force creates a desire for her that overshadows all of Sailors's thoughts and consumes his every emotion.

As the play nears its end, we again see Sinbad doting over Beynon. He recalls looking at the ship's clock recalling that the Sailors Arms is always open. The First Voice tells the reader that he suffers this realization to himself heartbroken over his inability to fulfill his desire. The mention of the Sailors Arms being always open leads him to plead for Beynon to open hers. Here, we see a play on meaning in that the name of the bar also refers to his condition. The Sailors Arms is always open to guests just like Sinbad the

Sailor's arms are always open to Gossamer. Therefore, it is clear that his desire for love is the force's controlling agent that drives him throughout the day.

As the reader follows the First Voice through the town, we arrive at Lily Smalls, the Beynon's hired help. Although we only get a one-sentence description of the contents of her dream, it supplies us with abundance into her character and the force's effect on her. After describing Sinbad Sailors's dream, the First Voice tells us that "a mogul catches Lily Smalls in the wash-house" (21). Although it is difficult to speculate at this point about the meaning of the dream, there are two key points that clue the reader into its meaning. First, a mogul is an important person and the word carries with it religious connotations. Therefore, getting "caught" by a religious figure implies that she is being "naughty." When the mogul catches her she replies, "Ooh, you old mogul!" (21). The tone of this response is disappointment and the fact that she calls the mogul "old" implies that she is, in fact, involved in a disagreeable activity. As it turns out, mischief surfaces as the vehicle for the force's control on Lily Smalls.

As Lily wakes up, the First Voice gives the reader more clues behind the dream. According to the narrator, she comes downstairs from a dream of "royalty who all night long went larking with her full of sauce in the Milk Wood dark" (29). As a servant it is not surprising that she would dream of herself as royalty, but the important aspect of the dream is that she is "larking," engaging in seemingly harmless mischief.

Her servitude has taken its effect on Lily as we see her struggling with her reflection in the mirror:

Oh there's a face!
Where you get that hair from?
Got it from a old tom cat.
Give it back then, love.
Oh, there's a perm!
Where you get that nose from, Lily?
Got it from my father, silly.
You've got it on upside down!
Oh, there's a conk!
Look at you complexion!

Oh, no, you look.
Needs a bit of make-up.
Needs a veil.
Oh, there's glamour!
Where you get that smile, Lil?
Never you mind, girl.
Nobody loves you.
That's what you think.
Who is it loves you?
Shan't tell.
Come on, Lily.
Cross your heart, then?
Cross my heart. (29-30)

Here, we see Lily carrying on a conversation with herself, presumably recapping comments she has received in the past. Although her self-consciousness is a result of her servitude, it fuels her desire to create mischief. Her lack of confidence stems from the force and serves as an additional source of control. Just as we see Lily leaning towards the mirror to breathe the name of her love, Mrs. Beynon yells loudly from above inquiring about her morning tea. Lily softly replies, "Where d'you think? In the cat-box" (30). This response illustrates her underlying desire for mischief, but like any good servant, she obliges.

After breakfast, we do not hear from Lily Smalls again, but the Second Voice tells the reader that she is "up to Nogood Boyo in the wash-house" (88). Although Nogood Boyo is the name of one of the characters, the statement does not refer to him. Instead it is a simple description of Lily's mischief, being up to no good. Neither of the narrators discloses her actions, but the emphasis is on her mischief. Thus, we see Lily acting out the contents of her dream with mischief surfacing as the premier driving force. She does not have any direction over the inexorable force that controls her.

Mrs. Rose Cottage lives next door to Rev. Jenkins and the Pughs. Although she is not the focus of the scene, her oldest daughter, Mae, dreams that she "peels off her pink-and-white skin in a furnace in a tower in a cave in a waterfall in a wood and waits there

raw as an onion for Mister Right to leap up the burning tall hallow splashes of leaves like a brilliantined trout” (21). The mere description of her dream reveals the underlying sexuality hidden beneath the young woman. In fact, the force creates a sexual desire that she represses in an attempt to reconcile her identity apart from the force. During the dream she closely and softly says, “Call me Dolores like they do in the stories” (21). According to Grooms this is a reference to H. G. Wells’s novel *Apropos of Dolores*, in which the story is of a superlatively common woman (“Notes”). Therefore, we see that Mae Rose Cottage thinks of herself as this infinitely common woman. This is due, in part, to the fact that she is still a virgin. Here, we see the juxtaposition of sexuality with virginity, which reflects the force’s duality. It is also important to consider the root of the name Dolores. Dolor, as in Theodore Roethke’s famous poem, refers to sadness. Mae Rose’s sadness results from her loneliness and lack of sexual gratification. As we shall see later in the play, it is this desire for physical with which the force drives her character.

While Captain Cat listens to the morning’s activities, he describes her sexuality as she passes by: “High heels now, in the morning too, Mrs. Rose Cottage’s eldest Mae, seventeen and never been kissed ho ho, going young and milking under my window to the field with her nannygoats, she reminds me all the way” (47). From this sporadic description, we can infer that she is still a virgin, although her sexuality is beginning to surface. Here, we see her beginning to resolve the conflict with the force as she begins to embrace the force. Captain Cat describes her as “young and milking,” which is a direct reference to her abundant sexuality. He even goes on to say that she reminds him all the way referring to his former sexual vitality with the deceased Rosie Probert. The fact that Captain Cat has taken notice of her underlying sexuality reveals that it is surfacing.

During the afternoon Mae Rose takes her nannygoats to the field where she lies nearly asleep in the field. Lazily, she blows on a puffball leaving to chance whether “he loves [or] he loves me not” (81). Finally, she arrives at “he loves me,” but she remains alone. Her willingness to let the puffball decide her love’s fate shows that love is on her mind. In fact, it is consuming her every thought as she neglects her duties to the goats.

As the sun begins to set, Mae Rose is still lying in the grass thinking of love. The Second Voice tells the reader that she “draws circles of lipstick around her nipples” (86). This exemplifies the extent with which her desire for love has grown. Drawing these

circles is both an act of pleasure and a cry for attention. Aside from the pleasure of stimulating her nipples, she draws circles around them in order to highlight her readiness. She wishes to draw attention to her vitality, but no one is there except the goats. After drawing the lipstick circles, she tells the goats that “I’m fast. I’m a bad lot. God will strike me dead. I’m seventeen. I’ll go to hell ... You just wait. I’ll sin till I blow up!” (86). Here, we see her desire rising to its climax as she fully embraces the force. Her desire for physical love has driven her to embrace her sexuality, but unfortunately there is not anyone to fulfill her desire and she remains alone and unfulfilled. Ironically, her willingness to engage sexually is met by an absence of partners, indicative of the force’s duality.

Bessie Bighead, the hired help on Salt Lake Farm, sleeps high in the loft and dreams of “pick[ing] a posy of daisies in Sunday Meadow to put on the grave of Gomer Owen who kissed her once by the pig-sty when she wasn’t looking and never kissed her again although she was looking all the time” (21). Like many of the characters before her, Bessie dreams of love and this emotion surfaces throughout the day.

The only other time that we hear from Bessie is during the late afternoon when she greets the cows driven by Farmer Watkins. Her interaction with the dairy cows is not the focus of this scene, but rather the First Voice provides an important glimpse into her character:

Look up Bessie Bighead in the White Book of Llareggub and you will find the few haggard rags and the one poor glittering thread of her history laid out in pages there with as much love and care as the lock of hair of a first lost love. Conceived in Milk Wood, born in a barn, wrapped in paper, left in a doorstep, big-headed and bass-voiced she grew in the dark until long-dead Gomer Owen kissed her when she wasn’t looking because he was dared. Now in the light she’ll work, sing, milk, say the cows’ sweet names and sleep until the night sucks out her soul and spits it into the sky. In her life-long love light, holily Bessie milks the fond lake-eyed cows as dusk showers slowly down over byre, sea and town. (84)

The word that stands out in this description of her is “love,” and as it turns out, love is her distinguishing characteristic. From the moment that Gomer Owen kissed her, Bessie’s

life changed. No longer is she the timid unwanted character that found herself on the doorstep as a child. This kiss sparked an emotion inside of her that continued to thrive even through Gomer's death. Again, we can see the characteristic duality of the amoral force. On one hand it seems cruel that the kiss was a dare, but on the other hand it ignited a feeling within her that brought her out of the darkness. The kiss becomes a representation of the negative and positive aspects of the force, and the love that resulted from this kiss surfaces as the vehicle for the force's control.

The next couple that we meet is the Beynons. Although we do not know much about Mrs. Beynon's dream, the First Voice tells us that "the Inspectors of Cruelty fly down into Mrs. Butcher Beynon's dream to persecute Mr. Beynon" (21-2). The reason behind his persecution lies in the fact that she believes her husband sells unorthodox meat such as owl, dog, and even human for consumption. Although this is not the case, she is haunted by her husband's deception and this continues throughout the day. The important aspect of her dream is her willingness to believe these preposterous lies.

Mr. Beynon, asleep beside her, dreams of "hunting on pigback shoot[ing] down the wild giblets" (22). The content of his dream is not as important as the description given by the Second Voice: "Straightfaced in his cunning sleep he pulls the legs of his dreams" (22). Here, we see deception surfacing as the defining characteristic of Butcher Beynon. He deceives even his dreams as he creates a fictional scene of riding on a pig's back hunting for internal organs. As we shall see, Butcher Beynon does not use these internal organs for food, but rather wishes to deceive everyone into thinking that he does. In fact, his deception is a reaction to the force. Mr. Beynon wishes to escape the absolute control of the force, but realizes that only through lying can he achieve some sort of control over his environment. Therefore, it is clear that deception drives Butcher Beynon.

When the couple sits down to breakfast, Mr. Beynon immediately begins deceiving Mrs. Beynon into thinking that they are having cat liver for breakfast. Once she becomes hysterical, he claims that they had eaten mole, otter, and shrews earlier in the week. At this point, Mrs. Beynon screams with horror and Lily asserts that he is lying calling him the biggest liar in town. Mrs. Beynon, blind to the apparently obvious facts, scolds Lily claiming that Mr. Beynon never tells a lie. Rejoicing in the excitement caused by his deception, he responds with another lie: "And now I am going out after the

corgies, with my little cleaver” (40). Here, we see that lies consume Mr. Beynon’s conversation, and according to Lily, the entire town knows that he is a habitual liar, representative of the extent of his deception. Ironically, the only person in the town who believes his lies is Mrs. Beynon and they continually haunt her.

The conversation between the gossiping neighbors confirms Lily’s claim that the entire town knows of his deception. Although it is gossip, there is some truth in their conversation. The Third Woman asks the others if they have seen Mrs. Beynon, to which the Second Woman replies, “she said Butcher Beynon put dogs in the mincer” (50). The First Woman reminds the others that he is pulling her leg, but they cannot tell her that because “she’ll think he’s trying to pull it off and eat it” (51). We can see the extent of Butcher Beynon’s deception as well as Mrs. Beynon’s willingness to believe these lies.

Perhaps the most illuminating character in the town is Reverend Eli Jenkins. He is the town’s self-proclaimed poet and preacher. The First Voice takes us into his dream where we find him dreaming of “Eisteddfodau” (23). The term *Eisteddfodau* takes its name from the Welsh *eistedd* (to sit) and *fod* (place) and refers to the traditional Welsh poetry contests in which the best poet wins either the crown or the chair (Grooms “Notes”). In his dream, the Second Voice tells us, “he intricately rhymes, to the music of *crwth* and *pibgorn*, all night long in his druid’s seedy necktie in a beer-tent black with parchs” (23). This description is again full of references to *Eisteddfodau*. The intricate rhymes refer to the traditional *cynghanedd*, which are verse forms commonly used in the competition (Jones 8). “*Crwth* and *pibgorn*” are two traditional Welsh instruments and the “druid’s seedy necktie” refers to the long white robes currently worn by the druid poets at the National Eisteddfodau in Wales (Grooms “Notes”). Poetry is the focus of the dream and it surfaces as the vehicle by which the force drives Jenkins’s character throughout the day.

Reverend Jenkins is the first person awakened by Captain Cat’s morning bell. Upon waking he dresses and immediately walks barefoot downstairs and pays homage to the town in a poem:

Dear Gwalia! I know there are
Towns lovelier than ours,
And fairer hills and loftier far,

And groves more full of flowers,
And boskier woods more blithe with spring
And bright with birds' adorning,
And sweeter bards than I do sing
Their praise this beauteous morning.

By Cader Idris, tempest-torn,
Or Moel yr Wyddfa's glory,
Carnedd Llewelyn beauty born
Plinlimmon old in story,

By mountains where King Arthur dreams,
By Penmaenmawr defiant,
Llareggub Hill a molehill seems,
A pygmy to a giant.

By Sawddwy, Senny, Dovey, Dee,
Edw, Eden, Aled, all,
Taff and Towry broad and free,
Llyfant with its waterfall,

Claerwen, Cleddau, Dulais, Daw,
Ely, Gwili, Ogwr, Nedd,
Small is our River Dewi, Lord,
A baby on a rushy bed.

By Carreg Cennen, King of time,
Our Heron Head is only
A bit of stone with seaweed spread
Where gulls come to be lonely.

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. (27-8)

This poem is his morning service and identifies his sense of place. All of the grand and wondrous aspects of the town are contrasted to Wales, but the mere inability to pronounce the names seemingly undercuts the intended charm; however, it illustrates the extent of Reverend Jenkins's knowledge outside of Llareggub (Lerner 271-2). He experiences the force's control positively with poetry driving his character throughout the day.

Poetry takes precedence over all other aspects of his day. In fact, during breakfast he "finds a rhyme and dips his pen in his cocoa" (36). The cocoa is presumably all that he has for breakfast, yet we see him use it as ink in order to capture a rhyme on paper. The force fuels a desire for poetry that takes precedence over everything else, including food.

Soon after breakfast, Jenkins makes his morning rounds to visit the sick. On his way he stops to hear Polly Garter sing as she scrubs the Welfare Hall. It is not the melody or the contents of the song that attracts him, but the poetic quality of the song. It is composed up of two eight-line verses with a repeating quatrain as the chorus and adheres to a strict rhyme scheme of aabbccdd etc. Once the song ends, he continues on his morning calls. Although this is not an unusual duty for a clergyman, he brings along jelly and poems. While sitting at the bar Mr. Waldo comments on Jenkins's "brolly and his odes" revealing that this is not unusual (61). We can conclude that through poetry the force controls every aspect of his life including his profession as a clergyman.

We get a description of his home towards the end of the play. While he writes in his life's work, the White Book of Llareggub, we are told that he is in the parlour or, as he calls it, the poem-room. Aside from its name, pictures of famous poets and preachers

hang from the walls. As the sun begins to set, Reverend Jenkins recites his sunset poem from the doorway of his house. This is another paean to the town and it completes the cycle. After his “evening service,” he returns to the poem-room to continue writing in the White Book of Llareggub on the importance of place and the innocence of men. At this point, it becomes obvious that through poetry the force drives every aspect of his life.

Mr. Pugh is the town’s schoolmaster who lives at the School House. In his deep sleep, he pretends to be sleeping while spying on his wife through the edges of his nightcap and whistles up murder. Although this is all that we get of his dream, it is enough to conclude that plotting against his wife drives his existence.

We already know from Willy Nilly’s morning mail route that he has ordered a book entitled *Lives of the Great Poisoners*. When we first see the couple together, the tension between them becomes very obvious. As he takes the morning tea upstairs to his wife Mr. Pugh whispers, “Here’s your arsenic, dear. And your weedkiller biscuit. I’ve throttled your parakeet. I’ve spat in the vases. I’ve put cheese in the mouseholes” (30-1). Aside from serving her poison, he rebels against her by suggesting that he killed her bird, spit in the vases, and contributed to their rodent problem. However, when he actually opens the door to her room he says, “Here’s your ... nice tea dear,” and we see that none of this has actually happened (31). The source of his hatred arises from her continual nagging. Before he can give her the tea she claims that there is too much sugar in it. He inquires how she can know that when she has not tasted it. She replies, “Too much milk, then” (31). Here, we can see the extent of her continual nagging and her willingness to find fault with everything. Like Mr. Waldo, Mr. Pugh exhibits a hatred of domesticity and a fear of women.

During breakfast and lunch the tension between the couple mounts. As Mr. Pugh fixes their breakfast, he thinks of putting ground glass in Mrs. Pugh’s omelet while she characteristically nags the saltcellar. Even though his plotting her death is detestable, he is not condemned because the uncontrollable, amoral force drives his thoughts. As the two sit at the dining-room table, Mr. Pugh reads from his book that he has bound in a plain brown-paper cover and spies on Mrs. Pugh poisoning her with his eyes. While he reads he underlines certain passages and smiles in secret enjoying the plot against Mrs. Pugh. She cannot resist the temptation to criticize his reading: “Persons with manners do

not read at table ... Some persons were brought up in pigsties” (69). Mr. Pugh responds calmly that pigs cannot read. Outraged, Mrs. Pugh flicks pieces of broken crust at him claiming that she knows one who can, obviously referring to Mr. Pugh. His responses are calm because, as the First Voice reveals,

in the hissing laboratory of his wishes, [he] minces among bad vats and jeroboams, tiptoes through spinneys of murdering herbs, agony dancing in his crucibles, and mixes especially for Mrs. Pugh a venomous porridge unknown to toxicologists which will scald and viper through her until her ears fall off like figs, her toes grow big and black as balloons, and steam comes screaming out of her navel. (70)

Again, we see the duality of the force exhibited in a character. Outwardly, Mr. Pugh is calm and collected, but inwardly he is inflamed and hysterical. The brutality and harshness of the words describing his thoughts of her death illustrate the intensity with which he enjoys plotting against his wife. Nevertheless, this nagging and plotting continues as she keeps referring to him as a pig and he continues to think of her death.

The last time that we see this couple they are still sitting at the table. However, as the afternoon takes its toll, Mr. Pugh begins to fall asleep. “Persons with manners do not nod at table,” snaps Mrs. Pugh. “You should wait until you retire to your sty.” Before dismissing her comment, the Second Voice tells the reader that he

foxes into his chemist’s den and there, in a hiss and prussic circle of cauldrons and phials brimful with pox and the Black Death, cooks up a fricassee of deadly night-shade, nicotine, hot frog, cyanide and bat-spit for his needling stalactite hag and bednag of a pokerbacked nutcracker wife. (75)

Although it seems absurd that these two remain together, we must remember that the force is amoral and nondiscriminatory. Consequently, Thomas remarked in a letter to *Botteghe Oscure* that “she likes nagging, he likes plotting, in supposed secrecy, against her ... how lucky they are to be married” (Lerner 272). Her continual nagging fuels the force by increasing his desire to plot against his wife.

As we travel through the town’s dreams, we revisit the home of the Morgan’s. We have already seen Organ Morgan, but now the First Voice introduces the reader to Mrs.

Organ Morgan. Aside from being Organ Morgan's wife, she is also the town's groceress. In her sleep she covers her ears and dreams of silence, where even the trumpeting Organ Morgan "snores no louder than a spider" (24). In her dream she finds peace from the continual music. Although we do not see much more of her we already know that she considers herself a martyr to music. Therefore, it is the thought and the ability to conjure silence in her dream that the force surfaces in Mrs. Organ Morgan. The duality of the force is exhibited by her escape into the dream world where her waking experience with the force is negative, but her retreat into peaceful sleep is positive.

Mary Ann Sailors is the grandmother of Sinbad Sailors and she, too, lives in the Sailors Arms. In her sleep she dreams of "the Garden of Eden" (24). Aside from the Reverend, she emerges as the religious figure in the play. While dreaming of the Garden, she imagines herself walking out of the kitchen draped in Sunday school pictures towards the old man playing the harmonium in the apple orchard. The apple orchard and the old man are direct references to the Garden of Eden. It is important to notice that it is *the* old man rather than just an old man, a probable reference to God. Nevertheless, she sits on the grass by his side and "shells the green peas that grow up through the lap of her frock that brushes the dew" (24). Images that describe her kitchen such as "cobbled," "whitewashed walled," and "applepie" characterize Mary Ann Sailors as every mother, yet at the same time she is also Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Eve, the first woman in the Garden of Eden (de Anda 23). Nevertheless, this idealized Garden is the setting of her dream through which the force drives Mary Ann Sailors.

As soon as she wakes up from her Arcadian dream, she rushes to the bedroom window to call out to the heavens. Although the sky is commonly referred to as "the heavens," it has particular significance here. She is praising God that she is "eighty-five years three months and a day" (32). Even at breakfast she "praises the Lord who made porridge" (35). Again, we see that through religion the force controls her thoughts immediately upon awakening and continuing throughout the day.

As the day reaches the afternoon, we see Mary Ann for the last time standing at her bedroom window looking out over Llareggub Hill. Again, religion surfaces as she refers to the town as "the Chosen Land" (54). Even her poetic language is an indication of her sense of holiness (Davis 83). For her, Llareggub represents the ideal pastoral world

and the stage note describes her feelings. As she peers out over the town, “a choir of children’s voices suddenly cries out on one, high, glad, long, sighing note” (54). This creates a scene where the feeling described is an intense religious experience reaching near euphoria. Every time that we hear from Mary Ann she is described in a religious tone that stresses religion as her defining characteristic.

With the quickly approaching dawn, the First Voice rushes to reveal the dreams of the inhabitants who live on Donkey Street. As a result we are only given the central core idea presented in their dreams. Dai Bread, the town baker, is the first character that we meet and we are told that he dreams of “harems.” (25). A harem refers to a group of women associated with one male and, as we shall see, this is exactly the case for Dai Bread.

According to Rae, Dai is commonly used in Wales as a shortened form of David (539). However, it seems likely that Thomas used this shortened name as a reference to Dai-ly Bread. Therefore, his daily bread is this multiplicity of women. We are introduced to Mrs. Dai Bread One and Mrs. Dai Bread Two, each apparently married to Dai Bread although some critics see Mrs. Dai Bread Two as his mistress, only jokingly referred to as Mrs. Dai Bread Two behind his back (Rea 539). Nonetheless, the fact that he has two wives stresses the notion that polygamy, an extension of love, stems from the amoral force that drives his character.

Mrs. Dai Bread One is the conservative wife who directly contrasts Mrs. Dai Bread Two’s sensuality. Mrs. Dai Bread One is fat, shawled, and likes to be “comfy,” a reference to her loose clothing. On the contrary, Mrs. Dai Bread Two is thin, sultry, and wears revealing clothes, exemplifying her sexuality. In fact, these contrasting women are representations of the duality of the force. The two women encompass the entire spectrum of women for Dai Bread, as one woman could not satisfy his needs. However, even these two women have trouble satisfying him: “nothing for breakfast, there’s wives for you” (33). This multiplicity of women becomes the solution for his underlying desire, and ironically all three happily embrace the force’s control over their lives.

Polly Garter who lives next door to Dai Bread dreams of babies. Again, this one-word description of her dream supplies the reader with enough information to conclude that the force controls her through a passion for procreation.

We already know that Polly has been with Mr. Waldo the night before and will sleep with him again at the close of the play, but we have not seen the extent of her willingness to procreate. When we first see Polly she is in her garden breast-feeding her newborn baby. She admits that nothing grows in the garden, only the clothes hanging on the line and babies. These babies are, of course, a result of her willingness to engage in free love. Even the neighbors know that she “can’t say No even to midgets” (71). But this does not discourage Polly from accepting her sexual promiscuity.

While Captain Cat is listening to the morning’s activities, he reveals that Polly Garter is again pregnant: “seen Polly Garter giving her belly an airing” (47). This indicates that she is far along in yet another pregnancy. This, however, is not discouraging as Polly sighs “isn’t life a terrible thing, thank God” (34). This statement alone represents the duality of the amoral force controlling Polly Garter; it contains both a positive and negative outlook. Nonetheless, we see that she is not upset by her single parent status. In fact, she does not care because she rejoices in her pregnancy.

As Polly Garter scrubs the Women’s Welfare Hall in preparation for the upcoming dance, she sings of her promiscuity. Through the song she reveals the multitude of men that she has been with and reveals that she thinks of her one love, Little Willy Wee, while the various men “do what they please” (60). Therefore, we see that she does have some idea of love, but it is procreation that keeps her coming back for more. Polly Garter becomes the mother-lover who warm and milky caresses the memory of her long lost love (de Anda 24). Because her one true love is dead, the force drives her to escape her loneliness by having a brood of babies.

Nogood Boyo is another character who lives on Donkey Street. Again, the First Voice only gives the reader a one-word description of his dream, but it is enough to illustrate the force’s control. The narrator tells us that he dreams of “nothing” (25). Although this seems very obscure, “nothing” refers to being up to no good, as his name implies (Rea 539). It is not necessarily mischief, but rather just being up to no good with which the force drives his character.

The first time that we see Nogood Boyo is in the wash-house where he confesses to being “up to no good” (34). Again, the reader is left to speculate on the details, but the focus is on the fact that he is up to no good. As the day progresses, Nogood Boyo takes

the “Zanzibar” out to sea where he lazily lies on his back and questions religion: “I don’t know who’s up there and I don’t care” (41). This agnostic view of religion is consistent with his characteristic nothingness.

Laziness becomes synonymous with Nogood Boyo’s being up to no good. In fact, the gossiping neighbors center on this characteristic:

FIRST WOMAN. Look at that Nogood Boyo now

SECOND WOMAN. too lazy to wipe his snout

THIRD WOMAN. and going out fishing every day and all he ever brought back was a Mrs. Samuel’s

FIRST WOMAN. been in the water a week. (51)

As a result of his laziness, Nogood Boyo is a terrible fisherman catching nothing except a corpse. Again, this characteristic “nothingness” surfaces as the defining attribute of Nogood Boyo.

Later in the play, a child and her mother see Nogood Boyo still fishing from the “Zanzibar.” The child tells her mother that “Nogood Boyo gave me three pennies yesterday but I wouldn’t” (79). Here, the reader is again left to speculate, but from the children’s game described earlier in the play we can safely conclude that it involves an act of sexual gratification. Recall that the young girls solicit kisses from the boys at a penny each, so three pennies would get Nogood Boyo a little further than just a kiss.

The Second Voice tells the reader that Nogood Boyo catches a whalebone corset, the only thing that he has caught all day. However, in his idle mind the force conjures up a seductive image of Mrs. Dai Bread Two dressed only in a nightgown, presumably the see-through gown that she wears in the morning. During his fantasy, he asks her if she would like this wet corset and a bite of his little apple. This, of course, has definite sexual undertones. However, she refuses his advance and he conjures up another sultry woman willing to satisfy his desire. He says to himself that he wants to be good Boyo, but no one will let him, including himself. This is a direct plead to the force. Occasionally, he seeks as identity apart from the force, but each time he realizes that it is impossible. Therefore, we see that the force drives him, at times, against his will. Thus, sexual gratification, laziness, and mischief all encompass being up to no good. Again, we must be cautious in

criticizing Nogood Boyo since his thoughts and actions are a result of the inexorable, amoral force at work in the universe.

The last character that we meet is Lord Cut-Glass. “Cut-glass” refers to his accent and literally means “very fine” (Rea 540). In his sleep he hears the ominous sound of time passing: “tick tock tick tock tick tock tick tock” (25). As we shall see, his obsession with time indicates his fear of death which is the driving force behind his lunacy.

Lord Cut-Glass is perhaps the character who is the most aware of the existence of the force. Recall that in Thomas’s poem “The Force” time becomes synonymous with the force. It is the “lips of time [that] leech to the fountainhead” (16). Just as in “The Force” the “lips of time” take on a vampirish quality and slowly eradicate his quality of life. In a sense, Lord Cut-Glass is the representation of the “fountainhead.” As time passes, he grows more aware of his closeness with death. Each year brings him closer to succumbing to the force, but he believes that he can ward off its inevitability. However, the force cannot be controlled and his resistance is foolish. Within Lord Cut-Glass Thomas seems to suggest that we should embrace the force and avoid wasting time fearing death. The cyclic nature of the process guarantees that death is inevitable, but it gives us hope in that death results in another life. Therefore, Lord Cut-Glass’s thoughts and actions become representative of the central problem of reconciliation of the individual with the force. As we shall see, his odd mannerisms are reactions to the control of the force.

During breakfast we see his obsession with time influencing his actions. After he dresses, he runs outside to feed his dog and immediately runs inside again with the sound of the clock looming in the background. Note that the emphasis here is on the fact that he runs in and out. Unable to waste any time, he must hurriedly run in and out keeping a watchful eye on the time. Even at breakfast he “scampers from clock to clock, a bunch of clock keys in one hand, a fish-head in the other” (36). He does not have time to sit down and enjoy his breakfast for fear that he may lose track of the time. His fear of death and resistance to the force cause him to keep an ever-watchful eye on the clocks in his house.

The First Voice reveals that Lord Cut-Glass has sixty-six clocks in his house, one for every year of his age. As if this is not strange enough, all of these clocks are set at different hours. He fears that the “unknown enemy will loot and savage downhill, but

they will not catch him napping” (72). The unknown enemy is the force, and he seeks to confuse or stall it by having sixty-six different clocks chiming at different times. Spring for Lord Cut-Glass means nothing more than the passing of time, a step closer to that day when “the tribes and navies of the Last Black Day ... pillage down Armageddon Hill to his dust-scrabbled shack” (73). These armies and navies personify the force. Therefore, we see that his obsession with time and resistance to the force have driven him completely insane. Unfortunately for Lord Cut-Glass, the force cannot be fooled and his attempts only fuel its control over him.

Thomas’s poetry and dramatic prose are a celebration of life, but with this celebration also comes the realization that life and death are controlled by an unrelenting, amoral force. This creates a cycle of “process” in which life and death are integral parts. All of the characters in *Under Milk Wood* are subject to the inexorable, amoral force that Thomas defines in his poetry. His obsession with the force continues to surface throughout his work even though the genre changed. In *18 Poems* Thomas considers the effect and nature of the force as it exists within himself and his counterpart, the natural world. In *Under Milk Wood*, its control presents itself as the “Ruling Passion” in the unconsciousness of the characters’ dreams. Thomas chooses to identify the force in their sleep, so that the dreams serve as the bridge between the conscious and unconscious. This underlying force is the same force described in his poetry, yet it differs only in regards to the time frame. In *18 Poems* he examines the force on a larger scale, encompassing a longer period of time. In *Under Milk Wood* the force is illustrated in the lives of the characters over the span of one full day. This relentless control creates a cyclical process that results in their eccentricities. Because this force is universal, it affects each of the characters, but it affects each of them differently. We have already determined that the force is amoral, which accounts for the uniqueness with which it affects each character. Some embrace this force and it has a positive effect on their life. Others, however, react against it and their experience is negative. Because the force is amoral, it does not distinguish between good and bad. In fact, this is the reason that none of the characters are condemned for their actions. The play is often criticized for its lack of action, but the majority of the action occurs within the characters as they struggle with an individual identity apart from the force’s control. As in Thomas’s poetry, the central focus of *Under*

Milk Wood is the reconciliation of the individual with the force. When examined in this manner, the play is full of action. Nevertheless, Thomas's early poems and drama provide a detailed look into identifying and understanding the ever-present entity that cannot be controlled, yet controls everything in the universe.

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