

DYLAN THOMAS (1914-1953)

The Force That Through the Green Fuse
Drives the Flower

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
5 My youth is bent by the same wintry fever.

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 into my veins
10 How at the mountain spring the same mouth sucks.

The hand that whirls the water in the pool¹
Stirs the quicksand; that ropes the blowing wind
Hauls my shroud sail.
And I am dumb to tell the hanging man
15 How of my clay is made the hangman's lime.²

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
20 How time has ticked a heaven round the stars.

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

1933



¹ The hand of the angel who troubles the water of the pool Bethesda, thus rendering it curative, in *John* 5.1-4.

² Quicklime was sometimes poured into the graves of victims of the public hangmen to accelerate decomposition.