

Poetry in Process:
The Compositional Practices of D.H. Lawrence,
Dylan Thomas and Philip Larkin

being a thesis submitted for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Hull

by

Alexandra Mary Davies

BA (University of Wales, Lampeter),

MA (University of Wales, Cardiff)

September 2008

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Acknowledgements

For permission to use the manuscripts of D.H. Lawrence, I would like to thank: Pollinger Limited and the Estate of Frieda Lawrence Ravagli ; The Hallward Library, The University of Nottingham and The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre, University of Texas.

For permission to use Dylan Thomas's manuscripts, I would like to thank: David Higham Associates; The Houghton Library, Harvard University, The Poetry Collections of The University Libraries, State University of New York at Buffalo; The University of Delaware; The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre and The British Library, London.

For permission to quote the manuscripts of Philip Larkin, I would like to thank: The Society of Authors; The Marvell Press, England and Australia; The Brynmor Jones Library, The University of Hull and The British Library, London.

I would also like to thank my supervisor James Booth for his help and support.

Abbreviations

Larkin *CP* – Larkin, Philip, 1990. *Collected Poems*, Anthony Thwaite (ed). London: Marvell Press.

Lawrence *CP* – Lawrence, D.H, 1993. *The Complete Poems*, Vivian de Sola Pinto and Warren Roberts (eds). Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Thomas *CP* – Thomas, Dylan, 1953. *Collected Poems 1934-1952*. London: Dent.

Thomas *NB* – Thomas, Dylan, 1968. *Poet in the Making: The Notebooks of Dylan Thomas*. Ralph Maud (ed). London: Dent.

Introduction

Philip Larkin used the image of Winston Smith's blank notebook in George Orwell's *1984* to illustrate the excitement experienced by the writer faced with an as yet unwritten text. He explains that:

the books the past has given us...are printed; they are magnificent, but they are finite. Only the blank book, the manuscript book, may be the book we shall give the future. Its potentialities are endless. (Larkin 1983: 86)

This study of 'poetry in process' will compare the 'compositional practices' of three twentieth century poets in order to come closer to understanding the means by which poems are written. One conclusion which is perhaps inevitable from such a comparative study as this is that there is not a single approach to writing a poem. Each poet has idiosyncratic habits.

The thesis is divided into nine chapters, the first three of which cover the history and theory of manuscript study. 'Methodologies' evaluates differing critical approaches to manuscripts. It presents my methodology, which emphasises the importance of establishing chronological order and looking at subjective and objective changes. It considers, among other things, French Genetic Criticism, which seeks to use manuscripts to uncover the writing process (Deppman et al 2004: 11), and German Textual Criticism, which argues that each change to a text creates a new 'version' (Zeller 1975: 240). Sally Bushell has formulated an 'Anglo-

American genetic criticism' which finds a means of redefining 'intention' in terms of writers' discernible changes during the process of drafting (Bushell 2003: 58).

'Practicalities' looks briefly at my personal experience of working with manuscripts and outlines how modern literary manuscripts came to be collected by academic institutions, first in America and later in Britain. It explores the three poets' attitude to manuscripts and considers Larkin's active role in keeping manuscripts in Britain despite his self-consciousness at having his own processes exposed during his lifetime (DPL(2)/3/55/33). Finally, I consider how Andrew Motion has taken up the campaign to give incentives for British writers to sell their manuscripts to British institutions (<http://www.guardian.co.uk>). 'Compositional Practices' considers each poet's theoretical and practical approach to writing and establishes contrasts between their modes of composition. It explores: their statements about the nature and purpose of poetry; their work routines; their methods of setting their work on paper and their attitudes to the complete or published poems.

The remaining six chapters take the form of case studies of the compositional practices of the three poets. "'The Immediate Present": D.H. Lawrence' focuses on the way in which Lawrence creates new versions of poems concerned with his mother's death in new contexts within the notebooks. It considers 'Sorrow,' 'The Inheritance', 'The Virgin Mother' and 'The Piano.' There are two chapters each on Dylan Thomas and Philip Larkin. 'Shut...in a Tower of Words' looks at Thomas's relationship to language and his poetry about poetic vocation. It traces the growth of 'Prologue' through three distinct phases and

illustrates Thomas's typical techniques including his use of *Roget's Thesaurus*. 'Poetry, Dyslexia and Stringing the Bait' draws on biographical and manuscript evidence to argue that Thomas's techniques and *Gestalt* attitude to writing show possible dyslexic characteristics. It examines the structure of 'Ballad of the Long-legged Bait' and seeks to demonstrate how Thomas's unique drafting processes shaped the final poem. "'A Verbal Device": Philip Larkin' investigates Larkin's conflicting impulses towards 'Romanticism' and a 'less deceived' diction. It re-evaluates the manuscripts of 'Deceptions' (discussed by A.T. Tolley in *Larkin At Work*) and 'Absences' (considered by Graham Chesters in 'Tireless play: Speculations on Larkin's "Absences"'). 'Setting Unchangeably in Order: The Drafting of "Love Songs in Age"' looks at two distinct, historically distanced versions of 'Love Songs in Age.' Unusually for Larkin, two phases of drafting led to two typescript versions different enough to be considered as separate poems.

Finally, 'Ships of Death: A Comparative Study' compares poems by each poet which share the common symbol of a ship of death. It juxtaposes draft material related to Lawrence's 'The Ship of Death', Thomas's 'Prologue' and 'Poem on his Birthday', and Philip Larkin's 'Next, Please', in order to draw out their startling differences of approach to compositional practice.

Chapter 1

Methodologies

The traditional literary critic seeks to dissect the published poem in terms of language, imagery and form. By a close consideration of manuscript evidence, this thesis aims to step behind the completed work of art and scrutinize how these effects came into being. The access to manuscripts provided to the contemporary critic by the growth of library interest in 'foul papers' and drafts during the twentieth century has made it possible to discover the 'back story' to the poem: the potential byways that were never taken; the experiments with establishing a form; deviations and misdirections that were erased. This study does not seek simply to compare the published poem with its drafts, but to pay attention to the process of writing itself.

Any project of this kind must carry the caveat that much of what might be termed 'creative process' is not recoverable from the marks on the page. Creative thinking is a complex phenomenon and few writers know why they are seized with the compulsion to write. Much of the process is mental and internal. The first draft which reaches the paper will not represent the earliest conception of that thought. There may be a long process between the original inspiration and the formulation of a poem. The main difference between the true poet and the person who occasionally writes poetry is the discipline with which they approach the initial spark: this is their 'compositional practice'. It is the means by which poets create

their poems: working habits; setting their ideas on paper; overcoming apathy or block and making aesthetic decisions about what is of publishable quality.

Initially manuscripts can feel like detailed treasure maps which clearly give directions to something significant but lack a key and a means of orientation. Before submerging oneself in the detail of the formulation of individual poems, it is essential to articulate explicitly a general methodology, which can guide our examination of the individual practices of each poet.

The first question to ask is what it can be hoped to discover by a study of the drafts of the poems of D.H. Lawrence, Dylan Thomas and Philip Larkin. My approach is designed to examine how individual poems were composed and to identify each poet's methods of composition.

Chronology, Objective and Subjective Changes

Clearly the order in which drafts are written is of great importance. However, placing the drafts of any particular poem in chronological order can be difficult, sometimes impossible. Much depends upon the practice of the individual poet. Historically, poets prepared drafts solely for their own use in order to enable them to complete the poem or to improve a poem already completed. They did not necessarily number or date the drafts.

It is sometimes possible to put drafts in chronological order by means of forensic methods such as dating the paper and the ink or by comparing the handwriting. A person's handwriting is liable to change over time as he/she ages; moreover a writer's style may vary over time. However, each of these methods has

drawbacks. Paper may be used long after its original manufacture and unless forensic tests can date ink to within a few minutes such tests would, in the case of a prolific re-drafter like Dylan Thomas, be useless. Even scientific methods require conjecture. For example, during the course of one study, Dylan Thomas's drafts for 'Poem on his Birthday' were placed in order on the basis that as Thomas was always short of money he would have exhausted one supply of paper before moving onto the next (Fosberg 1975: 25). This provided a plausible sequence which enabled the computer collation to order variants of lines. Graphology is considered a far from exact discipline and although a writer's style may alter perceptibly over a period of twenty years, it is unlikely to alter perceptibly over a period of six months or may even fluctuate hour to hour depending upon the conditions under which the writing is undertaken. It is far easier to date a draft to 1940 as opposed to 1960 than to distinguish a draft that was prepared in April 1960 from one created in October 1960.

Philip Larkin is an unusual exception here. Placing his drafts in chronological order is relatively easy and their order can almost always be ascertained with absolute certainty. He wrote drafts of his poems sequentially in a series of workbooks which contain virtually all the evidence of his compositional practice. Larkin's sequence of drafting is fixed and he regularly dates completed versions of his poems. Thomas is at the opposite extreme. He often wrote upon loose pieces of paper which are difficult to constrain within an exact chronological order.

A poet's reasons for making changes from one draft to another can be divided into two. First, there are what can be called technical changes for which objective reasons can be given. Secondly, there are changes for which no technical reason is discernible and which are subjective. It is only possible to speculate the reasons for such changes. Many changes will be the result of both objective and subjective considerations. But at the extremes the distinction is clear.

If the poet chooses to write in a particular form, the rules of that form will dictate certain objective qualities. A change to a draft designed to bring it into line with the rules of the poem's form is an objective change. Three kinds of objective changes are particularly common. First, where the poet has chosen a rhyming scheme with which the draft does not comply. This is particularly pertinent to Larkin and Thomas, who set themselves complex and rigorous rhyme schemes. Second, where there is a lapse in rhythm: it is an objective change to iron out, say, an initial clumsy shift from iambs to trochees or a hexameter in the midst of pentameters. Thirdly, a change may be made to improve alliteration or euphony: again the reasons for such changes may be objectively apparent.

An objective change is necessary; a subjective change is voluntary and is made because the poet believes it will improve the poem. Such a change is subjective in two senses. First, unless the reason why the change was made is stated in the drafts or other materials originating from the poet (which seldom happens) a student of drafts can only speculate as to why a particular change was made. There may be certain indications why individual changes were made but it is difficult to pass from the realm of speculation into certainty. Secondly, whether

or not any subjective change is an improvement is ultimately a matter of individual critical judgment.

In an area where there are so many changes and where the reasons for them will frequently be unknown, there can be no question of a checklist of reasons for a subjective change. There are obvious occasions when the changes are just a matter of good style, such as when a change replaces a word that has been used too frequently or where a word is replaced by another with the same meaning which either introduces or removes one which sounds like a word nearby. Words have subtle nuances and connotations to which a poet will be particularly attuned. Many subjective changes are attempts to select exactly the right word.

Identifying Phases in the Writing Process

In order to understand the process by which individual poems were written it is necessary to identify the separate phases in their composition. D.H. Lawrence's drafts of 'Piano' illustrates how the mature poet transformed an early, nostalgic poem into a psychologically complex statement after the death of his mother. A close examination of the extensive extant drafts of Dylan Thomas's 'Prologue' reveals that there were three stages in its composition. Without access to the manuscript material, this 'back story' to the poem would remain unknown. Similarly, the two distinct phases of Philip Larkin's 'Love Songs in Age,' which resulted in two separate typescript versions could not have been identified without returning to the drafts especially as the first phase of drafting is not catalogued. Engaging with the individual poet's processes also makes it possible to illustrate

seminal features of their methods of composition such as Thomas's use of rough worksheets and intermediary versions and Larkin's tendency to work intensively on each stanza before moving on to the next.

Having thought through these fundamental principles of my approach to the manuscript material, I began to investigate recently published methodologies with a view to ascertaining whether these could offer any assistance in my research. First I considered some traditional studies of poets' manuscripts, specifically Jon Stallworthy's influential monographs on W.B. Yeats (Stallworthy 1963 and 1969). Next I examined French 'genetic criticism', which attempts 'to seize and describe a movement, a process of writing that can only be approximately inferred from the existing documents,' striving to find means of pursuing 'an immaterial object (a [writing] process) through the concrete analysis of material traces left by that process' (Deppman et al 2004: 11). Thirdly I turned to the eclectic methodology of Sally Bushell, which she calls 'compositional criticism': a 'critical research method for the study of textual process and poetic draft material' which 'seeks to move across the perceived borders between "textual" and "literary" criticism to articulate and illustrate the importance of a full understanding of the textual process that underlies a single textual product' (Bushell 2005: 399).

I also investigated 'textual criticism' in the sense of criticism aimed at presenting an 'edition'. Traditional Anglo-American approaches introduced changes from other texts into the copy text in order to reflect authorial final intention (Zeller 1975: 236). More recent German textual theory however, in

contrast, considers each change made by the poet as the creation of a new 'version,' and every new version as marking 'a new intention' (Zeller 1975: 241).

Donald H. Reiman advocates 'Versioning,' a model for presenting facsimiles and transcripts in order to give readers access to the largest amount of primary material (Reiman 1987: 169). Facsimiles or transcription of manuscripts can be difficult to follow. 'Versioning' aims to provide order, and an understanding process, without the simplification of more traditional methods (Reiman 1987:170).

Traditional Manuscript Studies

What might be termed the traditional critical approach within English Studies to poets' manuscripts is exemplified by the work of Jon Stallworthy on W.B. Yeats. Sequencing of manuscripts is achieved by an immersion in Yeats's extant drafts rather than a scientific study of ink, paper type or computer-aided analysis (Stallworthy 1963: x). In *Between the Lines*, Stallworthy uses this approach to analyze eighteen of Yeats's poems (Stallworthy 1963: 253). He devotes a chapter each to the longer poems and one to seven shorter poems. He then makes general conclusions about Yeats's working methods across his career (Stallworthy 1963: 243-253). Stallworthy returns to Yeats's manuscripts in *Vision and Revision in Yeats's Last Poems* (Stallworthy 1969). Here, Stallworthy juxtaposes manuscript studies and contrasts poems that illustrate Yeats's range of poetic techniques. Stallworthy's method requires the interpreter to make assumptions about the working methods of the poet, for example that Yeats began with a prose gloss and

developed the poem sequentially. Yeats's actual working methods are perhaps not wholly consistent with Stallworthy's model, as Stallworthy acknowledges, but he argues for it as a working method (Stallworthy 1963: 13). Yeats's fair copies and drafts of poems in his notebooks were ordered randomly by the poet and were mixed in with other kinds of writing. He worked between 'rough paper' and his notebooks. There is also the problem of 'loose sheet notebooks' (Stallworthy 1963: 13).

Sensitive literary criticism, which pays close attention to the effects of individual words and their impact on the line, mimics the poet's selective processes. Educated assumptions, it is hoped, lead to an understanding of the essence of the poet's compositional practice. In some ways, such intuitive, responsive methods may be more valuable than computer collations as they can pay attention to lines within the larger context of the draft. Stallworthy places the manuscripts in order and presents transcripts in a way accessible to his readers. He makes an effort to bring alive the poet's writing process not only by describing the physical appearance of the manuscripts but also by using his insight into the poet's working methods to give a rough sense of the possible sequence of alterations (Stallworthy 1963: 12). He comments on the differences in effect that result from Yeats's changes. Stallworthy makes aesthetic judgements about the changes, using the manuscripts as an aid to literary criticism. He tends to assume that the manuscript versions move towards a final, privileged published version. Therefore, his judgements tend to be evaluative.

My approach in this thesis diverges from Stallworthy's as it does not assume that all poems move towards a preconceived final version, but acknowledges that writing can change direction and that each transitional stage in the process should be regarded in its own right. This is particularly so in the case of a poem such as Dylan Thomas's 'Poem on his Birthday', which developed through two distinct phases of composition when Thomas returned to the poem after its first publication. Stallworthy strives to give as much insight into the appearance and layout of the manuscripts as possible, but he lacks the full detail which can only come from the extensive use of photofacsimile. Some of the manuscripts discussed in this thesis will be reproduced in facsimile in the appendix, allowing a more nuanced appreciation of draft changes.

French Genetic Criticism

French 'genetic criticism' developed from 'the structuralist and post-structuralist notion of "text" as an infinite play of signs' (Deppman et al 2004: 2). Its central idea is the division between a published text and the work of the author that gave rise to it (the 'avant-texte'). Bellemin-Noel coined the term 'avant-texte' because he believed that earlier manuscript studies had been overly concerned with 'the conscious intentions of the author and not enough with the dynamics of writing' (Deppman et al 2004: 8). He needed to create a new word in order to move away from the assumption of "variant," which implies *one* text with alternative formulations' (Deppman et al 2004: 8). 'Avant-texte' is used 'to designate all the documents that come before a work when it is considered as a *text* and when those

documents and the text are considered as part of a system.' As in German textual theory, changes are seen as producing a new system of signs, rather than being variants of a single, unified text. Stages in development are seen as 'the contingent manifestations of a *diachronous* play of signifiers' (Deppman et al 2004: 5). However, genetic criticism also focuses on charting an abstract process of writing than that which can be inferred from the manuscripts. 'Avant-texte' is 'a critical construction' striving to reconstitute 'the chain of events in the writing process' (Deppman et al 2004: 2). Unlike structuralism and post-structuralism, genetic criticism is based on a 'teleological model of textuality' (Deppman et al 2004: 2).

This methodological approach is not the product of the mind of a single individual and there is no agreed statement or manifesto of the approach. Daniel Ferrer and Michael Groden describe French genetic criticism as 'a French literary critical movement' and state that its thirty years of activity have 'produced a variety of strains' in a movement characterized by its 'diversity' (Deppman et al 2004:1). 'Strains' in this context signifies 'strains' as in 'strains of a disease' rather than 'strains' as in 'tensions' though the movement also produced strains in the latter sense.

Bearing this limitation in mind, it is appropriate to consider what various scholars of standing within the movement of French genetic criticism have had to say and to consider whether this is of any assistance to me in establishing a methodology for this research. Three exponents Louis Hay, Jean Bellemin-Noel and Pierre- Marc de Biasi will be considered as spokesmen for French genetic criticism.

Louis Hay: Louis Hay has provided a clear working definition of genetic criticism, which he regards as developing out of 'extensive empirical work dedicated to authors' manuscripts' from which it 'appeared' that 'under certain conditions' it is possible 'to reconstruct the genesis of writing'. He explains that 'Genetic criticism retains from its origins an inductive approach, which builds up general models from a series of concrete observations' (Hay 1988: 68). An 'empirical' approach is the only effective way of engaging with the writing process. However, although it is possible to extrapolate 'general models' from individual manuscripts, some account must also be taken both of the writer's personal writing habits and the dictates of what he/she is producing. Writing a novel is not the same process, for instance, as writing a short, lyric poem.

Hay emphasizes the importance of undertaking 'a fully conceived sequence of analytical operations' in order to understand 'the process of creation and thought':

From the graphic pattern of writing immobilized by the pen and scattered over the page it is possible to reconstruct the process of creation and thought through a fully conceived sequence of analytical operations: deciphering, establishing the chronology, seizing the writing in its moves. (Hay 1988: 68)

In some respects the approach of this thesis is similar to Hay's. In particular Hay stresses the need for establishing chronology, though he is perhaps unrealistic about the extent to which this is usually possible.

Hay's common sense conclusion that it is necessary to put drafts in chronological order is not considered relevant by all genetic critics. Jean Bellemin-Noel is neither interested in the intention behind the manuscript nor in creating a chronology (Bellemin-Noel 2004: 31). Another point of controversy is the significance of features such as words that have been crossed out. Hay believes that 'The ways in which the text is laid out on the page, with marginal notations, additions, cross-references, deletions, alterations, different handwriting styles, and with drawings and symbols, texture the discourse, increase the signification and multiply the possible readings' (Hay 1988: 69) whereas Bellemin-Noel believes that words are not more significant for being crossed out (Bellemin-Noel 2004: 31).

Importantly, Hay gives a salient warning to anyone who considers that it is possible to extract a full knowledge of the writing process from manuscripts:

Even the most detailed and well-conserved documentation reveals but a fraction of the complicated mental process to which it bears witness. The ink on the page is not the writing itself. One need only meet a contemporary writer with evidence in hand from his manuscript that one has had a chance to study to be effectively cured of any presumption one may have to the contrary. (Hay 1988: 68-69)

This is vitally important. Manuscripts cannot give an absolute insight into the creative process; they are only the remains of that process.

Despite this limitation, Hay is excited by the possibilities of access to manuscript material. He considers that:

manuscripts ...give a new power to literary critics. They make it possible to examine how the pen works in its irrefutable material presence. In this way they manifest a level of reality to which no speculative interpretation can penetrate and possess a material richness that no effort of analysis can hope to exhaust... (Hay 1988: 69)

What lies behind the published text offers a whole new field of study that is not accessible by speculating from a more limited knowledge. Manuscripts are of value to literary critics as they give access to physical evidence of the writing process which can be interpreted.

Hay stresses the importance of 'the writing subject':

The writing subject has little place in modern criticism, fallen into disrepute first because of the banality of biographical commentaries, and subsequently removed from the text by the strict theoretical approach of formal analysis. Yet he resurges today as the subject of

new questioning. In dealing with writing, criticism inevitably encounters the moment of writing itself. It is stretched out between the author's life and the sheet of paper like a drumskin on which the pen beats its message. The echo we receive is but incomplete, yet reveals the complexity of the act itself, not to mention its contradictions. (Hay 1988:73)

He confronts the role of the creator in the making of the 'writing' because 'criticism inevitably encounters the moment of writing itself.' There is an imperfectly conveyed message between 'the author's life and the sheet of paper'. One of the objectives of this thesis is to consider the extent to which it is possible to extract biographical information from the writing process. This is not necessarily in the sense of biography, events in the poets' lives. It may instead be simply an insight into their idiosyncratic traits of thought.

Jean Bellemin-Noel: Jed Deppman writes: 'For the first fifteen years of modern French genetic studies, Jean Bellemin-Noel was a dominant figure...' He 'introduced the concept of the "avant-texte" to literary theory, making an important contribution to, and model for, genetic criticism at the moment when the discipline was taking shape' (Deppman et al 2004: 28). In his article 'Psychoanalytic Reading and the Avant-texte', Bellemin-Noel deals with the application of genetic criticism to the consideration of drafts (Bellemin-Noel 2004: 29). The crucial passages are as follows:

I am calling "avant-texte" the totality of the material written for any project that was first made public in a specific form. Since the term "textual" designates the closed field where reading meets a writing so as to make the latter signify its unexpected and unpredictable possibilities, regardless of the author's intentions and the pressure of social or biographical history, I will say that to attend to an avant-textual document is *to read continuously with the text and without any presuppositions, the totality of formulations that, as previous possibilities, have become part of a given work of writing.*

(Bellemin-Noel 2004: 31)

Bellemin-Noel's defines the avante-texte as 'the totality of the material for any project that was made first public in a specific form'. The avant-texte is limited, however, to material written for any project. A document can only be part of the avant-texte if it was prepared by the poet for the purpose of writing the poem in question. Bellemin- Noel distinguishes 'avant-texte' from 'rough drafts'. 'Rough drafts' as defined by Bellemin-Noel include the 'preliminary dossier' and 'the portfolio of accessory notes' (Bellemin-Noel 2004: 30-31). Though these items are not defined they would include works which the poet read preparatory to or in the course of writing the poem. For example, if before writing 'The Pied Piper' Browning had read a history of Hamelin and several books on rodents, this would form part of the rough drafts but not part of the avant-texte because these books were not written for the purpose of writing the poem, whereas a précis of the

contents of these books prepared by Browning would be part of the avant-texte. Also significantly, Bellemin-Noel denies the importance to the text of 'the author's intentions.' This views the manuscript not as the creation of a writer but as an autonomous text.

He continues:

Several things are self-evident: (1) this ensemble is not always all there is (whatever could be formulated in thought without being written on paper is missing, at any rate); (2) the order of successive stages is not necessarily revelatory (I do not reconstitute the sequential history of a creation, I explore an environment of words); (3) the information provided by the process of inscription (graphic marks, marginal ornamentation, technical intrusions, etc.) does not interfere with the written material and, as a result, such material enjoys no special privilege (what was once written is neither more prestigious and revelatory nor less significant for having been blotted or crossed out). (Bellemin-Noel 2004: 31)

Several points in this passage are self-evident, some in the way its author intended, some not. Some are self-evidently correct. Others are self-evidently and manifestly perverse.

The point about 'whatever could be formulated in thought without being written on paper' (Bellemin-Noel 2004: 31) is obviously correct, or, it would be if

it were worded 'whatever could be formulated in thought and remained in that sphere'. However Bellemin-Noel's statement that 'the order of successive stages is not revelatory' (Bellemin-Noel 2004: 31) is plainly incorrect. People think sequentially in time. Consequently poets write sequentially in time and what was written first has an influence on what was written thereafter, even if only in the negative sense of leading the poet to say to himself, 'I will delete that because I can think of something better', or 'I will abandon that since it points the poem in a direction I do not wish it to go.' Every poem is created in what might be called sequential sections, whether each section be a few words or a few lines. Bellemin-Noel also writes 'I do not reconstitute the sequential history of a creation, I explore an environment of words' (Bellemin-Noel 2004: 31). Such an approach will not help him in understanding how a poem was composed. To study the composition of a poem in a way other than that in which it was written is unwise.

That information provided by marginal annotation enjoys no special privilege is both true and obvious, though that a line is written in the margin may be helpful in putting lines in chronological order by suggesting it came after what is written in that part of the page customarily reserved for writing. Likewise marginal ornamentation may help in explaining an ambiguity in the text such as when a word has two meanings, a doodle in the margin depicting the object to which one of the meanings is attached may clarify which of the meanings the word in the text is intended to convey.

Marginal ornamentation in the form of doodles may well suggest that at the point at which they appear the poet found difficulty in composition. Doodles

appear in the manuscripts of the poems of both Dylan Thomas and Philip Larkin. Even if they are of no value for illuminating the meaning of the text, they are of biographical value in that they show that the author had difficulty writing the passage in question. More radically, on one or two celebrated occasions Larkin writes flat contradictions or sarcastic remarks in the margins of his poems.

That 'what was once written is neither more prestigious and revelatory nor less significant for being crossed out' (Bellemin-Noel 2004: 31) is not necessarily true. No line becomes more important or illuminating because a line is put through it, yet the deletions are important not only because they reduce the area of possible meaning where the meaning of the final version of the poem is obscure but also because they can indicate where the poet is grappling to structure his or her ideas. Bellemin-Noel's conclusions on the significance of marginal ornamentation are best disregarded.

He refutes the idea of trying to see drafts as developing sequentially:

(4) the primary interest of this reading consists, finally, in surrounding the text with a halo, that is, with verbal materials that radiate from them while resonating with it, whether such verbal spokes are parallel, oblique or perpendicular to it. Since the writing process is itself a production governed by uncertainty and chance, we absolutely must substitute spatial metaphors for temporal images to avoid reintroducing the idea of teleology. We must never forget this paradox: what was written *before* and had, at first, no *after*, we

meet only after, and this tempts us to supply a before in the sense of a prior priority, cause or origin. (Bellemin-Noel 2004: 31)

His rather elaborately rhetorical conclusion is that his method aims at 'surrounding the text in a halo... the purpose of which is tosubstitute spatial metaphor for temporal images to avoid reintroducing the idea of teleology' (Bellemin-Noel 2004: 31). My primary interest in reading the drafts is to find out how a poem was composed and this, of necessity, requires a preliminary establishing of a temporal sequence of writing. Bellemin-Noel's attempt to throw up a screen of spatial metaphors in deliberate distinction to temporal images to avoid reintroducing the idea of teleology seems to me inappropriate. There are other and more sensible ways of arguing against the idea of teleology. Teleology may be described in simple terms as the belief that there is only one possible version of a poem and that through all the drafting the poet has been seeking to reach that version. A more effective attack on the idea of teleology, for example, would be to arrange the various drafts in temporal sequence and show that the poet could have gone in a different direction from that eventually chosen.

Pierre-Marc de Biasi: Biasi's article 'Towards a Science of Literature: Manuscript Analysis and the Genesis of the Work' provides, according to Deppman, 'a thorough exposition of the major critical premises, techniques, and methodologies of the discipline' (Deppman et al 2004: 36). The article argues that distinguishing an avant-texte means:

examining the operation by which a text, notably a literary text, is invented, sketched, amplified, exploded into heterogeneous fragments, and condensed until it is finally chosen from among and against several other written materializations. Fixed in its stable form, it becomes (at least traditionally) publishable as the finished work text of the work. (Biasi 2004: 38)

Biasi does not make it totally clear whether the assembling of the *avant-texte*, for example of a particular poem, consists of putting together in some sort of order all the writing the poet produced in connection with the writing, of that poem prior to his sending for publication what he considered the final version or whether those papers are classifiable as *avant-texte* when that has been done and this is followed by a commentary, for example on the technique this particular poet used in writing the poem.

Traditionally the definitive manuscript of a literary work, i.e. the one which said, in effect, 'This is what the work is' was 'the one the author recopied at the end of the writing process in order to provide a readable version for the copyist or the printer... Yet the manuscript of most interest to the researcher in textual genetics, the manuscript-object of study, is usually not this definitive clean copy... Rather it is in the rough drafts, the handwritten documents of the writing process, that one concretely glimpses writing in the act of being born' (Biasi 2004: 39). However, traditional literary criticism was concerned with the question 'How good is this

poem?' or 'What other works influenced this poem?' As Biasi says, 'Textual genetics does not in itself have a criterion of critical evaluation' (Biasi 2004: 42).

Biasi lists 'five essential phases, each one responding to a key research operation' within genetic criticism' (Biasi 2004: 44). These are:

- Constituting (gathering and authenticating) the whole dossier of the available manuscripts of the work in question.
- Specifying and classifying each folio of the dossier.
- Organizing (checking over, partially deciphering and arranging in a teleological order) the dossier of rough drafts and other draft documents.
- Deciphering and transcribing the whole dossier.
- Establishing and publishing the avant-texte. (Biasi 2004: 44)

Of these five phases, the first, the second and the fifth are not relevant to the current research since with regard to the first and second phases these tasks have fortunately been carried out by the archivists of the various institutions where the manuscripts are held. Also, any decision to carry out the tasks detailed in the fifth phase will be taken by someone other than myself. Both Louis Hay and Biasi's approach emphasize the importance of considering the process of writing, and therefore reinforce my empirical approach.

Anglo-American and German Editorial Theory: The Problem of Textual 'Authority'.

Anglo-American and German editorial theory will be considered together since they have the same object, though they have different approaches to it. The object they both share is to produce an authoritative text of an individual work, known as the critical text. This text is conceived as the one which is closest to the author's final intentions, though at times what the editors mean by the words 'the author's intention' is not what a person not versed in editorial practice would mean by these words.

Hans Zeller: German textual criticism aims to clear the arena for literary criticism by creating an edition. It asserts that 'Since a text, as text does not in fact consist of elements but of the relationships between them, variation at one point has an effect on invariant sections of the text' (Zeller 1975: 241). Anglo-American eclectic editing of a copy text in order to reflect 'final intention', in contrast, presumes the author's intentions remained the same and that changes at one point of the text can be seen in isolation and do not constitute a new text (Zeller 1975: 241-243). Zeller compares 'textual history' to a 'cylinder,' in which 'The purpose of the "historical-critical edition" ...is to create an appropriate reproduction of the cylinder', which is 'the complete textual history' whereas 'the purpose of a critical edition is to reproduce a particular plane ...an individual version.' It is 'contamination' to project 'one plane onto another' (Zeller 1975: 244). Zeller insists that is dangerous to assume the writer is moving towards a single intention that

previously he has not managed to realize. He argues that in reality a changed version implies an alteration in intention (Zeller 1975: 245).

Zeller is concerned to produce evidence of the chronologically sequenced material leading to the various versions of the text. He distinguishes between the chronological sequence of material (the diachronic) and the versions of a text at particular times (the synchronic) (Zeller 1975: 244). He is not concerned with the poetic intention of the author, in making aesthetic judgements about the work or in providing an account of the poetic creative process. His approach is useful in informing this study in terms of sequencing the source material and the synchronic versus diachronic distinction, but needs to be extended in order to provide an account of the dynamic compositional process.

Zeller argues that each version is discrete and represents an historical moment in the creative process. There is no assumption that later versions are more valid than earlier versions. Instead 'From a historical point of view the different versions are in theory of equal value. Each represents a semiotic system which was valid at a specific time, which the author later rejected because he for some reason no longer found it adequate, in favour of another version which matched his new intention' (Zeller 1975: 245). This acknowledges the significance of change over time. Zeller engages with the unstable nature of writing. For the writer, 'a text is something to be created from the semantic inventory of the language' and 'the whole skeins of variants' in 'draft manuscripts' demonstrate that 'synonyms exist...in the broadest sense of the word' (Zeller 1975: 258). Drafting is a voyage of discovery in which there is no absolute predetermined point. Writing

is a construction not an uncovering of a latent work of art. This is particularly relevant to Dylan Thomas's drafting, which often throws up distinct 'versions.'

Behind the theories of recent German and Anglo-American editors lies the fundamental issue of the 'authority' of the text. It is very apparent to recent commentators that even some quite crude interventions may throw the simple relation between author and authored text into question. For instance, after the completed manuscript of a work is delivered to the publisher changes may well be made to it, especially with regard to the spelling and punctuation by compositors or proofreaders. Unless these changes are brought to the author's attention and approved by him, they cannot be said to be the author's intention. Sometimes an author may be subjected to mechanical standardisation in accordance with the house-style of a publisher, particularly in matters of punctuation. Hans Zeller cites the example of a modern critical edition of *Buch der Lieder* by Heinrich Heine first published in 1827, for instance. In this case there was very little manuscript evidence available of what Heine had sent to the publishers. The editor felt it was legitimate to change the spelling and punctuation to what he believed Heine would have used, based upon a study of Heine's autograph letters between 1815 and 1831. He found out what Heine's writing habits were at the time he was writing *Buch der Lieder* and proceeded on the assumption that Heine used the same spelling and punctuation for writing both his correspondence and his literary work (Zeller 1995b: 98). Obviously, in a case such as this, the editor must have some reason to suspect that the existing printed text differs in some way from what the author intended.

More troublingly there is frequently a difference between what an author would have written had he had total freedom and what has found its way into print. Simple religious censorship nearly suppressed Marlowe's great line in the last act of *Doctor Faustus*: 'See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!' Nathaniel Hawthorne agreed to the deletion of certain passages in his novel *The Marble Faun* because his wife, Sophia, thought they were indelicate (Zeller 1995b: 103). In preparing a critical edition of the novel, the editor is faced with the problem of whether to include what Hawthorne would have published had Mrs. Hawthorne not interfered or what Hawthorne actually agreed to publish. It depends upon whether by the words 'the author's intention' the editor means 'what Hawthorne would have liked to do' or what 'Hawthorne did do'. In one sense there are two intentions of the author. First, the unconditional intention i.e. a lack of interference by Mrs. Hawthorne, Secondly, the conditional intention which is the intention once granted interference by Mrs. Hawthorne. Though there are arguments for the adoption of either course, there is no logical reason why either should prevail. Ultimately, it is a case of editorial choice.

Though the checking of various manuscripts and correspondence of author, printer and publisher will continue to be needed, much of 'the agony of indecision' as to what is to go into a critical edition can be avoided by printing in the critical edition all the variants and indicating by brackets, a different variety of type e.g. italics or a heavier type or differing colouring that the words in question appear, say, in the manuscript copy sent to the publisher but not in the text which that publisher first published.

Though both the Anglo-American and the German editorial theory have the same objectives, their approach is different in certain respects. The German editing theory is far more comfortable with the idea of looking at more than one text of the work in question and at looking at materials outside all the texts of that particular work. The Anglo-American approach is to take the last text produced by the author as the one which represents the author's will and usually takes a printed text which was submitted to the author by the publisher/ printer for checking and approval as the best text. The German approach is to consult all the texts, including the manuscript texts in the belief that the more comprehensive view of the history of the text gained in this way, the more likely one is to find the author's intention.

Say there are ten versions of a work, nine in manuscript and one in print, the last returned to the publisher/printer with a letter from the author to the effect that he has checked it and that it is correct. There is a line in the printed version which is at variance with all the manuscript versions and for which change there is no absolute need as the work makes sense without the change. One must entertain the possibility that in reading the printed version the author did not spot the change. Readers who do not consult the manuscripts are dependent upon the editor's judgment and therefore it is significant to know how editors deal with variants. In poetry the mistranscription of a word may have an important impact. The German approach to the problem would be to go and look at all the manuscript versions and taking the view that there is an unbroken consistency of nine versions, the conclusion would be that the change is likely to have been introduced by the printers. In the Anglo-American approach great reliance is placed upon the copy-

text, for example the manuscript version which the author sends to the publisher and there is great reluctance to base a critical edition on materials outside this version such as earlier manuscript versions other than the setting version, the version of the copy text set in print and sent to the author for checking.

The Anglo-American approach is to go back into the history of the creation of the text as short a distance as possible and to limit one's researches to manuscripts of that work produced by the author. The German approach is to look at materials other than manuscripts and as many manuscripts as they think appropriate.

Fredson Bowers, one half of what is known as the Greg-Bowers school of Anglo-American editing theory, stated that in preparing the *Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne* the aims should be to 'establish the text in as close a form, in all details, to Hawthorne's final intentions as the preserved documents of each separate unit will permit. This aim compels the editors to treat each work as a unit with its own separate textual problems' (Zeller 1995b: 100). No setting text for *The Scarlet Letter* survives, that is no text either in Hawthorne's own hand or printed and checked by him. However manuscript setting texts of other works do survive, including that for *The House of Seven Gables*. Bowers, however, refused to reconstruct the lost manuscript of *The Scarlet Letter* in order to retrieve its 'accidentals' (spelling, punctuation, word division and capitalisation) from the evidence of Hawthorne's manuscripts of other works written at the same time. Instead he used the first published edition of *The Scarlet Letter* (Zeller 1995b: 100).

With one exception later explained, neither Anglo-American nor German editorial theory have caused me to reconsider my original 'common-sense' methodology. There are various reasons for this. Central to my concern is the chronological arrangement of drafts. I need to see what changes were made and when and why they were made. The concern of the editor of a critical edition is to find out what the author said last and to determine whether that is what he intended to say. By contrast, I am interested in finding out not only what each poet said but also in speculating so far as I can as to why he said that rather than what he had said previously. The editor of a critical edition may be interested in finding out what all the versions were but if he can find what the final version approved by the author was he will not go back further than is necessary to do this. The editor of the critical edition needs to know which was the last edition to which the author gave his/her informed consent. For example, if there are nine versions of a particular line in a poem all differing in some way but there is a letter from the author to the publisher to the effect that he/she wants the eighth version to be published and not the ninth, the editor of the critical text will not look at the first seven versions because he has no reason to do so. My research requires that I consider all nine versions because I want to know, so far as speculation permits, what changes indicate about the poets' compositional practices.

A comparison with genetic criticism may be useful. The genetic critic wants to see all the drafts and manuscripts because they may wish to put the *avant-texte* to the same use as myself or they may wish to put it to other uses. As Biasi writes:

the study of a text's genesis or, if one prefers, the attempt to establish the avant-texte, one can only succeed if one applies a selective critical procedure. This procedure will reconstruct the genesis from a closed point of view, for example, desire (psychoanalysis), inscription of sociality (sociocriticism), or the very conditions of its own poetics (narratology). (Biasi 2004: 42)

The editor of a critical edition wants to see some of the drafts to establish the 'author's intended wording' (Zeller 1995b: 97) rather than to discover how he came to write it or whether it throws any light on the author's psyche.

One procedure common to genetic criticism, editorial theory and the present research is the arranging of the manuscripts in chronological order. Though there may be difficulties in achieving this, in the case of modern writers with their greater awareness of the value of their manuscripts for scholarly research and/or sale, there are less likely to be changes arising between the author sending his manuscript to the publisher and the publication of the work. The author to whose works Zeller gives his attention are largely pre-twentieth century e.g. Holderlin, Heine, Schiller, Goethe, Rimbaud, Dryden, Crane, Hawthorne. Franz Kafka and Joyce (Zeller 1995b: 108) are the most recent authors to receive any consideration from Zeller and, significantly, he concentrates on Kafka's posthumous texts which were never the subject of correspondence between author and publisher. In the drafts of the works of D.H. Lawrence, Dylan Thomas and Philip Larkin which are the subject of this research there is no difference between what was sent to the

publisher and what was finally published. My research does not entail facing the problems which most frequently confront the editors of critical editions.

Since there is little by the way of overlap between what my research seeks to do and what the editor of a critical edition seeks to do, it is only to be expected that there are few problem areas in common. There is, however, in what Zeller writes a warning very relevant to my research. My research requires that, in respect of some changes, other than perhaps clearly objective changes, I speculate why this change was made. One of the editors of Keller's works, Jonas Frankel, said, speaking of the task of preparing a critical edition:

he alone is equal to his task, who out of the most exacting knowledge of the language of the world of ideas of a poet perceives the corruptions of the text without recourse to a manuscript, and knows how to resolve the discrepancies of the transmission indirectly with infallible assurance. (Zeller 1995a: 23)

Frankel's successor in this work was Carl Helbling who is quoted by Zeller as saying that he found 'the inner legitimation for the textual critical activity' in 'empathy' in a 'maximal amount of like knowledge and like feeling with the poet', and who 'confessed that he reached textual decisions out of a "curious intimacy" which came out of continued togetherness with the poet,' so that he, as editor, 'sometime believed [he] was hearing his (the poet's) actual voice' (Zeller 1995a: 23). Zeller comments, 'It is inconceivable in what condition the biblical texts or the

texts of the classics would be if the editors of two millennia had even just for a few generations proceeded so autocratically, with such high-handed inspiration with the texts entrusted to them' (Zeller 1995a: 23). This offers a salient warning to anyone working with manuscripts to avoid the assumption that they know what was in the writer's mind.

With regard to the posthumous works of Kafka, Zeller wrote of Kafka's life long friend, Max Brod: 'He used to justify his reworking of Kafka's posthumous texts by saying that he...countervened the transmitted wording, relying instead on the known intentions (known to him and only him) of his friend Franz Kafka' (Zeller 1995a: 24). Brod felt that 'Because of intimate collaboration I am familiar with the intentions with which Kafka approached the printing of his works. And in this spirit I have reworked Kafka's texts' (Zeller 1995a: 24). It should be noted that Brod does not say that the works should be edited in a particular way because Kafka told him that he should. The basis of his claim is that he knew Kafka so well that he knew what Kafka would have said had he thought about it. My task is not the same as that of Frankel, Helbling and Brod. I am concerned rather with the more empirical consideration of what is revealed about the writers' compositional practice by the evidence of manuscripts.

Compositional Criticism

Sally Bushell: Bushell distinguishes her methodology from that of French genetic criticism and German textual theories of 'versions' (Bushell 2008: 2). Growing out of structuralism and semiotics, both of these' follow a strongly "text-based"

approach, one which distinguishes sharply between the *avant-texte* and Text' and detaches both from the idea of authorship (Bushell 2003: 55-56). By contrast, Bushell's approach 'allows more space for the acknowledgement of the author as a designing cause, as well as allowing for free movement across compositional material and published works' (Bushell 2008: 2). She aims to create 'a distinctive Anglo-American "genetic" or "compositional criticism"' (Bushell 2003: 55). Emerging from the Anglo-American tradition, Bushell is concerned with the issue of 'intention' (Bushell 2008: 2). Yet this is not the same as assuming 'authorial final intention.' Intention is fixed in time and both mental and physical acts are embodiments of conscious decisions made by the writer. This can be seen in their actions. Bushell distinguishes three phases in this intention summarised as 'Prior Intention' (I intend to replace an unsuitable word with another); intention-in-action (I am replacing an unsuitable word with another); bodily movement (place pen on paper); action (physically enter the word "cliff" on the page)' (Bushell 2005: 403). This is a valuable as it draws attention to the importance of confining speculation upon 'intention' to the physical changes made to the manuscript page.

Justification for her interpretation of intention is that 'thinking about intentionality in terms of a mental state preceding physical acts ...at least partially, releases intention from personal or biographical confines' (Bushell 2005: 401). This draws attention to a need to focus upon physical evidence rather than speculating from biographical detail. However, as will be seen Sally Bushell's typology cannot be used without biographical knowledge because her

'Composition Context' demands information about the poet's working habits and environment (Bushell 2008: 50).

Bushell engages with the importance of changes not only for the critic, but for the poet him/herself.

The words on the page become an active part of the creative process because it is through small subtle changes to the base material that the poet gradually refines the nature of his communication and understands it for himself. (Bushell 2005: 403)

This is an articulate summary of the process of composition. Bushell emphasizes that:

for the written form every intentional act (beyond mental or oral composition) is recorded on the page and can be reconstructed with reasonable accuracy. Of course we still cannot be sure of the amount of time occurring between any of the changes (apart from the evidence provided by changes of ink or hand) and we cannot access the all-important initial point of composition...We can only ever reconstruct *beyond* the point of first composition, reminding us how important, and unique, that stage of the creative process is. (Bushell 2005: 403)

This suggests that every intentional act after the mysterious first composition is recorded, whereas in reality the poet probably undergoes an inaccessible process of unrecorded mental changes. I would argue that there is a limitation to the evidence of compositional practice that a draft can provide.

In order to undertake her study of compositional method, Bushell has identified three levels on which it is possible to consider drafts:

we can consider composition as a series of widening circles, moving outwards from a close focus on a single word in a line, to lines upon the page, and then to blocks of developing work within the manuscript. (Bushell 2005: 400-401)

Again, this is in accord with my own methodology. However, I would argue that this is not how the poet perceives the poem when creating it. In order to write it is necessary to have an idea about the overall purpose of the poem although this may be altered as the poem progresses. Sally Bushell's 'outline' includes 'Programmatic Intention,' i.e. an overall plan, which suggests this is the first phase of composition (Bushell 2008:50).

Bushell's outline is divided into 'The Compositional Context,' 'The Intentional Core Structure' and 'The Language and Meaning Totality' (Bushell 2008: 50-51). I shall not consider the whole of Bushell's outline, but only the sections most relevant to this study. Some of Sally Bushell's criteria for 'The Compositional Context' would not be traceable without reference to biography,

autobiography or the poet's own statements about his or her practices. The first category is concerned with the poet's working practices, not only with the equipment used and how it is presented: 'equipment (pen; pencil; size and shape of materials; nature of entry),' but also with 'compositional environment (habits; places; space; people) ' (Bushell 2008: 50). As will be seen in the next chapter, establishing the working habits of poets and how they go about putting their ideas onto paper is a logical place to start a study of compositional practice.

In her breakdown of 'Intentional Core Structure,' Bushell moves through different stages. She begins with the overarching 'Programmatic Intention', which she subdivides into: 'Pre-textual composition (mental and oral)'; 'Motivation for composition (internal, external)'; 'Relationship of text to other texts (of author and other authors)' and 'Potential failure, change or re-direction of programmatic intention' (Bushell 2008: 50). In 'Contingent Intention,' Bushell lists 'Compositional propulsion, means of stimulating or re-starting composition', 'Phases of work upon the text', 'Points of contingent completion (fair copy texts of part or whole work)', 'Structural organisation and reorganisation' and 'Relationship of texts to other texts (of author, or other authors)' (Bushell 2008: 51). These elements could be said to characterize the difference between the attitude of the occasional poet and the true practitioner towards the making of their *oeuvre*.

Bushell then considers 'Intention-as-action (Micro-intentionality)' including 'Physical aspects and appearance of the text on the page'; 'Physical aspects and appearance of manuscript notebook'; 'Localised structural organisation'; 'Distinction between first draft, draft, fair copy'; 'Effect of changed context upon

meaning of words'; 'Replacement of one word with another (reflecting changed intention)'; 'Creative judgment (changing intention, how defined, how directed)' and 'Use and role of amanuenses' (Bushell 2008: 51). These are useful criteria and will be adopted in relation to the practices of the three poets in this thesis.

Sally Bushell's outline confirms that it is important to have a systematic approach when undertaking a study of compositional method. However, this thesis will argue that creativity is unique to the individual and that compositional practices cannot be made to conform wholly to a single model, however helpful.

'Versioning'

Donald Reiman and Stephen Parrish: Reiman argues that 'where the basic problem facing the scholar or reader involves two or more radically differing versions that exhibit quite distinct ideologies, aesthetic perspectives, or rhetorical strategies' then 'versioning' is the best approach to presenting these. (Reiman 1987: 169). This emphasis on presenting whole versions that exhibit changes in the writer's viewpoint and aesthetics is, perhaps, of particular usefulness in examining the drafts of a poet like D.H. Lawrence. 'Piano' is a poem known widely in two distinct versions, but which also has revealing draft stages which are less widely known. Reiman's approach may also be useful for presenting the two phases of development in Dylan Thomas's 'Poem on his Birthday.' This technique could even be applied to Philip Larkin, whose 'Love Songs in Age' exists in two, distinct typescript versions, though this is something of an exception to Larkin's usual mode of composition. Unlike traditional editing techniques, 'versioning' presents

whole texts and not lists of variants (Reiman 1987:170) inevitably, however, versioning alone is inadequate in providing an interpretation of all of the processes of writing.

Reiman advocates making 'available to the public enough different *primary* textual documents and states of major texts (not all of which may need to be critically edited) so that readers, teachers, and critics can compare for themselves two or more widely circulated basic texts of major texts' (Reiman 1987: 169). There is certainly a demand for such editions. Reiman points to the success of the Cornell edition of Wordsworth and other series from writers' archives (Reiman 1987:171). He feels that the reader should have the means of checking the editors' text and the transcriptions (Reiman 1987: 170). This is a sound principle. Such editions give an interested reader an insight into the writing process without the necessity of trying to gain access to the original drafts and to establish a working order where it is not immediately apparent. Yet, because individual poems have been prepared for publication, the editor still plays a role in establishing their order and the poems are taken out of the larger context of Wordsworth's notebooks, which disengages them from the original creative process.

In a paper published in 1988, S.M. Parrish, one of the editors of the Cornell Wordsworth Series, argued that the literary historian should not assume that the poet makes a smooth progression to a final form, all his or her 'Rejected drafts, discarded variants, abandoned versions' being seen 'as false starts, misjudgements or lapses of taste' (Parrish 1988: 344). Instead he advocated an editorial model which took a 'vertical slice through the continuum of the text' (Parrish 1988: 344).

This approach is significant to my thesis because it affirms the need to evaluate the drafts as part of an ongoing process, rather than simply in relation to the final published version.

Producing an Edition

Producing an edition that attempts to expand the corpus of a poet's work is often highly controversial. Unless an editor undertakes the production of a *Complete Poems* that includes every poem in manuscript a poet finished, there has to be a process of selection. This will ultimately be based on personal taste and therefore open to criticism. In the case of selecting a poem, such aesthetic judgment is so subjective that it cannot form the basis for a scholarly edition. Although it may be tempting to add 'undiscovered' poems to the known body of a poet's work, it is not the role of an editor to decide what should be published and what left obscure. It would be possible to create a *Collected Poems* with an extensive appendix of contingent versions found in the manuscripts of already published poems. This would provide the literary critic or student of literature with material for comparison (as has often been done with Lawrence's two versions of 'Piano'). However, this gives little insight into how poems were composed. Using the example of De Selincourt's 1926 edition of the 1805 and 1850 versions of *The Prelude*, Sally Bushell argues that much of the early criticism was 'value-laden, and, at its most reductive, descends into arguments over which of the two texts is "better"' (Bushell 2005: 400). She concludes that "The process of composition itself, within, between and across the "complete" Prelude stages is largely ignored. This is

a little like crossing a river by means of stepping stones brought down by the flood: you experience its force but your feet remain dry' (Bushell 2005: 400). This is the distinction between study of composition and major versions.

This thesis does not aim to 'discover' new poems, but to uncover the writing process itself. Therefore, after discussing the controversies surrounding editions of Thomas and Larkin, I will consider the editorial principles of the Cambridge University Press's *Variorum* and *Complete Poems* of D.H. Lawrence for the *Works* series. I will then explore the usefulness of French genetic criticism, German textual theory and 'Versioning' as a means of presenting each poet's compositional practice.

Editions of the Poems of Lawrence, Thomas and Larkin

The availability of manuscript evidence of D.H. Lawrence, Dylan Thomas and Philip Larkin's poetic composition has led a number of editors to draw on this unpublished material in order to make it available to a wider readership. Manuscripts have given editors access to juvenilia and later poems that the poets did not publish during their lifetimes. It has often been assumed that poet's lifetime collection limits what can be published. If the poet has been involved in creating an edition of *Collected Poems* these contain what the poet wished to preserve. Both D.H. Lawrence and Dylan Thomas produced *Collected Poems* in the final years of their lives. Lawrence used the opportunity to radically revise his early poems and restructure the sequence of his work. Dylan Thomas resisted making revisions to his *Collected Poems*. No *Collected Poems* of Philip Larkin was produced in his

lifetime and he stopped publishing volumes of poetry some years before his death. Part of the poet's craft is the selection of poems for volumes. Philip Larkin emphasised the need for variety, comparing selection to 'a music hall bill' where there is 'contrast, difference in length, the comic, the Irish tenor, bring on the girls' (Larkin 2002: 55). Many new editions, with editors other than the poet, replace the sequence of the published collections with some kind of chronological framework. However, this is fraught with potential error as the poem as it first emerges in the workbook or notebook may not be the text which is finally published.

In *Poet in the Making: The Notebooks of Dylan Thomas*, Ralph Maud has presented an edition of Thomas's early notebooks and typescripts (Maud 1968). This gives the general reader access to transcriptions of these seminal manuscript resources. These are presented under sections which represent the separate notebooks: 1930; 1930-1932; February 1933 and August 1933. The Appendix contains twenty manuscript poems now at the British Library which are not found in the notebooks. This edition is an invaluable starting point for getting a sense of Thomas's early writing. The notebooks contain best drafts to which Thomas often returned later and at times included a new version of the same poem in close proximity to the original. Maud printed these later versions in his 'Notes' at the back of the edition. The greatest advantage of these notebooks is that poems have not been left out and Thomas's work can be seen in its original sequence and context. Although it provides Thomas's readers with new poems, these are not the personal choice of the editor but represent all the available material. However, this present study draws on the extensive extant manuscripts of Thomas's late poems, which

contain more evidence of the poet's methods of composition. Editing these manuscripts, which contain much of Thomas's rough working, presents a far greater challenge than the notebooks.

In 2003, the American publishers New Directions reissued two volumes of Thomas's poetry to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the poet's death. The first was a revised volume of Daniel Jones's edition, originally created in 1971 and brought out for the anniversary as *The Poems of Dylan Thomas*. Controversially, the publishers distinguished this from *Collected Poems 1934-1952* (which was approved by Thomas) by reissuing this as *Dylan Thomas: Selected Poems 1934-1952* (Davies and Maud 2004: 67). Walford Davies and Ralph Maud, the scholars responsible for editing *Dylan Thomas: Collected Poems 1934-1953* for Dent in 1988, took issue with the decision in 'Concerns about The Revised New Directions Dylan Thomas' which appeared in *P.N. Review* of November to December 2004. These scholars' concerns highlight the kinds of debates which are ignited when there is an editorial decision to try to increase the known corpus of a poet's work by drawing on manuscript material. They point out that there was never a public demand for more of Thomas's poetry, but rather that Thomas's trustees had felt the poet had made a poor job of preparing his *Collected Poems* (Davies and Maud 2004: 67). With the reissue of the editions, Davies and Maud were disturbed by the implication that Jones's volume was somehow more complete and that the poet's *Collected Poems* was 'relegated to "selected" status' (Davies and Maud 2004: 67).

Davies and Maud argue that Daniel Jones dilutes Thomas's poetic achievement by adding trivial poems from the letters and notebooks. These poems

were subsequently made available in Ralph Maud's edition of Thomas's notebooks (Davies and Maud 2004: 67) and Paul Ferris's edition of Thomas's *Collected Letters*. These poems are better put into their original context (Maud and Davies 2004: 69).

Davies and Maud have questioned the editorial rigour and principles upon which Jones's volume is based. One of their concerns is his chronological ordering. It was Thomas's practice to return to poems in his notebook years after their original composition. This means that in Jones's scheme late versions of the poem are put in the chronology where they originally emerged, possibly in a different form. He has arbitrarily used his own judgment to decide when the 'essence' of the poem arose (Davies and Maud: 67-68). They are also concerned that Jones includes Vernon Watkins's reconstruction of 'Elegy'. He changed and edited the most finished worksheet version from the worksheets in Texas and added twenty-three lines from elsewhere in the sheets, which Davies and Maud feel Thomas discarded. In addition, Jones selected what Davies and Maud regard as a preliminary version from the manuscripts of 'In Country Heaven' (Davies and Maud 2004: 69).

Its publishers have raised Daniel Jones's highly subjective and unscholarly volume to a 'quasi-*Complete Poems*' (Davies and Maud 2004: 64). When this is presented to a readership who are unaware of the way in which it has been put together it presents a false image of Thomas's verse, shaped more by the tastes of its editor than the extant manuscript material.

Philip Larkin collected his early poetry into typescripts which he regularly revised, revisited and reassessed. A.T. Tolley has edited Larkin's earliest work into

Early Poems and Juvenilia. These are drawn from the two hundred and fifty poems he wrote between 1938 and 1946 (Tolley 2005: xv). Tolley describes Larkin's development from his poems in the school magazine, *The Conventarian*, and the ten typescripts of work produced as a school boy (Tolley 2005:xvi) to the unpublished *In the Grip of Light* in 1947 (Tolley 2005:xx), tracing Larkin's influences and publication (Tolley 2005: xvii-xx). This gives an insight into Larkin's earliest writings. However, it is a selection and Tolley's transcriptions are not always completely accurate (Burnett: 3/7/08)

In 1988, Anthony Thwaite produced an edition of Philip Larkin's *Collected Poems*, which increased Larkin's body of work by adding poems from the manuscripts, presented in chronological order, but with the 'Early Poems' (written before 1946) relegated to the end. He explains that his aim was 'to include, first, the poems completed by Philip Larkin between 1946 and the end of his life, together with a few unfinished poems which Larkin preserved in typescript; and, second, a substantial selection of his earlier poems, from 1938 until the end of 1945' (Thwaite 1988: xv). However, Faber did not reissue this edition in 2003, instead publishing a *Collected Poems* consisting of Larkin's published poems. It restored the order of Larkin's original collections and published poems that had appeared in newspapers and magazines. In a letter to the *Times Literary Supplement*, James Booth refutes the charge that Thwaite's edition "'bloated" Larkin's oeuvre.' He insists that: 'In fact, at least fifteen of the "new" poems stand alongside the best work which Larkin published during his lifetime, and two of them, "An April Sunday brings the snow" and "Love Again," are today among his best known works.' He complains that

'rejecting appeals, Faber effectively put the "new" poems out of print in the 2003 *Collected Poems*, on the grounds that Larkin did not publish them himself' (Booth 2005: 15). Again, attempts to add to a poet's oeuvre have met with the paradigm of the poet's 'final intention.' Thwaite has at least attempted to include all the finished poems from 1946 to the end of Larkin's life and Thwaite's method in preparing Larkin's later work is less subjective than Jones's approach. However, Thwaite is selective when choosing early poems and 'unfinished' work.

Archie Burnett at the Editorial Institute in Boston is currently producing *The Complete Poems of Philip Larkin* for Faber as a scholarly edition with apparatus and commentary. At the moment he is considering the viability of noting all the variants in the manuscript: 'I'll have to discuss with the publisher (Faber) what to do with the workbooks. I provided an elaborate apparatus of variants from the notebook drafts when I edited Housman for Oxford, but the Larkin drafts may be too bulky for this treatment' (Burnett: 3/7/08). Presenting versions of Larkin's poems with variants may not be the most effective way of editing his poems. French genetic criticism offers a precedent of including examples of the 'avant-texte' rather than lists of variants taken from their original context (Biasi 2004: 61).

Posthumous editing can raise issues of selection, transcriptions and editorial assumptions about the order and nature of the manuscript material. Lawrence produced a vast quantity of poems which remained in manuscript at his death. These include several versions of poems, most famously 'The Ship of Death' and 'Bavarian Gentians.' At the end of his life, Dylan Thomas left major unfinished poems such as 'Elegy' and 'In Country Sleep.' Larkin too left major unfinished

works such as 'The Dance' from the period directly after he had published *The Whitsun Weddings*. These unfinished works have subsequently been published.

Christopher Pollnitz is one of the editors involved in the Cambridge D.H. Lawrence *Complete Poems* and *Variorum*. Pollnitz is concentrating on three, late notebooks: the *Pansies* notebook, the *Nettles* notebook and the *Last Poems* notebook (Pollnitz 1995: 153). He has written extensively about the editorial considerations surrounding producing a large scale scholarly edition.

He argues that the nature of Lawrence's practice and his tendency to continue to extract poems from the notebooks for later collections 'points editors down a road of broad inclusiveness when deciding which items in his autograph verse output he would have regarded as potentially publishable' (Pollnitz 1995: 507). He also insists that choices cannot be made between revisions of poems as 'Lawrence's practice of not keeping revised texts of poems that he had dispatched for periodical publication but of reverting to notebook versions when preparing a volume for publication, indicates that, prior to volume publication, he was little concerned to make revision a cumulative or sequential process one autograph draft being as good a starting-point as another' (Pollnitz 1995: 507).

He argues persuasively for a 'recension' of the manuscripts of the late notebooks. This has not been done systematically since the typescript for *Last Poems* was prepared posthumously in 1931 (Pollnitz 2000: 514). Pollnitz emphasises the importance of returning to original manuscripts rather than photocopies (Pollnitz 1995: 155). In creating a 'variorum', Pollnitz sees it as

essential to present all the 'versions' of a Lawrence poem as clearly as possible. He concludes:

A variorum edition of Lawrence's verse should also aim at reproducing the clarity with which Lawrence evolved versions of poems, intact and entire, even when successive versions were drafted, one over the other on a single, heavily revised page.
(Lawrence 1995: 155)

Giving the example of 'Emasculation', Pollnitz explains why he has decided to present each revised 'version' as a separate poem. He argues that 'Even an attempt to represent the manuscript poem in print laid out as a black-and-white quasi-facsimile would be misleading, because such a text would not allow a reader to reconstruct each successive stage of revisions of "Emasculation". The reader would be able to see the range of revisions but would lack information regarding their sequence' (Pollnitz 1995:161). He concludes that the best way is 'to represent the stages of composition of heavily revised poems as separate versions. The printed page will bear little visual resemblance to the holograph manuscript, but the editor can dispense with a cumbersome apparatus and offer the reader ease of access to the poem at each stage of its revision' (Pollnitz 1995: 161). This is in part done by looking at: the way in which the text is deleted and where it is interlined or where ink-colour varies. However, Pollnitz feels that as a reader of the manuscript some 'critical sense' can be exercised. He insists that 'Although the final determination of

a text should be based on bibliographical or textual grounds alone, the critical sense may come into play in the initial stages of distinguishing an internally consistent version' (Pollnitz 1995: 156). This implicitly suggests the editor has to make a value judgment about what constitutes some versions.

He has considered the value of a full photofacsimile for Lawrence's last notebook, but ultimately decided against it. He thought it would have value as 'literary art' as 'such a facsimile would allow readers to appreciate the phases and polysemy of Lawrence's revisions, like looking into the cross hatchings of a drawing' (Pollnitz 2000: 516). However he distinguishes it from Emily Dickinson's hand-sewn books or Blake's illustrated manuscripts (Pollnitz 2000: 516).

The need for radical re-editing of Lawrence's posthumous poems is necessitated by mistakes that were made by the first editors and perpetuated in later editions. At his death Lawrence left two notebooks of poems that contained a substantial amount of unpublished verse. Although Lawrence had published some of the poems from the earlier notebook in *Nettles* (which he saw into proof) and magazines, nothing had been published from the second notebook before 1932. Lawrence's posthumous editor, Richard Aldington, created two collections *More Pansies* and *Last Poems*. These were published together as *Last Poems*. Richard Aldington and Lawrence's Italian publisher, Guiesppe Orioli were responsible for creating the Florence edition which was published in England by Martin Secker (Pollnitz 2000: 504).

Christopher Pollnitz and critics such as Keith Sagar have taken issue with Aldington's assumptions about Lawrence's poetic process. Aldington called the

earlier notebook 'Ms B' and the later notebook 'Ms A' because he believed that Lawrence had used them at the same time: the first for rough drafts and the second for final copies (Pollnitz 2000: 504). This has been proved unfounded by reconsideration of Lawrence's writing process (Pollnitz 2000: 305).

Pollnitz believes that the original typescript for *Last Poems* was made by Orioli (whose English was imperfect) and not checked against the manuscripts by Aldington (Pollnitz 2000: 511). Pollnitz points to a mistranscription in 'For a Moment' where a woman's movements are compared to a ship 'backing her white sails into port' when a return to the manuscripts confirms that Lawrence had the more fitting 'tacking'. Pollnitz points out that 'The gaffe is one of mistranscription. Ludicrous as the misreading is, it has persisted for almost seventy years. In the third edition of *Complete Poems*, the good ship Isis-Frieda is still "backing" into port' (Pollnitz 2000: 509).

Warren Roberts and Vivian de Sola Pinto produced three edition of Lawrence's *Complete Poems*. Roberts attempted to make corrections from the notebooks, which were in the possession of The University of Texas, for the first edition, but Heinemann ignored his changes. In 1968, T.A. Smailes pointed out a number of errors and omissions from the late notebooks in *Complete Poems*. Some of his changes were incorporated into the third edition (Pollnitz 2000: 513). However, there was no complete reediting of the text. This Cambridge edition will be the first to be based on a new transcription of the *Nettles* and *Last Poems* notebooks (Pollnitz 2000: 514).

Creating a 'variorum' of full versions, unhampered by complex apparatus or symbols is useful in presenting Lawrence's poems. However, there is still an element of editorial judgment in establishing from the manuscripts what constitutes a 'version' from a heavily revised page. A little photofacsimile for reader's to check the editor's transcription would be useful. The Cambridge *Poems and Variorum* is a massive and difficult undertaking originating from Carole Ferrier's influential 1971 thesis, *The Earlier Poetry of D.H. Lawrence: A Variorum Text Comprising All the Extant Incunabula and Published Poems Up to and Including the Year 1919*. It has still not come to fruition. This demonstrates that even within a series such as the Cambridge University Press *Works* of D.H. Lawrence, which has made a great deal of the manuscript material of Lawrence's novels available, the sheer volume of Lawrence's poetic output has posed a challenge. Although Pollnitz gives examples of his work on individual poems in his articles, it is difficult to evaluate the impact of the 'variorum' until it is published.

Approaches of the Methodologies.

If the poet's final intentions are assumed to define the corpus of work then creating an edition which draws on unpublished manuscript material raises issues of authorization. However, methodologies which concentrate on the writing process rather than printing the poet's final authorized text offer a new perspective on what can be gained by examining the 'avant-texte.' It is in considering how to produce an edition that French genetic criticism and German textual theory may prove most

useful. Both are concerned with presenting editions that reflect the evolution of a text.

When an editor attempts to create an edition using the 'avant-texte', the volume of drafts that may lie behind a single text can pose difficulties. In 'Towards a Science of Literature: Manuscript Analysis and the Genesis of the Work,' Pierre-Marc de Biasi notes that there are two types of genetic edition as 'one can try to publish either an exhaustive collection of a work's manuscripts or an edition enriched by an important selection of genetic documents' (Biasi 2004: 61). In presenting an exhaustive edition there are two possible approaches: the 'diplomatic' and the 'teleological.' Biasi gives two examples of a 'diplomatic edition'. Giovanni Bonaccorso's edition of 'Un Coeur simple' transcribes each folio and tries to reproduce as closely as possible the documents' topography (Biasi 2004: 61). Jeanne Goldin's edition of a passage in *Madame Bovary* goes even further and attempts to present 'in readable (typographical) form, an "identical" reproduction of the original rough drafts (including the blots of ink)' (Biasi 2004: 61). Considering the reader of such an edition, Biasi concludes that "The indisputable advantage of this presentation is that it requires almost no code; however, a nonspecialist may be disconcerted by the density that this kind of reproduction inherits from the original' (Biasi 2004: 61).

A teleological edition 'tries to capture the genetic movement sequentially'. Such an edition 'provides transcriptions of all the avant-textes leading to the definitive text: the complete series of successive versions of each paragraph of the final text is given in the order of its writing, from the first draft to the final

manuscript' (Biasi 2004: 61). This 'explodes the unity of the folio and redistributes the transcriptions sequentially.' This is helpful as 'it offers the nonspecialist reader an immediately available image of each moment of the text' (Biasi 2004: 62).

However such editions imply 'that the genetic classifications on which they rest have been unambiguously demonstrated' and 'that their presentation of the avant-textes will allow readers to reconstitute--perhaps with the help of a biaxial table--both the unity of each folio and its relative place in the genetic development' (Biasi 2004: 62).

Despite the fact that exhaustive editions of manuscript dossiers are still not widespread, the influence of genetic criticism's emphasis on the 'avant-texte' has begun to shape editorial principles in France. Even popular editions are beginning to include appendices of unpublished drafts in spite of the restrictions placed by book size and publication costs (Biasi 2004:62). Editors of French twentieth century writers have 'begun to undertake genetic presentations of vast works,' including Proust and Sartre. These editions include 'parallel to the text, a genetic dossier that is as "meaningful" as possible' (Biasi 2004: 62). Biasi explains that these dossiers are often too vast to be reproduced in full and 'will always be within limits that materially exclude a real genetic evaluation' as they are five or ten percent of the extant genetic material. However, Biasi considers that textual theory has undergone a significant change as it has abandoned lists of 'variants' in favour of 'a much more dynamic point of view that makes the logic of the avant-texte appear in its proper dimensions' (Biasi 2004: 61). It is a change in attitude towards 'variants' that sees them as part of the writing process rather than mistakes that

distinguishing French genetic criticism and German textual theory from traditional Anglo- American textual criticism.

Hans Walter Gabler's edition of *Ulysses* was created on the principles of German textual theory. In 'The Synchrony and Diachrony of Texts: Practice and Theory of the Critical Edition of James Joyce's *Ulysses*', Gabler concludes:

No creation of the human mind springs to instant life and perfection without revision. Whether preserved or not, there must always have been discrete textual states, in temporal succession, of a literary composition. Thus the work may be said to comprise all its textual states. By such definition, the work attains an axis and extension in time from earliest draft to final revision. Its total text presents itself as a diachronous structure correlating the discrete synchronous structures discernible, of which that conferred by publication is only one, and not necessarily a privileged one. It is thus a kinetic system of signification whose dynamics revolve on the variant. The variant, far from being an extraneous irritant, becomes an integral textual element of pivotal significance in the textual totality of the work. (Gabler 1981:309)

Hans Walter Gabler's *Ulysses. A Critical and Synoptic Edition* was highly controversial. In 'Intentional Error: The Paradox of Editing Joyce's *Ulysses*,' Vicki Mahaffey discusses the debate surrounding the edition, conducted in the American

and British press in the years after its publication in 1984 (Mahaffey 1991:172-175). Gabler presented two 'versions': 'a "synopsis" of different stages of the text's autograph composition (from final draft through the last set of proofs) on the verso, and a clear reading text on the corresponding rectos (which was the basis for the trade editions published by Random House, Bodely Head, and Penguin in 1986)' (Mahaffey 1991:173). Mahaffey explains that:

The synoptic text, through the use of a complex set of diacritical marks enables a reader in theory to reconstruct what Gabler calls the "continuous manuscript" of *Ulysses*, which he controversially assembled to use as the copy-text of his edition. This was the most unusual feature of the entire edition: Gabler's decision not to "correct" the most authoritative printed edition (in this case the 1922 first edition) or to choose one of the manuscripts as his copy-text, but to assemble a compound "manuscript out of the diverse fair copies, corrections, and additions in Joyce's hand (or dictated by him; a small portion of the Rosenbach manuscript was dictated by Joyce to Frank Budgen). (Mahaffey 1991: 173)

At first, the press praised Gabler's edition. The 1961 Random House edition was notoriously corrupt and Gabler's edition made significant corrections (Mahaffey 1991: 173). Gabler was concerned with charting the process of composition rather than the transmission of the text. Much of the criticism levied against Gabler was based on the assumptions of the Anglo-American tradition of editing rather than what

Gabler had set out to achieve. Mahaffey notes that 'Gabler's edition is not founded on printed editions (as many Anglo-American editions have been, either wholly or in part); instead, Gabler chose to edit the autograph documents up to but not including the first published edition in 1922' (Mahaffey 1991: 176).

A possible criticism of Gabler's synopsis is that the diacritical marks are so complicated that it neither makes a clear reading text of the continuous manuscript for a general reader and a model for editors nor provides a clear text in order to make the process of composition accessible for critical interpretation (Mahaffey 1991: 177). She suggests a synoptic edition with different colours to indicate the layers (Mahaffey 1991: 178).

Creating a synoptic edition using German textual theory where all the differences in the drafting process were presented on a single page would not create a clear reading text. Therefore, although focusing on writing process rather than eclectic editing to create 'authorial final intentions', I would not use this editorial procedure.

Preparing an Edition of the Three Poets

If I were to prepare an edition based on the principles that underlie this thesis, then I would favour one which demonstrated the salient features of each poet's compositional practice. As their methods of composition are different, it would be necessary to take a different approach to each poet's manuscripts. However, the digitalization of archives potentially enables the whole literary archive to be made available on line thus allowing the reader full access to any poem in all its phases. Although time- consuming, to construct this would be less expensive than trying to

publish full facsimiles. Such an archive would allow the user to see all the manuscripts in colour and, by using the zoom button, to focus upon specific words or lines.

A photofacsimile of Lawrence's notebooks would make it possible to see the versions of poems in their context. This is important with Lawrence as he groups poems thematically and revises poems in new contexts to reflect his changing views. Indexing would indicate all the versions of a particular poem so these could be studied through each stage of their rewriting. There is not enough extant manuscript material to justify a genetic edition. Producing an edition in this way would be faster than creating a 'variorum.'

Dylan Thomas's late poems, with their extensive manuscript evidence, lend themselves either to a French genetic edition or 'versioning.' As with the prose writers with whom French genetic critics deal, Thomas produces a number of types of drafts: worksheets of ideas; clusters of lines with innumerable variants and contingent versions. In order to understand his writing process, it is necessary to identify these and present the whole dossier or sufficient examples of his compositional practice. Similarly, 'versioning' would be useful as a way of looking at the manuscripts leading to the two distinct versions of 'Poem on his Birthday.' The possible disadvantage of this technique would be its cost. However, the Cornell Wordsworth series has proved that where editions of manuscript material are made available there is an interested readership (Reiman 1987: 170-171).

Philip Larkin was highly systematic, drafting stanza by stanza. It may be of interest to produce a 'teleological' edition so that the subtle changes between stanzas

could be seen easily. However, this would not show the way in which any changes impacted on the emerging poem as a whole. As it leads to distinct versions, it would be possible to 'version' 'Love Songs in Age', possibly as a journal article and to reproduce a selection of the manuscripts that led to each version.

When producing an edition it is necessary to ask for whom it is intended and to what purpose could it be put. Since the purpose of this thesis is a study of compositional practice, a 'genetic' edition or 'versioning' would provide the greatest insight into the composition of specific poems for an interested general reader who did not have access to the manuscripts. This thesis does not seek to make value judgments between versions, but to explore each poet's unique compositional practice by immersion in the manuscript evidence.

Approaching the Drafts

At some point in the drafting process the poet decides that the poem is sufficiently complete for publication. The journey from idea to printed page can be divided into three aspects: inspiration; motivation and the actual writing of the poem.

What inspires a poet to write a particular poem is known only to the poet--and possibly not even to him/her. The poet may be able to identify the stimulus, the external incident or internal idea which caused him/her to think, 'That's a good idea for a poem.' However, this does not explain why the poet was able to create a poem from that idea. In 'Writing Poems,' Philip Larkin explained that:

Writing a poem is not an act of will...Whatever makes a poem successful is not an act of will. In consequence, the poems that actually get written may seem trivial or unedifying, compared with those that don't. But the poems that get written, even if they do not please the will, evidently please that mysterious something that has to be pleased (Larkin 1983: 84).

Larkin's comment stresses the unknown in composition. He explained in an interview with *The Observer* that the inspiration for a poem was a 'snatch' which he describes as 'the idea for a poem and a bit of it...comes simultaneously' (Larkin 1983: 52). As will be seen later, Larkin said that he had no idea why he wrote poetry. Lawrence insisted that his best poems 'seemed to come from somewhere, I didn't know where, out of a me whom I didn't know and didn't want to know, and to say things I would much rather not have said: for choice' (Lawrence *CP*: 849).

Motivation must be distinguished from inspiration. Inspiration is whatever leads to the thought 'That is a good idea for a poem.' Motivation is what causes the person who has received the inspiration to act upon it and write the poem. It is perfectly possible for a poet to have the idea that some stimulus would be a good idea for a poem, but to take the matter no further. A poet is much more likely to know what moves him to write and publish the poem than he is to know from where the idea for it came and why it reacted with his mind to produce the realization that he has a good idea for a poem. The motives may be the wish or the need for money, the wish or the need for admiration or to share the experience

which was the stimulus of the poem with others or any one or more of numerous others. There is no necessary connection between motivation and a love of poetry or a wish on the part of the poet to improve his poetry writing technique. In this thesis 'inspiration' will be used to describe the reaction of stimulus with the poet's state of mind to produce the realisation that an idea for a poem has arisen and 'compositional practice' will be used to describe how the poem is written. However, what can be learned about the compositional practice in respect of any particular poem is limited in two respects, first the physical and secondly the mental.

It is very rare for the full physical evidence of drafts to survive. This is usually true even if there has been no loss or destruction of the written drafts. The first draft is always made in the mind of the poet. Should a poet wish to preserve a mental draft it is improbable that he/she would be able to do so. Even if he could commit to paper or to a tape recorder ideas as fast as he could speak, ideas are like bubbles. They arise, burst and vanish before they can be caught. What is put on paper is at least the second draft and more likely the third. The first will be unarticulated thought. The second draft will probably be some version thereof mumbled to him/herself, turned over in the mouth and mind. In the vast majority of cases the first draft on paper will be the third draft. Moreover, poets in the age before cheap paper probably recited drafts aloud before committing them to the final version of parchment. Perhaps the most important draft has always been unavailable to scholars.

On the mental level, no one fully understands why a poet who has received the inspiration to write a poem decides to use the words he actually uses. Philip Larkin speaking of how and why he wrote poetry said: 'I have never claimed to know fully why I write poetry: it seems to be a skill easily damaged by self-consciousness and poetic theory is not much good if it hinders poets' (Larkin 2002: 78). The implication is that what one might call the poetry writing technique is so frail and nebulous that an examination of it could lead to its destruction or flight. Similarly a poet may not know why he or she makes a particular change to a draft of a poem.

In this thesis I adopt a blend of elements from various theories. In approaching a manuscript the first thing to be considered is its physical appearance, how the words are set out on the page, and whether the pages are loose or in a notebook. The physical evidence must then be compared with the poets' statements about how he writes in order to see how these relate to the manuscript evidence. Third, comes close analysis of stanzas and lines that appear to have been problematic in order to illustrate the full range of the poets' strategies as they meet challenges.

Chapter 2

Practicalities

'Operation Manuscript'

This chapter will explore how the poetic manuscripts of D.H. Lawrence, Dylan Thomas and Philip Larkin came to be held by academic institutions in America and Britain in an acknowledgement of the importance of manuscripts to the academic study of 'creative process.' During the late twentieth century these institutions increasingly took the responsibility of holding such materials on behalf of academics and researchers. Some poetic manuscripts had survived from earlier periods, but only by accident. Pioneers such as Charles D. Abbott at the Lockwood Memorial Library at the University of Buffalo now recognised the invaluable resources that could be brought together by asking poets for their worksheets in order to salvage them from destruction (Abbott 1948: 12). Such innovative collections also marked a greater interest in the poetry of living or recently dead writers. Traditionally writers had to have earned their enduring place in the canon of literature before they received such attention. British institutions were slower to recognise the importance of collecting the working materials of twentieth-century writers. Philip Larkin, as an academic librarian and poet, was in the vanguard, championing the value of manuscripts to an understanding of compositional practice and striving to create a national collection of the manuscripts of British writers to prevent their drain to America. In 'A Neglected Responsibility', written

in 1979, he explains that 'It was receiving this kind of solicitation myself -- at first from Mr. Abbott, then from others -- that awoke my interest in what was going on' (Larkin 1983: 103). British academic institutions were reluctant to invest in the manuscripts of living writers. He concludes that 'a British librarian' could be 'secure in the knowledge that his university would not encourage purchases of contemporary manuscripts' and, therefore, 'pays little attention to the large-scale acquisition policy -- Operation Manuscript one might almost call it -- mounted by certain American institutions' (Larkin 2002: 121).

Philip Larkin noted that manuscripts have two kinds of value: 'the magical' and 'the meaningful' (Larkin 1983: 99). The primary 'magical' quality is caught up with the excitement of seeing the poem emerging in the poet's own hand: 'this is the paper he wrote on, these are the words as he wrote them, emerging for the first time in this particular miraculous combination' (Larkin 1983: 99). In an article published in the Guardian on 7th February 2004, Andrew Motion notes that 'The nuts-and-bolts of writing, and manuscripts themselves, have a primitive fascination' as 'they allow us to sit down beside the author in the moment of creation' (<http://www.guardian.co.uk>).

The 'meaningful value' is a matter of the manuscript's importance in confirming the text and providing understanding of the process of writing: 'A manuscript can show the cancellations, the substitutions, the shifting towards ultimate form and the final meaning' (Larkin 1983: 99). It is these otherwise unobtainable insights that manuscripts provide which make them essential in a study of compositional practice.

Many of the worksheets and manuscripts of Dylan Thomas and D.H. Lawrence are held in America. Although it might have been possible to write this thesis by asking for photocopies without going to look at the originals much understanding of poetic compositional practice would have been lost because part of processing primary resources is working empirically to find which are the most revealing drafts. I had the opportunity to visit the Houghton Library at Harvard University, The Poetry Collection at the State University of New York at Buffalo and The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre at the University of Texas at Austin. Working with original manuscripts as opposed to copies provides greater insights. Inspection of the originals of Thomas's manuscripts showed me that he was turning over the pages from the bottom rather than laterally. The versos would be upside down in relation to the rectos. Unless one is able to look at manuscripts oneself, one must rely for such information on the archivist who has created the reproductions one uses.

In Britain, the Larkin manuscripts were considered too delicate for full access. I was allowed to work with the original of Larkin's first notebook on two visits to the British Library, but was encouraged to use the microfilm. This was not adequate for accurate transcription. In order to look at 'Deceptions' more closely I used a reproduction of the pages on CD-Rom. In the Larkin Archive of the Brynmor Jones Library I used bound photocopies of the notebooks which were mostly quite adequate. However, where I wanted to verify particular words from the original, I had to have each page of the workbook turned by the archivist. This made the process time consuming. Similarly, at the University of Nottingham

researchers work from photocopies of Lawrence's manuscripts. However, since Dylan Thomas's manuscripts are in a less vulnerable state, I was able to work with the originals in the British Library.

As a research student visiting America, I was given access to the originals, and was also able to procure extensive photocopies for private study. This proved particularly useful for studying Dylan Thomas's compositional practice as I was able to reunite the manuscripts of poems such as 'Poem on his Birthday', which are divided between the Houghton Library at Harvard University and the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre at the University of Texas at Austin.

At Buffalo, I discovered that Thomas's adolescent notebooks had been dismantled and the staples removed in an earlier attempt at preservation. Thus fragmented the notebooks are more difficult to study, as it is necessary to establish the way in which the pages relate to one another. At Texas, I was able to access both D.H. Lawrence's and Dylan Thomas's original manuscripts.

The issue of access to manuscripts is an important consideration. In order to be able to study compositional practice it is necessary to be able to see the nuances of the subjective and objective changes. This is especially true of Larkin's manuscripts which are written in pencil. In addition, page size, ink colour and other physical factors might explain an aspect of a composition. There are plans to digitalise the Larkin Archive. This will provide an experience far closer to working with the original manuscripts as scanned images reproduce the colours and textures of the page with far more subtly than photocopies and it will be possible to turn the pages. Once pages have been scanned, a group of students will be asked

to test the on-line resource to establish how easy it is to use. On-line archives such as that of Wilfred Owen (<http://www.hcu.ox.ac.uk/jtap/>) have already set a precedent for systematic digitising of manuscripts.

The Development of Modern Literary Manuscript Acquisition

The Poetry Collection: State University of New York at Buffalo

Charles D. Abbott's decision to ask for poets' worksheets was part of a larger project to create a collection of twentieth-century poetry begun in 1935 when Thomas B. Lockwood donated the Lockwood Memorial Library (Abbott 1948: 6). Abbott chose this area because it was relatively inexpensive to create a holding of these resources (Abbott 1948: 6-7). He realised that concentrating on the twentieth-century gave him the unique opportunity to ask for worksheets (Abbott 1948: 12). The process by which these worksheets were acquired was speculative. Abbott sent out begging letters to fifty American and British poets 'at random from a list of some two hundred, without regard to sex, age, or popularity' in order to test their responses (Abbott 1948: 13). The letters asked for 'a dossier as complete as possible on the composition of a single poem' (Abbott 1948: 13). However, only seventeen responded with 'documentary histories of composition'. Four replied with a promise, twenty-five with 'fair copies' (the traditional response to a request for a manuscript). Three did not respond at all and one, Rapallo, sent in a tirade against the American education system (Abbott 1948: 13). Ultimately, Abbott decided that it was more straightforward to meet poets in person and explain his

request. A self-funded trip in America (Abbott 1948: 15) and then in 1938 a University-funded visit to Britain proved successful (Abbott 1948: 16-24).

Buffalo did not command large financial resources and also did not want to discriminate between poets, therefore Abbott introduced the self-imposed rule of not paying for worksheets (Abbott 1948: 33). However, as will be seen later, an exception was made in order to acquire manuscripts by Dylan Thomas. Abbott came to the conclusion that one example from each poet was not really sufficient, as 'The really proficient searcher, whether his intent be the individual poet's achievement or the principles of poetic theory, would need more than one example' (Abbott 1948: 24) therefore, 'We must attempt to have every poet represented by a budget of poems, preferably from all seasons of his accomplishment' (Abbott 1948: 24). Abbott also understood that understanding poetic composition would also require the collecting of the poets' letters especially those sent to fellow poets (Abbott 1948: 27-28). The 'Poetry Collection' at the Lockwood Memorial Library set an early precedent and was highly influential. In 1948, *Poets at Work: Essays on the Modern Poetry Collection at the Lockwood Memorial Library, University of Buffalo* reflected upon the value of the project, citing the manuscripts in the collection in a discussion of what such study could reveal. As will be seen later, in the early 1960s, Eric Walter White, Assistant Secretary of the Arts Council was enthused by a visit to Buffalo to create the British *National Manuscript Collection of Contemporary Poets* (Larkin 1983: 103).

The possible value of manuscripts has long been debated. Samuel Johnson remarked that 'it is pleasant to see great works in their seminal state, pregnant with

latent possibilities of excellence; nor could there be any more delightful entertainment than to trace their gradual growth and expansion, and to observe how they are sometimes suddenly advanced by accidental hints, and sometimes slowly improved by steady meditation' (Johnson 1977: 407). T.S. Eliot, however, warned that 'a knowledge of the springs which released a poem is not necessarily a help toward understanding the poem: too much information about the origins of the poem may even break [one's] contact with it' (Eliot 1957: 122). Eliot is concerned that the process should not be valued more than the product.

When Charles D. Abbott considered initiating a collection of poets' worksheets one of his reasons was an increased interest in the processes by which published texts had come into being. He noted that:

Seeking to explain the basic origins as well as the ultimate aims of poetic endeavour (and all the processes of thought which lie between the beginning and the end), [critics] all started from the finished poem and unwound the ribbon of conjecture backwards. They were absorbed in the explication of causes while their evidence consisted almost wholly of effects. (Abbott 1948: 10-11)

By collecting worksheets, Abbott intended to furnish these theorists with the means to trace this process once it got beyond the initial thought processes in the poet's imagination (Abbott 1948: 12). As a librarian he was responsible for facilitating the work of the critic by providing the primary material.

Donald A. Stauffer offered a practical model of how manuscripts should be used. He saw manuscripts as a means of linking a purely aesthetic criticism of poetry with an historical approach, which sought to trace the poet's possible influences (Stauffer 1948: 39). He argues that the best evidence for the origins of the poem lie in 'what was in the artist's mind in the process of gestation and creation' and 'if we feel respect for the laws of evidence' this is only accessible through 'what the artist himself leaves as record' (Stauffer 1948: 40). Stauffer considers the poet's revisions as an ongoing process of self-reflexive criticism:

The most important criticism of art ...is the criticism made by the artist himself during the process of creation-- inventing, selecting, rejecting...In a word: deciding. (Stauffer 1948: 57)

Manuscripts directly reveal these processes to the commentator who examines the poetic drafting process. This thesis will trace this process of self-criticism as evidenced by the drafts. Stauffer also points out that manuscripts can offer practical insights into compositional practice, what he terms 'a workshop' for aspiring and practising poets (Stauffer 1948: 81-82).

However, in 'Squares and Oblongs' W.H. Auden sees the interest in poetic composition as a sign that people are no longer approaching poetry as readers, but rather as writers. Whereas readers used to ask of 'the final published product...' "Is it good or bad? Why do I like it or dislike it?" now they approach it as 'actual or potential poets' who asks "How is poetry written? Could I write it? Is poetry a

valuable occupation? Would I like to be a poet?" (Auden 1948: 165). Auden has a strong conviction that poets are born (Auden 1948: 171) and is dismissive of the common delusion that anyone can become a poet (Auden 1948: 165-166).

In 1958, A. Alvarez gave a talk on the *Third Programme* about the 'Library of Poetry' at the University of Buffalo which became an influential article in the *Listener*. Philip Larkin cites this in one of his reports upon the modern literary manuscript situation (DPL (2)/3/49/11). Alvarez is impressed by Charles D. Abbott's vision of creating a 'unique' collection which is 'devoted wholly to modern poetry' and contains extensive manuscripts especially as the collection was begun in 1935 (Alvarez 1958: 155). He summarises the purpose of the collection:

The idea was to provide not just the finished products but the whole assembly line of as many modern poems as possible. So the Lockwood Library is unique not merely for the material it has but for the principle behind it. It is devoted both to poetry and to what would, I suppose, be called the psychology of creation. It is, in short, wholly the product of the age of analysis. (Alvarez 1958: 155)

Alvarez, however, has 'misgivings' about the collection. He criticises the idea that it is possible to understand the creative act rather than simply the poet's artistic decisions (Alvarez 1958: 156).

However, he can see the value of the manuscripts in preserving the poets' texts from 'the whims of their editors and the vagaries of their printers'; ensuring

that 'the poets have the last word at least on some of their poems' by 'showing not only what the poets wrote but also what they almost wrote and then thought better of'; showing 'the kind of man a poet is: how much he revises and what he revises for...', as 'the early drafts will not make a poem better in itself but they will help one understand the kind of effect a poet is after, the kind of work he can and cannot do'; they may 'help in interpreting obscure poems' and show the poet's 'self criticism,' where he/she revises long after the poem is published as 'later versions are...criticisms of the early poems by their own authors they are ways of showing where the earlier versions failed and what the poet in his maturity thinks he was really after' (Alvarez 1958: 155-56). Though Alvarez fears that too much focus on the 'mystique of being a poet' might detract from the poems themselves, he sees that manuscripts can help in understanding the technical processes of the poet and contribute to an understanding of what he or she was trying to achieve (Alvarez 1958: 156).

Alvarez's reservations are about the 'institutionalising' of such a collection and the desire 'to understand the nature of the creative act itself' (Alvarez 1958: 156). He is concerned that:

The writer becomes just another thesis topic, and the manuscripts over which he has sweated, with all their mess, impatience, excitement, and boredom, have become just useful evidence for an academic theory. (Alvarez 1958: 156)

This is in part a justifiable concern. Understanding the process of composition is not the same as engaging in the creative act of writing a poem. However, these glimpses into the mechanisms of the poem are valuable because they are a reminder that poems do not emerge fully fledged but must be worked upon. 'Academic theory' can throw light on the practices of the poet and the development of specific poems.

Alvarez suggests that psychological analysis applied to these manuscripts will not tell us more about 'poems', only about poets. He can see no real 'psychological' use of such manuscript study:

The revisions and corrections, the false starts of a poet's worksheets, reveal...far more about the calibre of his artistic intelligence, about his ability to deal responsibly with his material, than they reveal about its nature and origins. In short, the interest is critical, not psychological (Alvarez 1958: 156).

The manuscripts can give evidence only of the poet's artistic decisions. They cannot give an insight into the psychology of creativity as manuscripts themselves cannot show why a poet made a change. Alvarez is rather extreme here, and in many cases it seems legitimate, as we shall see, to speculate upon the poet's psychological motives.

The Humanities Research Centre, University of Texas at Austin

Harry Hunt Ransom, who was the provost at the University of Texas, called for the establishing of a Humanities Research Centre in 1957 (Basbanes 1996: 312). Ransom was responding to the needs of his graduate research students who found it difficult to locate the primary and secondary material of the contemporary writers on whom they were working. The reasoning behind the creation of the Humanities Research Centre was to 'collect the books and papers of current writers and preserve them ...just as books of preceding centuries were being preserved as a matter of course' (Roberts 1986: 24). The centre was finally built in 1970 (Basbanes 1996: 316). Ransom realised that he could not compete on their own terms with other university collections of rare books and manuscripts. Therefore, according to Nicholas A. Basbanes, Ransom laid 'claim to the twentieth century while the fires of creation still burned' (Basbanes 1996: 313). As in the case of Buffalo, part of the drive to collect twentieth century manuscripts was to stake a claim in an uncrowded area of interest. An important early purchase in 1958 was the manuscript collection of Thomas Edward Hanley, a Pennsylvanian brick manufacturer which contained an important body of D.H. Lawrence's manuscripts as well as some by Dylan Thomas (Basbanes 1996: 317).

Significantly, Ransom's acquisitions were eclectic. He was most interested in the materials of the 'creative process':

Printed books certainly were included, but they were viewed as the logical conclusion of the creative process, not its beginnings.

Primary documents -- manuscripts, letters, journals-- were the quarry
(Basbanes 1996: 314).

Ransom's aim was to establish a world class collection in which it would be possible to trace a creative work from its inception to its printed form. Unlike Buffalo, the University of Texas was prepared to pay for manuscripts and had considerable financial resources at its disposal. This altered the market for modern literary manuscripts and made the British public and press more aware of the purchase of the manuscripts of British writers by America.

The Manuscripts

D.H. Lawrence

D.H. Lawrence did not see manuscript versions as fixing his text in a final, unalterable form. However, he did come to appreciate their commercial value as objects. In 1924 he was uncomfortable with accepting a ranch in Taos, New Mexico, from Mabel Luhan as a gift. Frieda Lawrence had the idea of giving their patron the manuscript of *Sons and Lovers* in recompense. Elaine Feinstein notes that:

This was a bargain for Mabel, since the neglected ranch was not worth more than a thousand dollars, while Lawrence's growing reputation meant the manuscript was worth three or four thousand.
(Feinstein 1994: 204)

Yet it was not until 1929 that the Lawrences seem fully to have realised the potential monetary value of the manuscripts. In this year before his death, Lawrence asked Dorothy Brett to remove his manuscripts from storage at the ranch in Taos and place them in a bank vault (Roberts 1986: 25). He regarded these as a 'nest egg', a financial 'reserve' on which could rely. He clearly felt a need to protect these assets and to keep an eye on the manuscript market. Though he only sold one manuscript during his lifetime, that of the short story 'Sun', he kept track of his manuscripts, 'sold or unsold' (Squires 1991: 2).

Frieda Lawrence played a seminal role in preserving these manuscripts from destruction. Writing to an unnamed correspondent from Bandol in France, she inquires as to the amount this person had paid for the manuscripts of *Women in Love* and *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, explaining 'you see till lately we never thought of the manuscripts as valuable and often Lawrence burnt them, but I tried to rescue them, as I thought they looked nice' (Squires 1991: 2). Lawrence's primary concern, perhaps originating from the values instilled into him by his mother, was to provide for Frieda Lawrence in the event of his death. He told his sister Ada Clark in September 1929 that 'if I died the MSS. and pictures would have to be sold to secure something of an income for Frieda' (Squires 1991: 2). As Lawrence left no will, there was a legal battle between Frieda Lawrence and her husband's brother and sister, but Frieda 'eventually won rights to Lawrence's published and unpublished literary work' (Squires 1991: 2).

Lawrence was aware that private collectors were prepared to buy his manuscripts. However, in contrast to the later experiences of Dylan Thomas and Philip Larkin, in Lawrence's lifetime (and indeed immediately afterwards) academic institutions showed only lukewarm interest in purchasing the manuscripts. It would not have occurred to Lawrence to offer his literary archive to the University of Nottingham, not only because he had evoked hostility by eloping with a professor's wife, but also because there was then no interest in using contemporary manuscripts to study compositional practice. It was not until the 1950s that Professor Vivian de Sola Pinto restored Lawrence's reputation at Nottingham and began to collect an archive which included Lawrence's manuscript material and eventually his significant early poetic notebooks. This was within a climate in which there was increasing awareness of the importance of preserving contemporary manuscripts. As the leader in this field, the Humanities Research Centre in Texas had already compiled a vast resource of D.H. Lawrence manuscripts. The driving force behind the amassing of Lawrence's manuscripts in Texas was Warren Roberts, who had written his doctoral dissertation on Lawrence under the supervision of Ransom and would become the director of the Humanities Research Centre in 1961 (Basbanes 1996: 351).

Shortly after Lawrence's death, Frieda Lawrence had the opportunity of selling manuscripts to A.S.W. Rosenbach through the book dealer Edward Titus. However she asked the impossibly high sum of £25,000. She was keen to assert the importance of Lawrence's reputation by setting this high and arbitrary amount despite the fact that there were only five or six private collectors interested in the

manuscripts (Squires 1991: 2). It was not until 1936 that Frieda Lawrence and her third husband Angelo Ravagli made a serious effort to sell the manuscripts. They brought in Jacob Israel Zeitlin, a young book dealer (Squires 1991:3). Zeitlin publicised the collection, targeting universities in particular. Michael Squires explains that:

Jake decided that the best way to win recognition for Lawrence's manuscripts was first to exhibit them – at Stanford University and at the Los Angeles Public Library – and then to issue a descriptive catalogue. (Squires 1991: 6)

There was enthusiasm from graduate students such as Harry K. Wells from Harvard University who wanted to write a biography of Lawrence. He hoped that his university would purchase the manuscripts so that he would be able to use them (Squires 1991: 6). However, Harvard were only prepared to offer \$10,000, and after their exhibition at Harvard the manuscripts were returned to Frieda and her husband (Squires 1991: 8).

The task of creating the catalogue fell to Lawrence Clark Powell (Squires 1991: 8). Zeitlin sent this out to dealers and customers who he thought might be interested, including Bertram Rota and T.E. Hanley (Squires 1991: 10). There was no interest from universities despite the fact that Zeitlin seems to have been in tune with new trends in the study of composition and was offering such a complete archive (Squires 1991: 11). His rationale anticipates that of Charles D. Abbott at

Buffalo. Writing to the University of California on 9th November 1937, he explained that:

This is a very important collection and is very excellent source material for students of contemporary literature as well as investigators into the psychology of creative writing (Squires 1991: 127).

The major buyer from this attempt to sell the manuscripts was Thomas Edward Hanley, who insisted on paying for his purchases in instalments and was still paying for material in 1954. (Squires 1991: 15-16)

Warren Roberts became aware of the existence of further primary material from personal contact with Frieda Lawrence who in 1954 invited him to Taos telling him, 'I have some of the pictures and MSS and typescripts' (Roberts 1986: 24). For Roberts 'The realization that Frieda still had in her possession Lawrence manuscripts and books was exciting, and we immediately thought about the possibility of establishing a D.H. Lawrence collection at Texas' (Roberts 1986: 24). During his trip to Taos, Roberts was commissioned to discuss 'bringing her Lawrence archive to Austin' (Roberts 1986: 24). Although she had occasionally sold manuscripts when she was short of money, or even given them away 'There was sufficient research material to confer distinction on any library' (Roberts 1986: 25). The manuscripts were appraised and priced and the Ravaglis came to Austin in mid-October. However Frieda's husband took umbrage at receiving only a letter

from Ransom rather than something more official and halted the sale. Nevertheless, as Roberts recalled, 'Frieda generously insisted that the manuscripts and books remain in Austin until the spring for other students and me to use in our work on Lawrence. Fortunately the University eventually obtained most of these items through a variety of sources' (Roberts 1986: 27). Frieda proved a useful contact, putting the Centre in touch with friends of Lawrence who still had correspondence (Roberts 1986: 28-29). She also told Texas about T.E. Hanley's Collection and in 1958 they were able to purchase it. Hanley was prepared to sell because his insurers refused to cover these valuable objects in his wood-framed Victorian house. Warren Roberts notes that 'The acquisition of Hanley's collection brought the largest single archive of Lawrence papers to the Humanities Research Centre' (Roberts 1986: 31).

The extent of the Lawrence Archive that Texas was able to amass made it one of the seminal manuscript collections in the Humanities Research Centre's foundation. Warren Roberts concluded that:

Interest in D.H. Lawrence provided the occasion for the first attempt to bring the archive of a twentieth-century writer to Texas, and the growth of the Lawrence collection parallels very closely the emergence of the Harry Ransom Research Centre as a major source for research in twentieth century literature. (Roberts 1986: 23)

It was Warren Roberts' enthusiasm and his contacts with those associated with Lawrence that proved central to the foundation of the Lawrence collection.

Yet despite the fact that universities such as Texas were making a concerted effort to collect Lawrence manuscripts, private collectors such as George Lazarus were still prepared to bid against Texas in the auction room. Lazarus collected much in the 1930s before Texas became interested in contemporary manuscripts (Finney 1973: 309). Anthony Rota, the son of Bertram Rota, a hugely influential book dealer responsible for many manuscript sales including those of D.H. Lawrence and Dylan Thomas, observed of Lazarus:

Mr. Lazarus has always had the greatest admiration for Lawrence's poetry and therefore tried particularly hard to buy manuscript and typescript poems. (Rota 1985: 106)

After Lazarus' death, his manuscripts went to Nottingham University along with those of another great collector, L.D. Clark. This means that this valuable resource is now available for widespread study.

Dylan Thomas

Dylan Thomas was always keen to share his manuscripts with interested parties. In 1935, his friend Charles Fisher requested one. Thomas explained that he worked between innumerable rough sheets, copying lines into his notebooks and then typing out the completed poem. He asked Fisher what he would like:

The scrap sheets I burn, for there are such a lot of them that they clutter up my room and get mixed in the beer and butter. Now what can I send you? A typed copy? Shall I write some out for you? Or preserve from the waiting fire the next batch of almost illegible sheets? Anything you like. I am at your service. (Thomas 1987: 182)

The practice of creating 'innumerable sheets' persisted throughout Thomas's writing career and this makes his manuscripts particularly engaging. His exhaustive drafting gives the sense of thinking on paper. In a significant 'P.S,' Thomas explained to Fisher: 'I can't give you the exercise books, for they contain the only copies I possess' (Thomas 1987: 182). Thomas mined these adolescent notebooks for poems to revise until he finally sold them. He was a slow writer and as he matured he used these early works as the foundation for his collections up to *Death and Entrances*.

When Henry Treece was writing one of the earliest critical works on Dylan Thomas, he sent his theories to Thomas for his comments. Where Treece made inaccurate judgements about Thomas's development between *Eighteen Poems* and *Twenty-Five Poems*, the poet offered to show his manuscripts to reveal the real sequence of the poems' composition. He wanted to discuss them and suggested that 'we can go together over all my manuscripts (if you care to, of course) and see properly how these poems do genealogically work' (Thomas 1987: 310).

Thomas did not sell his notebooks to the University of Buffalo until 1941, but there is evidence that he was interested in Charles D. Abbott's project as early as 1938 (the year of Abbott's trip to Britain). On 17th January, 1938, Thomas writes: 'Your plans sound really important and interesting, and I do hope you'll tell me about them' (PCMS-028). He did arrange to meet Abbott in London, but there is no mention in *Poets at Work* of this meeting taking place as Philip Larkin points out in 'A Neglected Responsibility' (Larkin 1983: 103).

The letters from 1941 show that Thomas presumes that he will be paid for his manuscripts. This placed the University of Buffalo in an awkward situation as Thomas's manuscripts were exactly the type of thing they were striving to collect. Charles D. Abbott explained to Betram Rota on 24th September 1941 that:

Such a collection, from a poet such as Dylan Thomas, is exactly the sort of thing we most covet in this project we have undertaken. But -- our hands are tied when it comes to purchasing manuscript materials... (PCMS-028)

He explains that he has persuaded Thomas B. Lockwood to put forward the money for their sale:

According to all the rules and regulations I can not buy them. But I want them so badly that I have done something which I fear is far from politic. I have persuaded a private friend to buy them for us. It

is a transaction which is unlikely to occur again. This time, however, it can be done. I got a friend of the University to put up \$140.00 for all the poetry manuscripts...(PCMS-028)

The sale of the four surviving 'red notebooks' containing Thomas's poems and the one containing his early short stories was of great importance as Thomas had to make the decision that he would no longer draw from these reserves in future writing. Caitlin Thomas explains that:

It was during [the] early part of the war that Dylan decided to sell the notebooks in which he had drafted many of his early poems, and which he had mined constantly during the late Thirties, re-working some of the poems...*The Map of Love* had done very badly...he blamed much of that on his notebooks, and he said he had been using them far too much...(Thomas and Tremlett 1986: 83).

Caitlin insisted that it was a conscious, artistic decision and 'the calm, rational, literary Dylan decided he did not want to refer to them any more' (Thomas and Tremlett 1986: 83). She explains that Thomas told her that 'I've pretty well exhausted all the stuff in there; there's nothing more I want to use' (Thomas and Tremlett 1986: 83). She concludes that:

The drinking Dylan may have drunk those notebooks ..., but it was the creative Dylan who decided to sell them. (Thomas and Tremlett 1986: 83)

John Ackerman notes 'it was a bold sale, for Thomas had now to turn to new sources of inspiration, and it marked, as the war had done, that decisive development in his work that produced his mature and greatest poetry' (Ackerman 1994: 28).

Thomas had to write to Clement Davenport to locate these exercise books. He facetiously asked:

Would it be a lot of trouble for you to send them to me?...I've got a chance of selling my mss, for about the price of two large Players after the next budget, and it's easier, and more honest too, to send the real mss rather than to copy out the copies in different coloured inks and with elaborate and ostentatiously inspired corrections. (Thomas 1987: 479)

Thomas has at least given a passing thought to how such false worksheets might be perpetrated. As manuscripts gained a market there was a genuine concern that poets might be tempted to create such false sheets.

Thomas told Bertram Rota:

I am very interested in selling my manuscripts. The trouble is that most of my poems I write into exercise books, and each exercise book contains a lot of poems, including utter failures that I shall never print...I think it would be a pity to disfigure the books by tearing a few poems out. (Thomas 1987: 480)

Similarly, Philip Larkin was self-conscious about some of the poems in his early notebook and even tore out some of the pages, though he carefully preserved them'. Buffalo's records (dated April 1963) reveal that Dylan Thomas ignored requests from scholars to quote from his manuscripts, and Buffalo was meticulous about withholding access to the unpublished poems (PCMS-028). More conscientious than Thomas, Philip Larkin tried his best to be accommodating while keeping a tight control on what could be published 'during my lifetime'.

Almost as an afterthought, Thomas offered to Buffalo the drafts of 'The Ballad of the Long-legged Bait':

PS. I have almost completed what I think is my best work so far: a long Ballad, which *Horizon* is printing next month. The manuscript of that, comprising of a great deal of drafts, corrections and alterations, is certainly the most interesting I have. Perhaps you would tell me if you'd like to see this, too? (Thomas 1987: 480)

This is more characteristic of Thomas's intensive drafting process than the finished versions in the notebooks.

On 1st September 1941, Bertram Rota wrote to the University of Buffalo:

These manuscripts present a complete poetical history of Dylan Thomas, and show every detail of the mechanics of his writing. The complete development from original inspiration to the finished product is revealed in a way that few writers could, or would allow. They are a unique aid to the study and appreciation of one of the most stimulating poets writing in English today. (PCMS-028)

These notebook manuscripts are the more valuable because they contain versions of poems from across Thomas's poetic career, where Thomas has returned years later and re-written early work in the same notebooks. The poetic notebooks contain '42 "Mainly Free Verse Poems," dated April 1930-December 1930;' 'more than 80 poems dated December 1930 to July 1932 with complete revises of poems made in 1941,' '51 poems dated February to August 1933 and with revisions dated 1936-41' and '41 poems dated August 1933 to April 1934' (PCMS-028).

In the same letter to Charles D. Abbott, Rota quotes Thomas's covering letter which refers to two of the notebooks:

I mean, not that the poems are good or bad, but only that they show the growth of poems over a period of just over a year, one extremely

creative, productive year, in all their stages and alterations, and -- in many instances -- how a quite different poem emerges, years later, from the original; -- The majority of them have not been printed anywhere yet, though I'll quite probably print some of them in my next collection. (PCMS-028)

Thomas also mentions 'The Ballad of the Long-legged Bait':

The manuscript of the Ballad shows every tiny detail, in close-up, of the growth of a long narrative poem, and the workmanship is in very strong contrast to the fluency of the earlier books. (PCMS-028)

In 1953, Thomas was able to capitalise on his tours of America and the appreciation of rich, female American 'ardents' to sell his manuscripts for much needed cash.

Oscar Williams acted as his unofficial agent:

I enclose the signed note for the Prologue poem; also the work-sheets. I do hope you can sell them for me for an impossible sum. My agent here has said he will help me with my debts but allows me no money: so I must have some of the stuff on the side. You must take some money yourself from whatever you can get for these messy sheets-- poems won't change the sheets for their guests -- so that we can both celebrate. (Thomas 1987: 872)

These were bought by a female admirer who donated them the Houghton Library in Harvard in memory of Oscar Williams.

Dylan Thomas's manuscripts have an undeniable 'magical' value that Philip Larkin called the 'Thomas-coloured factor' (Larkin 1983: 99). The current director of 'The Poetry Collection' at Buffalo mentioned that tourists will purposefully seek out the Collection to have their photograph taken with a Dylan Thomas's manuscript. They are also among the manuscripts most frequently requested by scholars. Efforts have also been made to extract their 'meaningful value'. The drafts have been used in doctoral theses which track the development of lines and establish the order of the pages. By contrast, this thesis will focus on gaining an insight into 'the movement of writing' through which Thomas built his 'towers of words'.

Philip Larkin

Larkin's active participation in the campaign to collect modern literary manuscripts conflicted with his personal attitude towards requests to use his own manuscript material. Despite his generous donation of his first workbook (1944-50) to the National Manuscript Collection of Contemporary Poets on the understanding that 'its contents must ultimately be made public' he was wary of granting permission for its use as he had 'no wish for work which I did not think worth publishing to be in fact published during my lifetime' (DPL (2)/3/55/33). From 1958 to 1979 he acted as a public advocate for the collection by British institutions of the literary

manuscripts of modern British writers. As an academic librarian, he appreciated the potential value of manuscript collections to the reputation and kudos of the university which housed them (Larkin 1958: 577). As a poet he recognised that drafts expose the whole poetic process to scrutiny.

Whereas Larkin could appreciate that this gave an insight to a scholar studying a poet's work (Larkin 2002: 120) he felt personal reservations about his own manuscript material. Although he granted Harry Chambers permission to photocopy the notebook, Larkin would not allow quotation in Chambers's thesis (DPL (2)/3/53/33). Larkin's internal, self-critical voice branded his unpublished early work embarrassing 'rubbish' which he did not want to be 'exhumed' (DPL 2/(3)/84/3). He was a private man who was suspicious of media exploitation and the consequent lack of control once his drafts had passed into the public domain. Therefore, when he was asked to allow more of his notebook to be used to publicise the 1967 'Poetry in the Making Exhibition' at the British Museum, although he did not want to be obstructive, he was reluctant to grant permission (DPL (2)/3/53/22).

This ambivalence is vividly illustrated by contradictory clauses in Larkin's will. Larkin made it clear that he wished the financial gains to go to his partner Monica Jones. Despite giving his literary executors authority over 'all my published and unpublished works together with all manuscripts and letters' and 'to publish any such unpublished works and to complete or have completed any unfinished work', he included his 'unpublished writings' as well as his diaries in the material he wished to be destroyed. His diaries were shredded. However, the other

terms of the will were contradictory enough for it to be declared 'repugnant'. Anthony Thwaite explains that 'Philip Larkin's own precise wishes in his will, drawn up during his illness in July 1985, were not at first entirely clear; yet he certainly gave his literary executors, of whom I am one, discretion over the publication of his unpublished manuscripts' (Larkin *CP*: xxii).

In order to understand this ambiguity in Larkin's relationship to poetic manuscripts, it is necessary to trace his interest and involvement in creating a British counter-reaction to American academic institutions actively collecting British modern literary manuscripts and the apathy and suspicion towards the research into contemporary writers shown in Britain. Yet despite the public Larkin becoming a persuasive apologist for the institutional amassing of modern literary manuscripts, the private poet (with a strong aesthetic sense of each poem as a self-contained work of art and a burgeoning literary reputation to protect) was uneasy about laying out the workings of his carefully constructed 'verbal devices'.

Andrew Motion considers Larkin's active involvement in the manuscript campaign as a brave decision, since he was aware that 'His own poems, with their sophisticated assimilation of jagged private feelings into smooth structures, would one day have their hidden workings pored over by biographers and critics' (Motion 1994: 340). Motion concludes that '[Larkin] accepted that in seeking to save the papers of other writers he would also make it easier for his Executors, in due course to preserve his own' (Motion 1994: 340-341). This is true, but Larkin was still keenly self-conscious about sharing his manuscript material.

In 1958, Larkin wrote to the *Times Literary Supplement* citing a debate between Karl Shapiro and David C. Mearns of the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress about the ethics of libraries asking for manuscripts without offering payment to the poets. Larkin articulated his belief that British academic libraries should be trying to keep manuscripts in Britain. He concludes that:

It is frankly absurd for the manuscripts of British authors to go to America just because an American library has taken the trouble to ask for them. (Larkin 1958: 577)

As an academic librarian, Larkin understood the advantages of collecting such resources:

The manuscripts form part of the capital of my university; they attract scholars from elsewhere, they provide material for our own graduates to work on to make their academic reputations, and they establish the university in the world of scholarship as a repository of valuable literary property. (Larkin 1958: 577)

During the rebuilding of the Brynmor Jones Library, Larkin created a literary archive which included the manuscripts of writers connected to the university or city of Hull including Stevie Smith, Gavin Ewart and Douglas Dunn (Motion 1994: 255).

In the Summer of 1960, Philip Larkin undertook a survey on behalf of SCONUL (Standing Conference of National and University Libraries) to discover if British writers had been directly approached for their 'worksheets' by American libraries. He put a letter in *P.E.N. News* and in *The Author* to establish how widespread these approaches were (DPL (2)/3/49/12). His short questionnaire was sent to twenty writers to see which British and foreign libraries had asked for the gift or sale of manuscripts. Twelve of these were aged over fifty and eight under fifty. Larkin's statistics confirm that American libraries paid attention to younger writers as well as the well established. His survey revealed that 'twice as many requests' for gifts were from American libraries than British and that many of these solicitations came from the University of Buffalo. He discovered that all the sales to libraries were to America:

Two writers mentioned the sale, at lucrative prices of entire manuscript collections. Others reported similar approaches on this basis. At least one American university is making handsome offers for complete manuscript collections plus the option of all future manuscripts. (DPL (2)/3/49/11: 2)

Having undertaken this research, Larkin presented his finding and recommendations to SCONUL's Sub-Committee on Manuscripts in March 1961. He identified that there was a significant drain of manuscripts across the Atlantic. He was disappointed by their response. They did not accept the need to act

collectively or set aside grants, but only suggested that national and university libraries should express their interest in manuscripts to British writers (Larkin 1983:103).

However, Larkin's letters had been noted by Eric Walter White, the Assistant Secretary of the Arts Council and Larkin became involved in the drive by the Arts Council and the British Museum to create a collection of British modern literary manuscripts (Larkin 1983:103). This was significant as the British Museum at the time did not accept the manuscripts of living authors, even as gifts (Larkin 1983: 103-104). Now it was acknowledged that there was a need for action and a proactive policy of approaching living writers for their manuscripts. The first meeting took place in 1963, chaired by C. Day Lewis. The list of poets that they initially approached was the unofficial twentieth-century canon of the day: John Masefield, W.H. Auden, T.S. Eliot, Robert Graves, Dame Edith Sitwell, R.S. Thomas, Edwin Muir and Walter de la Mare. They also discussed action to be taken on Robert Bridges, Norman Cameron, Rudyard Kipling, D.H. Lawrence, Louis MacNeice and Sylvia Plath. The response was mixed. The Poet Laureate, Masefield refused to contribute, while Robert Graves acknowledged that he already had an arrangement with the Lockwood Library at Buffalo. The minutes give no indication of why Masefield refused drafts (DPL(2)/3/81/3:1).

The Arts Council received a £2000 grant from the Pilgrim's Trust which they used to purchase manuscripts. The British Museum would then pay back the cost so the money could be used again (Larkin 1983:103). In May 1964, Larkin set an example by donating his first notebook to the scheme (DPL (2)/3/81/5:5). The first

exhibition of the National Manuscript Collection of Contemporary Poets took place in 1967. In a newspaper article that publicised the scheme and the exhibition, Larkin remarked that American universities were more likely to take risks and acquire manuscripts from writers the value of whose work was not established. He insisted that 'We wait until we have decided something is good, and then find to our indignation that it is in Buffalo, and has been for twenty years' (DPL(2)/3/53/40).

In 'Operation Manuscript,' which was his introduction to *Poetry in the Making: Catalogue of an Exhibition in the British Museum, April-June 1967*, Larkin explores both the potential value to an understanding of composition provided by the manuscripts in the collection and how the collection tried to counteract the inextricable drain of British modern literary manuscripts to America (Larkin 2002: 119-126). Larkin brings to this debate both his subtle appreciation of poetic process and his professional perspective as an academic librarian.

Larkin stresses the unique insights that can be gained by looking at drafts:

For the scholar, concerned with finding out as much about an author and his work as possible, this is primary source material: this is what he wrote, how he wrote it, what he corrected, what he left. (Larkin 2002: 120)

It is such otherwise inaccessible insights that make manuscripts valuable.

As a meticulous and systematic poet who worked in notebooks, Larkin is fascinated by the different techniques of the poets represented in the collection. He asks, 'Is there a distinction here, between the notebook men and the loose-sheeters?' (Larkin 2002: 119). He concludes that, 'If a poet uses a notebook, of course, the whole chronology of composition may be preserved' (Larkin 2002: 120). However, this is not true of all poets as Lawrence regrouped his poems when he copied them into his notebooks. Yet Larkin's own notebooks do offer a valuable insight into his chronology of composition as he kept all his drafting in these books.

Larkin appreciates that an academic interest in the published as well as unpublished manuscripts of twentieth-century writers is a relatively new phenomenon:

They are sought after for the proper verification of texts and for the amplification of our knowledge of how a writer worked. Since this is the business of the scholar, the libraries to which such scholars look for material-- the national and university libraries-- have entered the field on behalf of the readers they serve. (Larkin 2002: 121)

However, Larkin argues that despite what can be gained from their study, the modern literary manuscripts of British writers continue to be bought by American institutions such as Texas because many in British academia still do not believe that the work of living writers was worthy of study (Larkin 2002: 121). Although

some living British writers were prepared to accept less money for their manuscripts from British libraries, they had not been asked. This is a cause of offence as writers feel their work is not valued by their home country (Larkin 2002: 123-124). Larkin's fear was of 'the increasing likelihood of a situation wherein the manuscripts of every considerable British writer since 1850 are in American hands' (Larkin 2002: 122). Academics in Britain were losing the opportunity of working on their national authors. Although it might be argued that in American libraries this material was still freely available, in reality the Atlantic was still a barrier. There was, for instance, no free exchange of microfilms so that British scholars could work on these writers (Larkin 2002: 122-123).

Philip Larkin describes The National Manuscript Collection of Contemporary Poets as a 'national reaction' against the drain of manuscripts to America. He explains that its primary purpose is:

to give honour to the writers represented in it, and a public rebuttal of the belief that 'England is not interested in living writers' manuscripts' (Larkin 2002: 125).

Larkin was the chair of the Sub-Committee between 1967 and 1979. After the 1967 exhibition the scheme was widened to the work of all imaginative writers. Larkin believed that involving more national and university libraries would expand the scheme's scope. However, even despite a twenty-five percent reduction when literary manuscripts were sold to SCONUL libraries and, after the 1972 exhibition,

an increase to a fifty per cent subsidy for manuscript purchases there was a lamentable lack of enthusiasm (Larkin 1983: 104). Larkin's report on 'Modern Literary Manuscripts,' reveals the embarrassment of the sub-committee, which 'having instructed the Secretary to write to numerous authors who fell within the terms of reference, was faced with the offer of groups of worksheets in which no library appeared to be interested' (DPL (2)/3/81/5). He became increasingly disillusioned.

B.C Bloomfield, speaking of Larkin's role as 'The first -- and only -- Chairman' of the Arts Council Committee on the National Manuscript Collection of Contemporary Writers notes that 'The fact that we still have any contemporary manuscripts in this country and that public opinion was aroused, if only slightly, is in part owing to [Larkin's] efforts' (Bloomfield 1982: 52). Similarly, Maeve Brennan pays tribute to Larkin's professional concern for the manuscript situation. She notes that 'as a poet, he was able to use his influence to the benefit of the profession in at least one matter of national concern' (Brennan 2002: 84). The issue of his involvement in the preservation of manuscripts was so important to Larkin that he included his 1979 paper addressed to the Manuscript Group of the Standing Conference of National and University Libraries (SCONUL), 'A Neglected Responsibility: Contemporary Literary Manuscripts,' in his collection of essays, *Required Writing*. He had first published it in *Encounter* in July 1979. This outlines much of the history of American institutions' interest in collecting evidence of composition and Larkin's involvement in the Arts Council - British Museum National Manuscript Collection of Contemporary Poets (which later

expanded to encompass all imaginative writing) as well as the disappointing results of this scheme when it was widened so that SCONUL libraries could purchase contemporary manuscripts (Larkin 1983: 98-108). In addition, the Larkin Archive in the Brynmor Jones Library contains much of Larkin's research and his reports upon the manuscript situation.

Larkin makes clear that by 'manuscripts' he does not mean the drafts alone but also 'typescripts' and 'corrected proofs' as well as 'diaries, notebooks, letters to and from, even photographs and recorded tapes: anything, in fact, that makes up the archive of a creative writer's life and constitutes the background to his works' (Larkin 1983: 98-99). Where 'fair copies' contain 'variant readings', these would also be included. The aim of creating an archive is to collect as much material as possible about the origins and development of works. Whereas this thesis will concentrate on the poetic drafts, typescripts and/or proofs it is also vital to draw upon the poets' letters where these discuss the process of composition of a specific poem (especially where these are contemporaneous with writing the poem) or the poet's feelings about writing.

Larkin's argument is that a collection of manuscripts needs to be in the right cultural context to be appreciated and is more likely to be augmented by being joined by the archives of the writer's relatives and friends in his/her native country (Larkin 1983: 101). He insists that 'On the whole I remain convinced that the best place for a writer's papers is in one of the libraries of his own country. I think they are more likely to be studied there, and studied with greater understanding' (Larkin 1983: 101). He stresses the need to value creative writers and their manuscripts

and not to lose the opportunity of collecting their work through apathy. He concludes that:

I think above all that a country's writers are one of its most precious assets, and that if British librarians resign the collection and care of their manuscripts to the librarians of other countries they are letting one of their most rewarding responsibilities slide irretrievably away.

(Larkin 1983: 101)

However, these librarians are only reflecting the lack of interest of university departments and the persistent suspicion of research students writing upon living writers (Larkin 1983: 102).

It is perhaps no coincidence that in the twenty-first century it is one of Larkin's literary executors, Andrew Motion, who has taken up his mantle and called for action on the continuing drain of manuscripts and literary archives to America. It is commonly known that many living English authors, poets and playwrights have arrangements with American institutions for the ongoing sale of their archives. American academic institutions already possess the manuscripts of many important twentieth century writers. In 'Close the Book on Literary Export,' Motion contrasts America's long history of investing in modern literary manuscripts (including complete archives) with the British reluctance to take risks on funding the purchase of the manuscripts of living writers. The Heritage Lottery Fund will only give grants for the purchase of papers over ten years old. It is this

lack of rapid decision making that advantages the more decisive American institutions.

It is a fallacy that Britain does not have the funds to acquire modern literary manuscripts on the same scale as America. Not only is there the Heritage Memorial Fund and Friends of National Libraries (FNL) that has grants of more than £200,000 through the Philip Larkin Memorial Fund established in 1986 but also the British Library has over £3 million as its share from Shaw's bequest, which the playwright left to the British Museum. Motion argues that a concerted effort by these two bodies could have a major effect. However the FNL has tended to respond to approaches for funds 'rather than in a more active or initiative taking way' (<http://www.guardian.co.uk>). He calls for the creating of a committee to focus on the issues surrounding manuscripts, headed by a 'manuscript tsar'. He also calls for tax breaks for writers' manuscripts and exemption from VAT. Motion argues that the manuscripts of living writers should be valued as part of our national heritage. At the same time, his initiatives would give financial incentives and support to writers (<http://www.guardian.co.uk>). Motion himself has sold his manuscripts to the British Library. This is in contrast to Philip Larkin who donated his first notebook to the original National Manuscript Collection of Contemporary Poets without payment.

Larkin's prominence in the preservation of manuscripts and current concerns about the papers of contemporary British writers is of such significance that Jamie Andrews, Head of Modern Literary Manuscripts, Department of Western Manuscripts at the British Library has thoroughly charted Larkin's involvement

from the Arts Council and Larkin Archives in an article entitled 'What will survive of us are manuscripts: Collecting the papers of living British writers', published on-line on 30th July 2008 (http://jhc.oxford.org/cgi/content_full/fhn016:4-12). This demonstrates the on-going relevance of Larkin's role in the campaign and the paradox of his personal attitude towards creative privacy (seen in the shredding of his diaries and the contradictory clauses of his will) (http://jhc.oxford.org/cgi/content_full/fhn016:12-13). Jamie Andrews concludes that, after Larkin's papers were finally deposited in the Brynmor Jones Library, 'Hidden among the boxes of his voluminous professional and personal papers, rough scraps of cheap wartime paper emerged: ripped out of the very workbook that Larkin had give the NMCCP in 1964....What had survived of Larkin -- in physical terms -- were his manuscripts, and his campaigning from 1959 helped ensure that this would also be the case for the literary remains of many of his fellow writers' (http://jhc.oxford.org/cgi/content_full/fhn016:13).

Chapter 3

Compositional Practice

Philip Larkin explained that when writing a poem 'most of the time one is engaged in doing, or trying to do, something of which the value is doubtful and the mode of operation unclear' (Larkin 1983: 83). To cope with this difficulty poets have to formulate a personal working approach to composition and to articulate (at least to themselves) the purpose of poetry. In order to write, there must be the initial compulsion, but something must keep the writer engaged with the process when the imaginative spark has been struck. To compare and contrast the approaches to writing of D.H. Lawrence, Dylan Thomas and Philip Larkin is to discover much about their poetic processes. Although much can be gained from a close study of poetic drafts it is necessary to consider also biographical contexts and autobiographical statements since details about the writer's chosen working environment and conditions augment evidence of what can be seen on the page. Andrew Motion has noted that one of the most frequent questions writers are asked is 'How do you write?'

This can sound high-minded, even theoretical, but usually turns out to mean something more down-to-earth: do you use a pen or pencil? Do you abuse the backs of envelopes or favour a certain kind of notebook? How much do you revise? Are your first orderings your

last orderings? Do you doodle as you go? And so on and so on.

(<http://www.guardian.co.uk>)

This chapter will give an overview of each poet's statements about the nature and purpose of poetry; the writers' work routines; each writer's methods of setting his work on paper and finally each poet's attitude to the completed/ published poem.

Theories and Definitions

Lawrence's writing on poetry emphasises three ideas. First, he stressed that his own poetry was of 'the immediate present' and is ephemeral (Lawrence *CP*: 182). He contrasts his view of poetry with poetry of 'the future,' and poetry of 'the perfected past' which has 'exquisite finality' (Lawrence *CP*: 181-182). Secondly, he held that the poet should not suppress the poems that he/she feels compelled to write because they might be unacceptable (Lawrence *CP*: 28). Throughout his poetic career, Lawrence struggled against internal and external censorship. Thirdly, he felt that poetry should reveal the 'chaos' of the universe (Lawrence 1988: 235). In 'Poetry of the Present' (originally the introduction to the American edition of *New Poems*) Lawrence asserts his belief in 'the poetry of that which is at hand: the immediate present. In the immediate present there is no perfection, no consummation, nothing finished' (Lawrence *CP*: 182). There is no sense that a poem should have a final fixed form. Rather it is fluid and changeable.

Lawrence, unlike Larkin and Thomas, championed free verse which he saw as 'direct utterance from the instant, whole man. It is the soul and mind surging at

once, nothing left out' (Lawrence *CP*: 184). Free verse should be without rules: 'It is no use inventing fancy laws for free verse, no use drawing a melodic line which all the feet must toe' (Lawrence *CP*: 184). In keeping with the poetry of the present, free verse 'has no finish. It has no satisfying stability, satisfying to those who like the immutable...It does not want to get anywhere. It just takes place' (Lawrence *CP*: 185). There is spontaneity in free verse which contrasts with the stabilizing forms of traditional poetry. Free verse liberates poetry from 'the stereotyped movements and the old hackneyed associations of sound and sense' (Lawrence *CP*: 184). He made an ideological distinction by dividing the poems in his *Collected Poems* into 'Rhyming' and 'Unrhyming', although the division is not strictly accurate.

In his introduction to *Pansies*, Lawrence stresses the poems' ephemeral nature: 'I offer a bunch of pansies, not a wreath of *immortelles*. I don't want everlasting flowers, ... A flower passes, and that perhaps is the best of it.' He explains that the pansy poems are 'merely the breath of the moment, and one eternal moment easily contradicting the next eternal moment' (Lawrence *CP*: 424). Poetry has a function in the here and now; it does not need to be immortal. There is a sense of intense, passing, organic beauty.

Essential to an understanding of Lawrence's drafting process is his concept of conflict between his mere 'compositions' and his 'real poems'. As a young poet, Lawrence was afraid of his 'real poems' because they expressed emotions that he hesitated to articulate. He explains, 'They seemed to come from somewhere, I didn't know where, out of a me whom I didn't know, and to say things I would

much rather not have said: for choice' (Lawrence *CP*: 849). He also commented that 'my real demon would now and then get hold of me and shake more real poems out of me, making me uneasy' (Lawrence *CP*: 27). Lawrence had an insistent interior critical voice which amounted to a powerful internal censor. He spent his creative life learning how to release the 'demon'. In terms of his compositional practice he felt justified in radically remaking his early poetry as he felt a continuity with his past and 'To the demon, the past is not past' (Lawrence *CP*: 850). In other words, to Lawrence, who saw his life as recursive in terms of powerful experience and intense emotion, any previously written poem could be revisited and reworked in line with his present feelings. This is in sharp contrast to the compositional practice, for instance, of Philip Larkin, whose poems bear the unmistakable imprint of their exact place in the poet's developing life and trajectory of ageing.

Having conquered internal censorship, Lawrence felt passionately about the injustice of the censorship of his writing and paintings. In the introduction to the expurgated version of *Pansies* he insists that 'I am mystified at this horror over a mere word, a plain simple word that stands for a plain simple thing...The word arse is as much god as the word face. It must be so, otherwise you cut off your god at the waist' (Lawrence *CP*: 418). He defends his use of words thus:

I am abused most of all for using the so-called "obscene" words...gradually the *old* words, that belong to the body below the navel, have come to be judged obscene. Obscene means today that

the policeman thinks he has a right to arrest you, nothing else.

(Lawrence *CP*: 418)

Language should not be censored because those with unclean minds dirty it with their 'unclean mental association' or because of an unhealthy disgust at the body (Lawrence *CP*: 418-420).

In 'Chaos in Poetry,' Lawrence describes his belief that poets and artists rend holes in the 'cosmos' which man creates to protect himself from chaos. However, people become used to these visions and painted images of them are incorporated into the protective 'umbrella' (Lawrence 1988: 234-235). Lawrence considers that the 'umbrella' has been patched so many times, that is no longer possible for the poet to break through it. He defines true poetry as a 'longing for chaos'. He concludes that:

[Poets] reveal the inward desire of mankind... They show the desire for chaos, and the fear of chaos. The desire for chaos is the breath of their poetry. The fear of chaos is their parade of forms and technique. Poetry is made of words, they say. So they blow bubbles of sound and image, which soon burst with the breath of longing for chaos, which fill them. (Lawrence 1988: 236)

Lawrence has a strong sense that poetry should strive radically to alter visions of the world. Form is a striving towards order in contrast to Lawrence's brand of

ephemeral poetry which is like 'bubbles of sound and image'. Rather than emphasising the need for craft, Lawrence is suspicious of poetic form which shapes and regulates poetic utterance. He scrutinises the traditional definitions of 'poetry' and concludes that these devices often lead only to 'poesy'. Significantly, as will be seen later, the definition of poetry that Lawrence rejects has much in common with Thomas's definition of what poetry means to him. Lawrence concludes:

Poetry is a matter of words. Poetry is a stringing together of words in a ripple and jingle and a run of colours. Poetry is an interplay of images. Poetry is an iridescent suggestion of an idea. Poetry is all these things, and still it is something else. Given all these ingredients, you have something very like poetry, something for which we might borrow the old romantic name of poesy. And poesy, like bric-a-brac, will for ever be in fashion. But poetry is still another thing. (Lawrence 1988: 234)

Lawrence believes that poetry should challenge the way in which we perceive the world:

The essential quality of poetry is that it makes a new effort of attention, and "discovers" a new world within the known world.

Man, and animals and the flowers, all live within a strange and ever
surging chaos. (Lawrence 1988: 234)

Through the subversive power of poetry we glimpse the 'chaos' at the heart of life.

In contrast to Lawrence's moral dedication to experience, what first attracted
Thomas to poetry was the 'colour' of words. Thomas explained that:

I wanted to write poetry in the beginning because I had fallen in love
with words. The first poems I knew were nursery rhymes... I cared
for the shapes of sound that their names, and the words describing
their actions, made in my ears; I cared for the colours the words cast
on my eyes. (Fitzgibbon 1965: 367)

Thomas was always fascinated with the sound of words, but his view of poetry
shifted as he matured. Speaking to students at the University of Utah, he
explained:

I am trying for more clarity now. At first I thought it enough to leave
an impression of sound and feeling and let meaning seep in later, but
since I've been giving these broadcasts and readings of other men's
poetry as well as my own, I find it better to have more meaning at
first reading. (Adix 1961: 62)

Above all else, Dylan Thomas perceived poetry as a 'craft' and himself as a 'craftsman'. It is notable how frequently the term appears in Thomas's statements. Poems are things that must be constructed out of words, using a great deal of hard work. In 1951, Thomas replied to an inquiry from an American Ph.D. student, Richard Jones, describing himself as 'a painstaking, conscientious, involved and devious craftsman in words' (Fitzgibbon 1965: 371). He stressed that 'Every device there is in language is there to be used if you will. Poets have to enjoy themselves sometimes, and the twistings and convolutions of words, the inventions and contrivances are all part of this painful, voluntary work' (Fitzgibbon 1965: 371). Thomas sees his 'craftsmanship' as the shaping of sound and explains that he is writing towards an understanding of his original impulse:

What I like to do is treat words as a craftsman does his wood or stone... to hew, carve, mould, coil, polish and plane them into patterns, sequences, sculptures, fugues of sound expressing some lyrical impulse, some spiritual doubt or conviction, some dimly realised truth I must try to reach and realize. (Fitzgibbon 1965: 368)

He stresses the process of shaping from rough beginnings through intensive refining: 'hew, carve, mould, coil, polish and plane.' Yet poetry must be more than craft. Thomas explained that 'You can tear a poem apart to see what makes it technically tick' and look at 'the vowels, the consonants, the rhymes or rhythms...' Although it is possible to say "This is why the poem moves me so. It is because of

the craftsmanship"...You're back with the mystery of having been moved by words'. Thomas concludes that 'The best craftsman always leaves holes and gaps in the works of the poem so that something that is *not* the poem can creep, crawl, flash, or thunder in' (Fitzgibbon 1965: 372-373). This highlights that the technical construction of the poem must, as it were, leave room for the reader to experience something more from the poem than mere technique.

Thomas had the conviction that poetry should be as concentrated as possible. Andrew Lycett quotes 'a significant unpublished statement of [Thomas's] poetic ends':

I think I am always attracted to the idea of extremely concentrated poetry; ... I want, and wanted every line to be the essence of the poem, even the flourishes, the exxagerations [*sic*]. (Lycett 2003: 159)

This was Thomas' 'ideal' which 'naturally, [he] could never achieve' (Lycett 2003: 159). Thomas concludes:

I never could reconcile myself to reading six weak lines, lines of mechanical verse, or worse still, of poetical mechanics, in order to get the strong (qualified) poetry of the seventh. My determination to avoid this has led to the mixed monotony of many of my poems. (Lycett 2003: 159-160)

For Thomas nothing in poetry can be redundant. Poetry is an intensely concentrated form which requires tireless craft and a visceral enjoyment of the sound of words.

Philip Larkin was concerned less with an abstract poetic theory than with a working definition which allowed him to create individual poems:

I have never claimed to know fully how or why I write poetry: it seems to me a skill easily damaged by self-consciousness, and poetic theory is not much good if it hinders the poet. If I must account for it, I think it would be best described as the only possible reaction to a particular kind of experience, a feeling that you are the only one to have noticed something, something especially beautiful or sad or significant. Then there follows a sense of responsibility for preserving this remarkable thing by means of a verbal device that will set off the same experience in other people, so that they too will feel *How beautiful, how significant, how sad*, and the experience will be preserved. (Larkin 2002: 78)

The poet captures the experience and then preserves it in such a way that readers can repeat it. Though, like Lawrence, Larkin focuses on the fleeting moment, he is unlike Lawrence in feeling that poetry ought to aim at a certain permanence.

In his view poetry creates a 'verbal device' with which to 'preserve an experience' (Larkin 1983: 83). He also admits that this is not as simple as it might appear as poetry is 'not an act of will,' but must 'please the mysterious something that has to be pleased' (Larkin 1983: 84). Sharing the poem with a reader through publication is an important part of the process as 'you want it to be seen and read, you're trying to preserve something. Not for yourself, but for the people who haven't seen it or heard it or experienced it' (Larkin 1983: 52). He assumes that through a precise use of language he can convey the 'emotional concept' to the reader (Larkin 1983: 80).

For Larkin, the writing of a poem fell into three stages, all of which stress that poetry is an act of communication of emotion between poet and reader:

the first is when a man becomes obsessed with an emotional concept to such a degree that he is compelled to do something about it. What he does is the second stage, namely, construct a verbal device that will reproduce this emotional concept in anyone who cares to read it, anywhere, any time. The third is the recurrent situation of people in different times and places setting off the device and re-creating in themselves what the poet felt when he wrote it. (Larkin 1983: 80)

'Emotion' is key to the successful realisation of a poem which dramatizes the experience for the reader: 'poetry is emotional in nature and theatrical in operation, a skilled re-creation of emotion in other people, and..., conversely a bad poem is

one that never succeeds in doing this' (Larkin 1983: 80). He defended himself against charges of lack of emotion:

I always think that the poems I write are very much more naïve-- very much more emotional -- almost embarrassingly so -- than a lot of other people's. When I was tagged as unemotional, it used to mystify me; I used to find it shaming to read some of the things I'd written. (Larkin 2002: 23)

Poetry is not an undisciplined outpouring; it demands artifice. Larkin explained:

I do think that poems are artificial in the sense that a play is artificial. There are strong second act curtains in poems as well as plays, you know. (Larkin 2002: 23)

Larkin described 'writing poetry' as 'playing off the natural rhythms and word-order of speech against the artificialities of rhyme and metre. One has a few private rules: never split an adjective and its noun, for instance' (Larkin 1983: 71).

Work Routines

Richard Aldington recalled that:

Lawrence was a marvel. Through having to work intellectually in his youth in the frequented miner's kitchen, he could switch off and write in a room with other people talking! He wrote always in a school penny exercise-book (sixpenny after he had a little money) and preferred to work outdoors. (MacNiven and Moore 1981: 17)

Lawrence's work routine was to some extent shaped by his home background, his character and his circumstances. At Nottingham University he wrote poetry in lectures as an act of rebellion against an educational system with which he was disillusioned (Lawrence 1968: 300). According to Lawrence's sister, he wrote in times of stress such as at his mother's bedside during her illness (Pinto 1957:12) and wrote in the spaces between doing the housework and practical jobs that Frieda did not do (Feinstein 1994: 81-82; 90). Writing was an integral part of his life. He had the ability to become wholly absorbed in his writing wherever he happened to be. After eloping with Frieda, and leaving teaching due to ill health he never had a fixed home or a regular day job. Instead he lived the life of a bohemian writer, often choosing to write outdoors with his back against a tree (Lawrence 1983: 82). The typical image of Lawrence at work is that painted by Frieda, who describes him wholly focused on his writing:

he would sit in a corner, so quietly and absorbedly, to write. The words seemed to pour out of his hand onto the paper, unconsciously, naturally and without effort...

His was a strange concentration, he seemed transferred into another world, the world of creation. (Lawrence 1983: 38)

He is easily characterised as the archetypal inspired poet, constantly working over new versions of what he has written. Kenneth Rexroth writes:

Some poets meditate in stillness and inactivity, as far away as possible from the creative act...

Lawrence meditated pen in hand. His contemplation was always active, flowing out of a continuous stream of creativity which he seemed to be able to open practically every day. He seldom reversed himself, seldom went back to rework the same manuscript.

(<http://www.bopsecrets.org/rexroth/essays/lawrence.htm>: 8)

Lawrence's personality was indeed energetic and emphatic. However, as we will see when we look at Lawrence's compositional practice Rexroth's description is not wholly accurate. There were more elements of deliberation and second thoughts in his writing than this view might lead one to expect.

It is important to remember that poetry did not occupy the unquestioned central place in Lawrence's writing that it did in that of Thomas and Larkin. Indeed he composed two thirds of what appears in the *Complete Poems* in the last two years of his life when he was too ill to write the longer prose works which had made his reputation (Pollnitz 2000: 505). Nevertheless, even when ill, Lawrence

gained immense pleasure from his writing routine. Rhys Davies, who was invited to stay with the Lawrences at Bandol, recalls Lawrence's energy when writing:

He would write them in bed in the mornings... He sat up in bed, a little African straw cap on the back of his head -- 'It keeps my brain warm,' he said... There was something perky and birdlike about him thus, and he was intensely happy and proud of the *Pansies*; he would read out the newest ones with delight, accentuating the sharp little pecks in them. (Davies 1940: 194)

Lawrence retained a passionate conviction in the importance of his poetic work.

Dylan Thomas's work routine was very different from Lawrence's. He needed isolation and a concentrated stretch of time in which to work. He found it very difficult to write when visiting London because of the distractions of socialising, and was most productive when he was in a rural setting, especially in Wales (Thomas 1987: 57). Moreover his writing phases were discontinuous; he did not write all the time. Sometimes he expressed ambivalent attitudes to being a poet. When his writing was going well his typical routine was to work in a concentrated afternoon session, from 'two to seven as prompt as clockwork' (Ackerman 1996: 155). He would set aside the morning and evening for visiting the pub, although when he was intending to write in the afternoon he never drank anything stronger than a couple of pints of beer. In another sharp contrast with

Lawrence the result of all this labour would be 'one or two fiercely belaboured lines' (Ackerman 1996: 155).

Thomas's creativity was rooted in his early years, and as an adult he showed the need to recreate his boyhood 'writer's den', or 'bedroom by the boiler' in Cwmdonkin Park (described in 'The Fight'; Thomas 1948: 42). Thomas needed places to withdraw from the noise and chaos of his wife and children. The most iconic of these was the writing shed at Laugharne, a former garage overlooking the estuary. Visitors to Thomas's writing shed have described the mess of papers, unopened letters and literary magazines amidst which Thomas worked (Brinnin 1956: 93). His tireless attempt to impose strict syllabic order on his poems both reflects and contrasts with the physical disorder in which he composed. This need for silence and absolute physical withdrawal is in contrast to Lawrence.

Another key difference is Thomas's occasional need to treat writing with brutal practicality. In his early novel-writing career Lawrence had also experienced a phase of 'hack' production, but his poetry was always spontaneous and inspired. In contrast, John Malcolm Brinnin described Thomas trying to finish *Under Milkwood* against the pressure of time. Thomas worked in Brinnin's flat in Cambridge, littering the table with beer bottles, cigarettes and fragments of scenes. Brinnin remarked it was more like 'a man working on his income tax report rather than a playwright attempting to sustain a lyric mood' (Brinnin 1956: 161). In this case, at least, the writing was a job; Thomas had to deliver for a specific purpose.

Philip Larkin archly observed:

I've always thought that a regular job was no bad thing for a poet. Indeed, Dylan Thomas himself -- not that he was noted for regular jobs -- said this; you can't write more than two hours a day and after that what do you do? Probably get into trouble. (Larkin 1983: 51)

In contrast to Lawrence and Thomas, Larkin had a regular job throughout his adult life. He did, originally set out, after leaving university to become a professional novelist making a living by his writing. But this was not his vocation, and he became instead perhaps the model of the 'academic-administrative poet' with a day job, who writes 'in his spare time'. He is cogent in his defence of this life-choice however, and his argument surprisingly stresses the existential ephemerality of poetry and the need for inspiration. It is only possible, he wrote, to work at poetry in short bursts:

when I did write [poems], well, it was in the evenings, after work, after washing-up (I'm sorry: you would call this "doing the dishes"). It was a routine like any other. And really it worked very well: I don't think you can write a poem for more than two hours. After that you're going round in circles, and it's much better to leave it for twenty-four hours, by which time your subconscious or whatever has solved the block and you're ready to go on. (Larkin 1983: 58)

The answer was for the poet to live a life filled with other, unpoetic activities.

Poetry would then find its natural place:

The best writing conditions I ever had were in Belfast, when I was working at the University there. ...I wrote between eight and ten in the evenings, then went to the University bar till eleven, then played cards or talked with friends till one or two. The first part of the evening had the second part to look forward to, and I could enjoy the second part with a clear conscience because I'd done my two hours. I can't seem to organize that now. (Larkin 1983: 58)

It is difficult to judge how serious Larkin's more philistine comments on this arrangement are. His claim of the moral high ground for not making a living from 'being a writer' or 'being a poet' and joining 'the cultural entertainment industry' (Larkin 1983:61), is not wholly convincing. He says 'I was brought up to think you had a job, and write in your spare time, like Trollope' (Larkin 1983: 62). On the other hand he recalls fantasizing a successful novelist's life reading through proofs on the Côte d'Azur. In fact, as a poet he could not have made a living by his writing for most of his life. And even then his literary earnings from his *Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse* were more significant than what he received for his own poems. (Larkin 1983: 62)

Significantly he did occasionally falter in his self-defence, wondering if he could or should have been a full-time writer, after all:

Sometimes I think, Everything I've written has been done after a day's work, in the evening: what would it have been like if I'd written it in the morning, after a night's sleep? Was I wrong? Some time ago a writer said to me -- and he was a full-time writer, and a good one -- "I wish I had your life. Dealing with people, having colleagues. Being a writer is so lonely." Everyone envies everyone else. (Larkin 1983: 62)

However, with Larkinesque wryness, he usually resigns himself to his life choice. In a statement which differentiates him sharply from Lawrence and Thomas, he explains:

All I can say is, having a job hasn't been a hard price to pay for economic security. Some people, I know, would sooner have the economic insecurity because they have to "feel free" before they can write. But it's worked for me. (Larkin 1983: 62)

This financial security also allowed Larkin to be more fastidious about what he chose to publish than many other poets, and meant that he could stop publishing when inspiration failed, rather than continuing uninspired like the professional poets Wordsworth and Auden.

For Larkin, the essence of poetry was 'pleasure', and he seems to have derived intense pleasure himself from the writing process:

To write a poem is a pleasure: sometimes I deliberately let it compete in the open market, so to speak, with other spare-time activities, ostensibly on the grounds that if a poem isn't more entertaining to write than listening to records or going out it won't be entertaining to read. (Larkin 1983: 84)

Like Thomas he needed solitude and concentration to compose. These seem to have been more easy for him to attain (once he had finally rejected marriage around 1950), and less difficult to preserve than they were for Thomas. He took to heart Cyril Connolly's aphorism 'The pram in the hallway is the enemy of art.' Unlike Thomas he did not marry and had no children. Larkin wrote, characteristically in top-floor flats and rented rooms. In this sense, perhaps, his apprehension of the essential vagrancy of the artist is as radical as that of the much-travelled Lawrence; and in this respect both of them differ from the rooted, Welsh Thomas. Larkin saw moving into his own house in 1974 as one element (among others) in the final extinction of his free poetic spirit.

Pen(cil) on Paper

Despite the fact that all three poets kept notebooks which were significant to their poetic development, each poet had a distinct way of setting his work on paper. Part

of their process of becoming 'poets' was to discover a personal working method for organising their poetic output. These working methods demonstrate that 'compositional practice' is a case of finding a conducive mode of composition and that techniques will vary between poets.

Lawrence began to write poems and prose when he was nineteen, and collected his poems into notebooks when he was twenty-one (Lawrence *CP*: 849). At the University of Nottingham he subverted the purpose of his college notebooks (both ideologically and physically) by using them for his poems, turning them upside down and writing from the back. The use of his college notebooks not only allowed him to write in lectures but also in the kitchen at home, when apparently doing academic work (Sagar 1985: 4). Thus, Lawrence, at least for a brief time, was able to conceal his writing from the censure of his mother. These notebooks were then passed to Jessie Chambers for her criticism, and were used later as a mine for ideas (Chambers 1935: 81).

Lawrence favoured the creation of whole new versions with radically different perspectives rather than a process of small incremental changes to poems which were essentially following the same trajectory of thought. In the notebooks, new versions were put into the context of groups of poems which explored a particular theme or his most recent view of himself and his history. Holly Laird has noted that Lawrence originally considered including the early, nostalgic version of 'Piano' among his elegies in *Amores*, but that 'the two intermediate drafts' are placed among the poems for his collection *Coming Awake* (published as *New Poems*) in which emotional breakdown is perceived as 'a transformative

moment' (Laird 1986: 193-194). The reworking of the poem is shaped to the themes of the collection.

The degree to which Lawrence's handwriting and ink colour may vary in his manuscripts is noticeable; but this may be the result of momentary changes in situation rather than a gap between drafts, as would be the case with a poet of more predictable habits (Tiedje 1971: 230).

The notebooks imposed some stability on Lawrence's generation of new versions and were a useful element of continuity in his vagrant lifestyle. Christopher Pollnitz notes:

Lawrence's practice of conserving his poem in notebooks as he composed them gave him, in his itinerant life, a resource from which to revise them for publication. The notebooks imposed some stability on his inveterate production of new versions with new variants; they made it unlikely that periodical and anthology versions would be transmitted to his volumes; and without determining the final sequence or text of even his posthumously published work, they demonstrably shaped each of his nine volumes. (Pollnitz 2003: 19)

Although his ready generation of work can give the impression of a steady flow of creativity, Holly Laird has concluded that:

One finds him working on different kinds of poetic productions at different times: first, a long period in which he produced massive quantities of verse, chiefly in manuscript; then, another long period where he wrote little, but revised a great deal and collected several books; then, a few years when he wrote and designed books simultaneously; and so forth. (Laird 1988: 12)

In his early writing career, Dylan Thomas kept fair copies of his poems in a series of school exercise books: 'my exercise-books full of poems'. He remembered that 'There were Danger Don'ts on the back' (Thomas 1948: 42). By requisitioning school exercise books, Thomas like Lawrence was rebelling against the authority of the educational system. The poetic purpose to which Thomas put these contrasted with his light, precocious schoolboy poems he wrote within the school context. Ralph Maud concludes that 'his real personal history is rather to be found in the secret Notebooks, whose poems were not for the profane pages of the school magazine' (Thomas 1968: 11).

As he matured he would draw on these early versions to create his poems for publication. They were the basis of much of his work until 1941, when he sold them to Buffalo (Thomas 1968: 273). Thomas's writing process was extremely slow and he was asked to produce his two, early collections very close together. This meant that he included poems in *Twenty Five Poems* (published in 1936) which were written earlier than those that had appeared in *Eighteen Poems* (published in 1934). Thomas was also under pressure from his editor, Richard

Church, to move away from obscurity. Thomas made a concession by including some earlier more straightforward poems. This decision gave critics such as Henry Treece a false sense of Thomas's development which he offered to correct by showing Treece the manuscripts (Thomas 1987: 310).

Dylan Thomas's compositional practice reflects the importance he placed upon using language in an exploratory fashion. He took infinite pains over individual lines, exploring a substantial number of their variations on paper. This meant he generated vast quantities of drafts. In 1935, Thomas described his compositional practice to Charles Fisher:

I write a poem on innumerable sheets of scrap paper, write it on both sides of the paper, often upside down and criss cross ways, unpunctuated, surrounded by drawings of lamp posts and boiled eggs, in a very dirty mess; bit by bit I copy out the slowly developing poem into an exercise book; and, when it is completed, type it out.
(Thomas 1987: 182)

Significantly, Thomas worked between rough work on 'scrap paper' and creating a sustained version. The collections of late worksheets such as those for 'Prologue' and 'Poem on his Birthday' reveal that Thomas produced a number of intermediary sustained versions to bring together his fragmentary workings of lines or sections on other scraps. Although Larkin would on occasions write out the stanzas he had already perfected whilst drafting the next, he does not seem to

have needed to take this to the same extreme as Thomas, even when he changed some punctuation, would sometimes write out the whole poem. For Thomas, there was a struggle of "'keeping the poem together," so that its growth was like that of an organism' (Brinnin 1956: 104). He worked in a kind of creative chaos in which he gradually brought the work into shape. The intensive nature of Thomas's compositional practice and its gradual working towards order through many phases might suggest dyslexic characteristics. One of the values of manuscripts is that they offer an opportunity for unique biographical interpretations, not from the poet's biography but from the evidence on the page.

As an adolescent, Philip Larkin produced a large body of writing. He describes how at this time, 'I wrote ceaselessly... now verse, which I sewed up into little books, now prose, a thousand words a night after homework, resting on Beethoven's Op 132, the only classical album I possessed' (Larkin 2002: 11). As a mature poet, he concludes that 'Both [prose and verse] were valueless, but I wish I could command that fluent industry today' (Larkin 2002: 11). This early commitment to writing developed into the use of a series of notebooks in which Larkin developed his mature, more considered style of drafting. The poems in the earliest of these are dated between 5 October 1944 and 10 March 1950 (Lewis 1967: 51), although A.T. Tolley has suggested that it was begun 'around December 1943' (Tolley 1997: 1). In this first notebook, it is possible to see Larkin's distinct style of drafting emerging in poems such as 'At Grass' and 'Deceptions.'

In an interview, Larkin explained that he drafted stanza by stanza, trying to complete a stanza before going onto the next. He would make a typescript when the

poem was finished and sometimes make small alterations (Larkin 1983: 70). This is certainly the spirit of Larkin's drafting process although, as with 'Unfinished Poem', he would sometimes already have a few lines of the next stanza while refining the first. By compartmentalising the drafting of each stanza in this way it was possible for Larkin to be exploratory, but also to reject material that would unbalance the poem. This discarded material often contains beautiful lines or individual images. Elsewhere, it also contains lines which obviously would not pass Larkin's high standards. He had the critical ability to pare away both.

In discussing his methods of writing, Larkin reveals the importance mental processes played in stimulating a poem and allowing it to be finished. Unlike Thomas, he could not work from 'the abstract'. He revealed that 'What is always true is that the idea for a poem and a bit of it, a snatch or a line--it needn't be the opening line--come simultaneously. In my experience one never sits down and says I will now write a poem about this or that, in the abstract' (Larkin 1983: 52). Similarly, he explained that 'I used to find that I was never sure I was going to finish a poem until I had thought of the last line. Of course, the last line was sometimes the first one you thought of! But usually the last line would come when I'd done about two-thirds of the poem, and then it was just a matter of closing the gap' (Larkin 1983: 58).

Philip Larkin's compositional practice was extremely orderly. He did all his drafting in a large, hardback notebooks with 'a succession of Royal Sovereign 2B pencils' (Larkin 1983: 83). Writing in pencil meant that Larkin was able to chose his method of cancelling words: rubbing them out; using heavy blocking so words

are indecipherable; scribbling through them (which showed he was rejecting the idea), or neatly crossing through text with a single line (to show that a version had been superseded by the next.) Larkin also regularly dates his work when he reaches what he regards as a complete version.

Attitudes to Completed/Published Poems

D.H. Lawrence did not regard any poem as finished or fixed by publication. When the manuscript of *Pansies* was seized, he retyped it, making different alterations. This attitude is in keeping with Lawrence's professed beliefs about poetry. He was constantly striving to free his demon. This made him feel justified in radically re-writing poems where 'a young man is afraid of his demon and puts his hand over the demon's mouth sometimes and speaks for him. And the things the young man says are very rarely poetry' (Lawrence *CP*: 28). He believed that in these early poems he had been trying to say something it can take a man twenty years to say and therefore felt justified in rewriting certain poems for *Collected Poems* (Lawrence *CP*: 28). Phyllis Bartlett, drawing on Lawrence's letters, has considered the way in which he transformed his poetic oeuvre for *Collected Poems*. This was thoroughgoing but also extremely rapid:

In a few weeks [Lawrence] altered the face of his early poems as drastically as the arch-revisers Wordsworth and Tennyson altered theirs in the course of many years. (Bartlett 1951: 83)

Bartlett draws particular attention to Lawrence's own comments:

His most concentrated period of activity as a poetic reviser was the winter of 1927-28, when he collected his poems for the publisher Martin Secker. And he remarked at the time that he felt "like an autumn morning, a perfect maze of gossamer of rhythms and rhymes and loose lines floating in the air." No wonder he felt this way, for he had been altering rhythms, rhymes, single words, and punctuation in addition to rewriting whole stanzas and sometimes whole poems. (Bartlett 1951: 583)

When revising, Lawrence took the opportunity to make technical as well as radical changes. Significantly, Lawrence makes substantial changes to his early poems in the 'Rhyming Poems' section of *Collected Poems*, but less so to those in 'Unrhyming Poems'. In collections such as *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* and *Look! We Have Come Through!* Lawrence had already achieved a high level of emotional honesty.

Thomas did not rewrite any poems for his *Collected Poems*, instead he poured his energy into the technically complex poetic preface 'Author's Prologue'. In the 'Note' to his *Collected Poems* he explains that 'Some of them I have revised a little, but if I went on revising everything that now I do not like in this book I should be so busy that I would have no time to try to write new poems' (Thomas 1953: vi).

Unlike Lawrence and Thomas, Larkin only published his poetry once he felt it was entirely finished. This makes the few occasions where there is a different, contingent version in manuscript (as in the case of 'Deceptions') or more rarely in typescript (as in the case of 'Love Songs in Age') even more interesting. Nevertheless, like his predecessors Larkin does seek to shape his *oeuvre* on occasion, after original publication, but without rewriting a finished poem. He added 'Waiting for breakfast, while she brushed her hair' to the new Faber edition of *The North Ship* in 1965 (Larkin 1983: 30). In the introduction he asks for the indulgence due to juvenilia. He saw the poems in the volume poems as marking the 'several' 'abandoned' selves through which he had passed with influences such as Yeats and Thomas (Larkin 1983: 28-29). Rather than feeling compelled to re-write the poetry of this younger self, he framed it with a knowing retrospective context.

Conclusion

Understanding each poet's view of poetry and his working practices is essential before discussing the manuscript material in detail. Whereas D. H. Lawrence rewrote in order to fit his latest view of himself and his history, Dylan Thomas wrote out of a craftsman's love of words. In striving to 'preserve an experience,' Philip Larkin was aiming to find the ultimate means of communicating this to his readership. These contrasting goals impacted upon the way each poet wrote. For Lawrence, the context of the poem shaped the mood and content of a new version. Dylan Thomas played exhaustively with lines and sections. He needed to create

intermediary versions to order his intensive experiments. By working stanza by stanza, Larkin was able generally to recognise and pare away misdirection. Each writer's work routine was dictated by his lifestyle, personality and the needs of the kind of poetry he was producing. Lawrence's energy and ability to become absorbed in his work is reflected in the intensity and vividness of his poetry. Dylan Thomas's compositional practice demanded the devotion of many hours in order to forge his concentrated and packed individual lines. By contrast, working for no more than two hours at regular intervals stimulated Larkin's 'subconscious' to resolve difficulties. The case studies in the following chapters will take up salient themes from each of the poet's compositional practices and explore these in more detail.

Chapter 4

'The Immediate Present': D.H. Lawrence

It is a distinctive characteristic of D.H. Lawrence's genius that he would produce versions of poems with different perspectives and conclusions. Throughout his career, Lawrence rewrote extensively so that his poems were consistent with his current thinking and feelings. In *Self and Sequence*, Holly Laird notes that Lawrence's compositional practice fell into distinct phases which included a 'long period in which he wrote little, but revised a great deal' from 'massive quantities of verse, chiefly in manuscript' (Laird 1988: 12). Lawrence's manuscript material is consequently a rich source of poems that Lawrence went on to reshape. Christopher Pollnitz, one of the editors of the Cambridge *Collected Poems* and *Variorum*, has explained:

Lawrence wrote, not to improve the word or line, but with the internal consistency of an entire poem before him... (Pollnitz 1995: 168)

Lawrence's notion that poetry should be of 'the immediate present' and should reflect the 'chaos' of the universe, with 'no perfection, no consummation, nothing

finished,' is reflected in his ever-shifting, sometimes Protean drafting practice (Lawrence *CP*: 182).

This chapter will trace the developing versions of 'Sorrow,' 'The Inheritance,' 'The Virgin Mother' and 'Piano', all poems focused on the intense mother-son relationship. The key turning point in Lawrence's early development as a writer was the death of his mother. His emotional dependence on Lydia Lawrence had held back his personal development and her disapproval of his writing had been a limiting factor in the development of his creative process (Sagar 1985: 4). Her illness and death in 1910 had a profound affect upon him. In his 'Note' to *Collected Poems*, Lawrence describes 'the death of the mother, with the long haunting death in life' as a 'crisis.' It is a crisis which, he suggests, still affects the war poems in *Bay* (Lawrence *CP*: 28).

In each case a general tendency in the drafting process is observable. Lawrence shapes and reshapes his raw responses to give them greater symbolic force. These are highly personal and emotive works which dramatize the struggle between his sense of continuing dependence upon his mother and his need to continue to live. His close emotional attachment was troubling in its intensity and the stages of his grieving are often sublimated in quasi-religious and sexual imagery. He creates a personal mythology around his mother in order to deal with his emotions. This can be seen even in apparently simple poems such as 'Sorrow', in which her grey hairs floating away come to represent Lawrence's process of letting go. Gail Porter Mandell comments that through this action he is 'relinquishing his mother bit by bit to the darkness' (Mandell 1984: 74). 'Sorrow'

and 'Piano' show the simplicity and power with which Lawrence often approaches his subject matter whereas 'The Inheritance' and 'The Virgin Mother', in contrast, use an obscure personal iconography. The drafts of 'The Inheritance' demonstrate that Lawrence increasingly universalised his pain at his mother's death in order to create passages for the more oblique 'Noise of Battle', which, in a startling illustration of his organicist attitude towards the writing process, grows during drafting into a quite new, different poem altogether. Finally 'Piano', with its well-known different draft versions, offers a case-study in Lawrence's spontaneous, often unpredictable compositional approach.

Many of Lawrence's 'mother poems' were included in *Amores*, published in 1916, six years after her death, and drafts of them are found in manuscript books used over several years. The poems discussed here are from notebooks now in the D.H. Lawrence Manuscript Collection at the University of Nottingham. LaL2 is a University College notebook containing poems from 1906-1910. LaL9 is another University College notebook containing poems from around September 1906 to February 1911. LaL10 is a notebook dating from 1916 to 1918. These dates are taken from the Nottingham on-line catalogue for the D.H. Lawrence Manuscript Collection.

'Sorrow'

In 'Sorrow,' Lawrence records a spontaneous emotion before going on to refine and rework his experience. The first draft, probably written in December 1910, and found in LaL2, presents the poet's shocked reaction to his mother's illness. He

recalls finding strands of his mother's hair upon his coat; his actions are arrested and his 'cigarette burns forgotten.' This first version is in two stanzas forming a question and a reply. The first stanza establishes the present situation:

Why does the thin grey strand
Floating from between my fingers
Where my cigarette burns forgotten
Why does it trouble me.

That this is written spontaneously is suggested by the fact that Lawrence omits the question mark, presumably through haste. He creates a strong visual image of the smoke of the disregarded cigarette reminding him of hair 'Floating from between my fingers.' In the second stanza he explains the memory this incident evokes:

Ah, you will understand-.
When I carried my mother downstairs
A few times only, at the beginning of
her brief sickness
I would find on my coat, floating, loose,
long grey hair.

At this early stage of drafting, Lawrence seems concerned simply to record an experience and fix on one or two expressive epithets: the subtle internal rhyme in

the last line with 'coat' and 'floating', for instance, and the adjectives 'floating' and 'loose,' which give a sense of movement to the hairs.

Gail Porter Mandell argues that there is a radical improvement between the drafts of this poem. She contends that 'The second stanza of [the first] draft is not poetry, but a record of the external phenomenon that triggers sorrow in the speaker of the poem; it does not touch us' (Mandell 1984: 72). Although it is true that this version is not as developed as his subsequent drafts, it is an important phase in Lawrence's exploration of his reaction to bereavement. It appears on the same page as 'Grief' where, stepping from the bath, the speaker wonders at his own physicality and his sorrow that his mother is no longer a substantial presence.

In the second draft of 'Sorrow,' which is also found in workbook LaL2 and also probably dates from December 1910, although it is some sixty-nine pages away from the first draft, Lawrence has refined the poem and begun to impose some craft upon this statement of his emotion. The rhymes are now regular and controlled and serve to unify the poem. The initial lines of each stanza rhyme with each other: 'strand', 'understand' and 'reprimand'. The last line of each stanza rhymes: 'me', 'malady' and 'chimney.' The second line of stanza one rhymes with the third line of stanza three: 'forgotten' and 'one.' The second line of stanza two rhymes with the second line of stanza three: 'downstairs' and 'hairs'. Lawrence tightens the first stanza:

Why does this thin grey strand

Floating up from the forgotten

Cigarette between my fingers

Why does it trouble me?

He has cut all superfluous words, and by using 'this thin grey strand,' he makes the parallel between smoke and hair more explicit. In the second stanza 'Of {her} soft-foot malady' is less harsh than 'her brief sickness' from the first version. It suggests the slow progress of her illness and its undramatic nature. There is also more craft in the further internal chimes 'only' and 'malady', echoed in stanza three by 'gaiety'.

This second version adds an extra stanza which develops more emotional complexity. The speaker feels guilty that his attention has strayed from the illness of his mother and he has become cheerful. The hairs on his coat are a sharp reminder:

I should find, for a reprimand

To my gaiety, a few long hairs pressed

and

On the breast of my coat, ~~which~~ one by one

into

I would let them float, grey strands, ~~towards~~ the dark

chimney.

The detail that the hairs are on 'the breast of my coat' suggests more physical intimacy than 'I would find on my coat' in the first version. In this simple observation there is both the idea that his mother's head must have lain against his

breast and the suggestion that the strands of hair are over his heart. In the final line of this version Lawrence echoes the rhyme of 'reprimand' in 'grey strand', psychologically linking the ideas. Rather than one hair, as in the first draft, there are several, which the speaker now releases into the chimney. This version is not simply a description of the incident as in the first version; its details suggest the speaker's emotions more vividly. The association between the tenuous grey smoke of the cigarette and the grey hairs is highlighted. The speaker allows the hairs to be taken up into the chimney '...one by one / I would let them float, grey strands, ~~towards~~ {into} the dark chimney.'

It was a variant of this second version which Lawrence published under the title 'Weariness' in *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, in December 1914, four years after it had been written (Mandell 1984:73). In the published text there are further recastings to the final stanza:

I would find as a reprimand
To my gaiety, a long grey hair
On the breast of my coat, and I let it float
Grey strand, towards the dark chimney.

The abrupt break in the third line makes the internal rhyme 'coat'/ 'float' more stark, even dismissive.

The third version appears in LaL10 and has been dated between January and May 1916. It was thus completed just before he published *Amores*, something over

six years later than the first two drafts and two years after 'Weariness' had been printed. It is essentially the same as the second version. However, Lawrence has removed the repetition of 'grey strands' from the final line. In the third version, the final line is '~~And~~ I let them float up the dark chimney.' The corrected line is published in *Amores*. Even after this, however, Lawrence makes one further minor adjustment to the text. In the *Collected Poems*, published twelve years after *Amores*, the final line is given a more passive twist. Rather than letting the hairs go, the speaker 'watched them float up the dark chimney' (Lawrence *CP*: 107, ll.12).

'The Inheritance'

The complex Pentecostal allusions and rhetorical devices in 'the Inheritance' contrast with the simplicity of 'Sorrow.' Lawrence explores his sense that despite grief at his mother's death she 'left me a gift of tongues'. The flame of his mother is still somehow with him. The first version, in the Clark Notebook, LaL9 (which is in A1: 399), is dense and difficult. This density Lawrence then pares away in the second version in LaL10. The first draft has been dated around April 1911, and the second between January and May 1916, and the poem was published in *Amores* (1916). Lawrence has made subtle changes to stanzas five and six between the manuscript version in LaL10 and the printed text. He did not revise this poem further for *Collected Poems*.

In the first version he boldly addresses his dead mother, giving the impression that she is not lost so much as 'hidden':

Since you did depart
Out of my reach, my darling,
Into the hidden,
I see each shadow start
With recognition, my darling;
[illegible] I'm wonder ridden.

In the first four stanzas Lawrence uses a rather naïve-sounding abcabc rhyme scheme perhaps suggesting a desire to return to the religion of his childhood, with his mother as the central figure. As in 'Sorrow', the echoes, such as 'recognition' / 'hidden' / 'ridden' create a subtle undercurrent. There is a sense that his mother is still with him in every shadow. The unusual phrase 'wonder ridden' gives a sense of frenetic drive to the poem.

In the second version in LaL10, Lawrence rejects the more conventional '~~pain~~ ridden' for a return to '{wonder} ridden'. 'Wonder ridden' is more hopeful, but the word 'ridden' carries with it the conventional associations of 'pain ridden' and 'guilt ridden'. It also suggests a sense of compulsion. As with 'Sorrow', in redrafting this stanza in LaL10, Lawrence loses superfluous words. He also employs more enjambment. The final three lines of the first stanza become:

I see each shadow start
With recognition, and I

wonder
Am ~~pain~~ ridden.

The repetition of 'my darling' has gone, despite the fact that this breaks his rhyme scheme. The internal rhyme is also foregrounded.

In stanza two of the first version, he feels that the 'shadows' hold something of his mother:

Dazed I am still with farewell,
Yet I scarcely feel your loss,
You left me a gift
so
Of tongues, ~~and~~ the shadows tell
things
Me ~~of you~~, the world's sigh toss
Me their drift.

The 'shadows' link the living and the dead and the 'gift of tongues' allows the speaker to interpret their language. This stanza conveys strong emotion: 'Dazed I am still with farewell,' using a subtle echo of 'I' sounds. In revising this stanza in the version in LaL10, Lawrence uses the less consciously poetical construction 'I am dazed with the farewell', the shifting of 'dazed' from the beginning of the line suggesting the imposition of more control upon the emotion. Similarly, in LaL9 Lawrence distances himself from the more personal 'shadows tell / Me ~~of you~~' to

the impersonal, and vague, '{things}.' This is incorporated into LaL10. The overall impact of this is thus more firmly tied to the imagery of the gift of tongues.

The Pentecostal imagery is sustained in the next stanza of LaL9, which relates the dead mother boldly to the Holy Ghost. There is a sense that all those around the mourner carry a 'brand' of this 'mournful pyre':

You have sent me a cloven fire,
Pain-lit, that waves in the draught
Of the breathing hosts,
light
Sets / the mournful pyre
Of folk
~~Alight~~, its brand awaft
Like candid ghosts.

It is only in this first version that Lawrence uses 'Pain-lit,' with its startling and emotionally raw equation of suffering with illumination. In the second version in LaL10, he changes this to 'From death' and in the published version 'Out of death.' This is part of the process of distancing in which Lawrence moves from expression of an emotion to a clarification of an idea. In the drafting Lawrence can be seen to be removing references to 'pain', emphasising the grateful sense of some contact beyond death. 'Out of death' conveys that death is a distant place; 'breathing hosts' carries many connotations, not only suggesting crowds of people but also perhaps

angels. Finally, 'hosts' have connotations of carriers of fire from the 'mournful pyre.'

Lydia Lawrence attended the Congregational Chapel in Eastwood and insisted on her children also attending. There Lawrence absorbed the language of his mother's religion. He uses this language in the poems concerning her death in transgressive ways. In the second version of this poem in LaL10, for instance, Lawrence intensifies the religious tone in a way which would certainly have disconcerted Lydia Lawrence herself:

You have sent me a cloven fire
From death, that waves in the draught
Of the breathing hosts,
Kindles the darkening pyre
Of people, till ^r ~~its~~ stray b/ands waft
Like candid ghosts.

Between versions one and two, 'Sets {light}' becomes the more emotive 'Kindles' and the 'mournful pyre' becomes a more dramatic 'darkening pyre', juxtaposing the darkness of death with the light of hope.

In stanza four of LaL9 every 'form' which passes contains 'A flame like me.' Even the stars are part of the fiery connection between himself and his dead mother. This suggests perhaps a sense of unreality caused by intense bereavement:

form
Each [illegible] along the streets
Waves like a ghost along,
A flame like me;
The star above the house-tops greets
Me every eve with a long
Song fiercely

In redrafting the poem in LaL10, Lawrence alters this direct identification with those he passes to the idea that they help him. They are 'Kindled for me.' This also echoes line four of stanza three.

In the first version, Lawrence appears to have composed stanzas of six lines and then squeezed in additional lines above each line in stanzas 5 and 6, resulting in apparent stanzas of twelve lines (See A1: 399). On closer examination, however, it is clear that the indented shorter lines which are inserted make up alternative or additional stanzas with the same abcabc rhyme scheme. Carole Ferrier notes that these are 'interlined in mauve ink' and 'parallel 11.1-6 and 13-18 of "Noise of Battle"' (Ferrier 1971: Poem 74). This gives a significant insight into Lawrence's distinctive and unusual creative process, as two potential versions of the same stanzas seem to be given equal priority:

And all day long this town
The sound of a lost lark flicker
Roars like a beast in a cave

Overhead, and I answer 'Yes.'

That is wounded there

The coltsfoot raise

And like to drown

Their little golden stars, and quicker,

While on the days rush wave after wave

My heart than the sun to caress

To its lair

To augment their blaze.

And all I can do, my love

So I am not lonely nor sad

Since they put us asunder

Although bereaved of you,

Is to hark and to see the days

Of you, my love,

Crash through the night like thunder

Having

~~You have~~ found a great kinsfolk clad

[illegible] is

Flying [illegible] / when I with white[illegible], wonder

~~But~~ Differently, for [illegible] through

Wan with amaze

The vesture there move

The longer lines describe a closely observed rural landscape found also in poems such as 'The Wild Common.' The sounds and sights of the countryside comment upon the speaker's mental state:

The sound of a lost lark flicker
Overhead, and I answer 'Yes.'
The coltsfoot raise
Their little golden stars, and quicker,
My heart than the sun to caress
To augment their blaze.

So I am not lonely nor sad
Although bereaved of you
Of you, my love,
Having
~~You have~~ found a great kinsfolk clad
~~But~~ Differently, for [illegible] through
The vesture there move

There is closely observed detail, such as the 'sound of a lost lark flicker'. Lawrence employs the loaded word 'lost' to describe the bird, in the process creating an alliteration. The 'golden stars' of the coltsfoot have medicinal powers, acting as a balm. This is linked to the imagery of fire, which also by implication is part of a

healing process. He repeats the shocking and transgressive phrase 'my love'. He is comforted by having 'found a great kinsfolk clad/ Differently'. This clearly links to stanza seven, where Lawrence expands upon 'the vesture':

Nake'd wistfulness beneath
Like mine, my love
And the shadow of kindness, and wreath
Of the aura of love
Like yours, my love.

This 'wistfulness' is naked, suggesting a raw emotion and the nakedness that lies beneath the 'vesture.' Lawrence attributes the residue of virtues to his mother 'the shadow of kindness, and wreath/ Of the aura of love/ Like yours, my love'.

By contrast the shorter interpolated lines sustain an urban setting. As in Philip Larkin's 'Deceptions,' the speaker's perception of the outside world is heightened by traumatic experience:

And all day long this town
Roars like a beast in a cave
That is wounded there
And like to drown,
While on the days rush wave after wave
To its lair

And all I can do, my love
Since they put us asunder
Is to hark and to see the days
Crash through the night like thunder
[illegible] is
Flying [illegible] / when I with white[illegible], wonder
Wan with amaze

Grief becomes the sound of the town, like that of a wounded beast in a sea cave, whose 'lair' is bombarded by waves of days. The violence of separation is foregrounded in the image of thunder. This is an outpouring of grief and love, addressed directly to 'my love.' Lawrence uses archaic, Romantic poetic terms to convey his dazed state: 'wan with amaze,' reflecting the physical effect of the grieving process.

Lawrence eventually published these interpolated lines as a separate poem entitled 'Noise of Battle' (originally 'Apprehension') in his short collection of war poems, *Bay* (Mandell 1984: 22-23). This is an interesting exercise in distancing. Lawrence universalises the intense pain at the loss of his mother by transferring the emotion wholly onto 'the town'. In the final, printed version the context of personal bereavement is left behind, and a number of small verbal changes create a quite independent work:

And all hours long, the town
Roars like a beast in a cave
That is wounded there
And like to drown;
While days rush, wave after wave
On its lair.
...

But all that it can do
Now, as the tide rises
Is to listen and hear the grim
Waves crash like thunder through
The splintered streets, hear noises
Roll in the interim. (Lawrence *CP*: 59, ll.1-6, 13-18)

Lawrence takes his fierce emotion from 'The Inheritance' and transfers it to the less personal context of the town. 'Noise of Battle' is more deliberate and abstract. This is a particularly striking example of Lawrence's restless, unstable notion of textuality, made visible in the drafting process. He can be seen to be writing two poems simultaneously: one personal and consolatory, asserting a strong sense of connection with the dead loved one, the other impersonal and with a larger sense of cultural despair.

In the LaL10 draft stanzas five and six of 'The Inheritance' re-mix elements from both versions of stanzas five and six in LaL9. The lark and coltsfoot disappear, but so also does the violent imagery of grief found in the interpolated lines:

And all day long, the town

[illegible] wondering
[illegible] Stealthy with kindled ghosts

Going
~~Wafting~~ up and down

In a vision
~~Weaving darkness~~ like a dress;

~~And~~ their daunted
[illegible] ~~But all their~~ looking flickers

~~that~~ and
To me, ~~and~~/ I answer 'Yes.'

So I am not lonely nor sad

Although bereaved of you

My love.

am here among
I like [illegible] a kinsfolk clad

In words but [illegible] fluttering [illegible] through

~~In darkness~~, but [illegible] through

~~See~~

~~Comes the light of the dove~~

~~Within~~ the pulse of [illegible] speech, my love.

Lawrence preserves the town setting from the interpolated poem and finds a new use for 'flickers', now applied to 'looking' rather than to a 'lark'. The response 'Yes' is transferred from the song of the 'lost lark' to the 'daunted looking' of the 'wondering ghosts.' He rejects an overt allusion to the descent of the Holy Spirit in the line '~~Comes the light of the dove.~~' He has already made this theme clear with greater subtlety earlier in the poem with mention of 'the gift of tongues.' He also reintroduces the theme of speaking, echoing the gift of tongues in stanza two. This continues the Pentecostal theme less overtly and concentrates the focus upon speech.

In the published version, Lawrence conveys an even stronger sense of the people of the town being ghosts, suggesting the speaker's mental state:

And all day long, the town
Glimmers with subtle ghosts
Going up and down
In common, prison-like dress,
Yet their daunted looking flickers
To me, that I answer Yes!

So I am not lonely nor sad
Although bereaved of you,
My love.

I move among a townsfolk clad
With words, but the night shows through
Their words as they move. (ll.25-36)

The flame imagery is refined, as 'the town/ Glimmers with subtle ghosts'; 'kinsfolk' become the less intimate 'townsfolk'. The 'ghosts' are 'In common, prison-like dress,' suggesting that they are somehow trapped or acting under compulsion. The ending is more uneasily ambiguous; he no longer claims kinship with those around him. The 'townsfolk' are 'clad / With words,' but these still let through the 'night.' They are transparent.

'The Inheritance' is a challenging poem. Studying the drafts shows how Lawrence processes his grief in order to share his emotional state with his reader, but also how he can distance himself from the rawness of personal emotion and transform parts of the poem, sometimes by startling wrenching of the original context, into a quite different poem. LaL9 could be seen as containing two distinct outcomes of the same initial poetic impulse, one in which Lawrence is reconciled to his personal loss because all around him carry an aspect of his mother and he has her virtues still. In the other version the pain is initially more raw, and is ultimately transferred into a different, less personal poetic context, the new, different poem 'Noise of Battle.' The ambiguous conclusion in the published poem still retains, it seems, hints of this conflict of impulses.

'The Virgin Mother'

The manuscript draft of 'My Love, My Mother,' an early version of 'The Virgin Mother,' in the Clark Notebook, LaL9, dates from around January 1911. It is notable for the angry and jealous comments inscribed on it by Frieda Lawrence. In his discussion of the Clarke Notebook, F. Warren Roberts notes that:

[Frieda Lawrence's] passionate indictment of his mother fixation provides a poignant insight into the difficulties Lawrence himself wrote about with such naked honesty in *Look! We Have Come Through!* (Roberts 1970: 6).

Frieda not only annotates the text with vitriol, but also leaves a three-quarter of a page message to her husband. Against stanzas one, two and four she ejaculates 'I hate it'. In the line between stanza one and two she writes 'You love it, you say!!!!' Beside stanza two she comments 'Good God', drawing particular attention through a row of exclamation marks to the line 'Once with your misery'. The final lines of this version are 'And who can bear me a third time? / --None love-- I am true to thee'. Frieda takes this as a starting point for her commentary:

Yes, worse luck -- what a poem to write! Yes, you are free, poor devil from the heart's home-life free, lonely you shall be, you have chosen it, you chose freely, now go your way.-- Misery, ~~and~~ a sad, old woman's misery you have chosen, you poor man, and you cling

to it with all your power. I have tried. I have fought, I have nearly killed myself in the battle to get you into connection with myself and other people, sadly I proved to myself that I can love, but never you -- Now I will leave you for some days and I will see if being alone will help you see me as I am, I will heal again by myself, you cannot help me, you are a sad thing, I know your secret and your despair, I have seen you are ashamed -- I have made you better, that is my reward --. (Roberts 1970: 6)

Lines 5, 6 and 7 of stanza two are underlined, most probably by Frieda, since these are lines to which she refers in her remark:

Once from myself to be

Free from the hearts of people

Of each heart's home-life free.

She clearly reads the poem as a statement that Lawrence does not need any other connection than that which he shared with his mother.

'The Virgin Mother' is not a great poem. However, it is significant to any study of Lawrence's creative process, and the part played in his development by Frieda Lawrence's response to his mother-fixation. Again Lawrence uses religious imagery, focusing upon physical birth and his emotional attachment. The original title of the first version in LaL9, 'My Love, My Mother,' conveys both these ideas,

while the title of the second version in LaL10 and the published poem, 'The Virgin Mother', refers to the figure of Mary in a sacrilegious way. The second version contains the most overtly quasi-religious references and probably dates from between January and May 1916. In the first stanza of the first version in LaL9, Lawrence thanks his mother:

My little love, my darling
You were a doorway to me,
You let me out of the confine
Into a vast countrie,
Where people are crowded like thistles
Yet are shapely and lovable (sic) to see.

His mother literally provides the 'doorway' from the 'confine' of the womb and launches him into life. Lawrence purposefully uses antiquated spelling and folk imagery such as 'people...crowded like thistles,' and the poem has something of the quality of devotional poetry. In the second manuscript version in LaL10 Lawrence writes 'people as tall as thistles'. Most significantly, in this transitional version he uses 'Into the mystery' rather than 'vast countrie,' intensifying the religious connotations. In the second manuscript version, Lawrence has 'lovely' rather than 'loveable'. 'Loveable' is subjective and personal whereas 'lovely' is more aesthetic and detached. In the published version, Lawrence's only change is stylistic. He uses 'comely,' creating a more effective internal rhyme with 'see,' 'me,'

'countrie' and 'shapely' and alliteration with 'countrie' and 'crowded.' 'Comely' is perhaps more in keeping with the overall style of the poem.

In the second stanza of the first version, Lawrence addresses his mother 'My little love, my dearest.' She has freed him from other attachments:

Twice you have borne me,
Once from the womb, sweet mother,
Once for myself to be
Free of the hearts of people
Of each heart's home-life free

In each stanza the second, fourth and sixth lines rhyme on a long e sound, this rhyme continuing throughout the poem. However, in the second manuscript version and the published version, Lawrence alters stanza four and adds three additional stanzas, he varies the rhymes of the second, fourth and sixth line, complicating the lyric flow of the earlier version.

In second manuscript version and the published version, Lawrence has altered 'borne' to 'issued' in the second stanza. 'Borne' conveys the physicality of childbirth, whereas 'issued' suggests a more abstract hereditary line. Significantly, in the second manuscript version in LaL 10 he has 'Of the inner darkness, free.' This suggests the mother has redemptive powers as she can offer salvation. In the version published in *Collected Poems* this becomes:

Once from your soul, to be
Free of all hearts, my darling
Of each heart's entrance free. (Lawrence *CP*: 101, ll.10-12)

However, the version in *Amores* is closer to the second manuscript. In LaL10 Lawrence has:

Once from myself, to be
Free of all hearts, my darling
Of inner darkness, free.

In *Amores* this is only slightly refined:

Once from myself, to be,
Free of all hearts, my darling,
Of each heart's home-life free.

In his revisions for *Collected Poems*, Lawrence makes his meaning more explicit. His second birth is from his mother's 'soul.' He is both 'Free of all hearts' and 'Of each heart's entrance free' because of his love for his mother he is safe from loving others.

In the third stanza in the first version in LaL9, Lawrence elaborates on the image of birth:

You sweet love, my mother
Twice you have blooded me,
Once with your blood at birth-time
Once with you misery !!!!!
And twice you have washed me
clean,
Twice-wonderful things to see.

This stanza is also found in the second manuscript version. In both *Amores* and *Collected Poems*, Lawrence has cut this stanza, perhaps in response to Frieda Lawrence's attack: '-- Misery, a sad, old woman's misery you have chosen, you poor man, you cling to it.' This baptism in 'blood' suggests his mother's sacrifice, perhaps referring to her final illness and death. The reference to 'misery' may have triggered the association with 'Mary' found in the title 'The Virgin Mother' ('Mater Misericordia'). This is even more idealised than the title 'My Love, My Mother.'

In the fourth, and final stanza of the first manuscript, Lawrence protests his faithfulness:

And so, my love, Oh mother
I shall always be true to thee.
Twice I am born, my mother
As Christ said it should be,

And who can bear me a third time?

-- None love-- I am true to thee.

He overtly links the second birth which his mother has given him with Christ's promise of re-birth. He claims absolutely that 'None' could '...bear him a third time...' By contrast in the second manuscript version and the published versions, Lawrence struggles to embrace life beyond his mother's death. In the second manuscript version, Lawrence writes:

And so, my love, my mother,

I shall always be true to you.

Twice I am born, my dearest

To life, and to death, in you;

Now I seek the life hereafter

Wherein to be true.

The two births have become explicitly 'To life, and to death, in you.' Not only does the act of being born lead inevitably to death, but even more worryingly, the speaker's close relationship to his mother means that part of him has died with his mother. He is left to 'seek the life hereafter/ Wherein to be true.' He must live in order to be true to her. He is still devoted to his mother. There is still a suggestion of tentativeness as he only seeks 'life hereafter.' This is ambiguous as it can also suggest 'life after death.' In the published versions, Lawrence subtly alters this:

To life, and to death, in you;
And this is the life hereafter
Wherein I am true. (ll.16-18)

Lawrence now attempts to say 'goodbye' to his mother. This is more life affirming. He retains a sense that part of his mother remains:

I kiss you good-bye, my darling,
Our ways are different now;
You are a seed in the night-time,
I am a man, to plough
The difficult glebe of the future (ll.19-23)

Whereas his mother is 'a seed in the night-time' he must 'plough/ The difficult glebe of the future,' an image with sexual connotations.

In the second manuscript version, Lawrence makes an overt religious reference in the last line:

For to
~~For~~ ~~Which~~ God ~~will~~
~~For the years to~~ endow

In the published versions, Lawrence changes the reference to 'seed', associated with his mother, endowing the soil:

For seed to endow. (11.24)

As with the first two stanzas, Lawrence begins stanza four and five with a similar formulation. Both the kiss and the endearments are typical of the way Lawrence uses sexual language to convey his close relationship to his mother.

As in poems such as 'Grief' and 'Sorrow,' Lawrence expresses a state of emotional breakdown. In the revisions to stanza seven in the second manuscript version, he refines his expression. The first two lines of the second manuscript version are 'Will the last word never be ~~spoken~~ {uttered},/ The farewell never said?' and in *Amores* he has 'Let the last word be uttered,/ Oh grant the farewell is said!' In *Collected Poems*, Lawrence finally has 'Is the last word now uttered?/ Is the farewell said?' The second manuscript version is more tentative. Most significantly, Lawrence's second manuscript version expresses the power of his love and the way in which it imprisons him as it uses 'Since' and has 'chained' as an alternative for 'helpless':

Oh Spare me the strength to leave you
Since you are dead;
I love you so much I am helpless
Beside your bed.

In the published versions, Lawrence alters 'Since' to 'Now.'

Spare me the strength to leave you
Now you are dead.
I must go, but my soul lies helpless
Beside your bed.

'I must go, but my soul lies helpless' has more rhythmic force and introduces a chime in 'o' of 'go' and 'soul.'

Lawrence's initial version of 'My Love, My Mother' ends with an affirmation of his commitment to his mother. The later versions entitled 'The Virgin Mother' make more of an attempt at a 'good-bye.' However, Lawrence is still made abject by the pain of trying to leave her.

'Piano'

'Piano' is the most famous example of a Lawrence poem that exists in more than one form. Vivian de Sola Pinto's transcription of the earliest extant draft of the poem has been central in discussions of the work. As Professor of English at the University of Nottingham, Vivian de Sola Pinto was a key figure in developing interest in Lawrence's verse. In 1957, in an article that published poems from the earliest extant notebook, Pinto printed a facsimile of this first draft (Pinto 1957: 5). Thus an interested reader without access to Lawrence's manuscript could return to the draft of the poem.

The first version (in A2:400) appears in Lawrence's earliest extant poetic manuscript, and was later revisited and radically recreated. Laird notes that 'Piano' is one of the earliest poems in the notebook to which Lawrence returned between '1910 and 1918 to revise poems for publication' and may have been written as early as two years before his mother's death (Laird 1986: 187).

Pinto explains:

It is instructive to place beside this vivid, immature poem (in which "the hand of the commonplace youth" can be seen only too clearly) the little masterpiece that appeared in *New Poems* (1918) and was reprinted without alteration in *Collected Poems* (1928). (Pinto 1957: 26)

Pinto focuses on the early version's lack of maturity and on Lawrence's remark on the conventionality of his early poetry. The contrast is between a 'vivid' poem and 'the little masterpiece' of the final version. Dissemination of Pinto's transcription of 'The Piano' has reached a non-specialist readership. In programme 8 of the Channel 4 educational series *Arrows of Desire 2* (2004), the poet Michael Donaghy referred to a 'notebook version' of 'Piano'. He compared the difference in impact of the beginning and ending of the two poems and specifically the way in which Lawrence first attaches 'glamour' to the singer's music and later to the speaker's past.

The five stanza early version, found in LaL2, is indeed markedly different in emphasis from the final three-stanza poem, first published in *New Poems*, which is more histrionically emotional. Whereas in the early draft the poet muses on the similarities and contrasts between the present and the memories evoked by the woman's singing, in the published version the poet loses his emotional autonomy to the past evoked by the 'song'. As with other poems examined in this chapter, an ingenuous, personal poem becomes, in the drafting, more self-conscious, larger in implication, and more strongly structured.

Lawrence's attitude to the death of his mother changed as he developed. Laird concludes:

When Lawrence first drafted 'Piano' in 1908, his mother was alive and well; no poem about her could have elegiac force...after her death, 'Piano', a relic of his childhood...triggered all the strengths of a buried memory. (Laird 1988: 193)

H.A. Mason notes the description of the mother's piano that appears in *The White Peacock* and its earlier draft *Nevermere*. Lawrence describes the piano in terms of an ageing woman and in the novel has a child pressing the feet of the mother' (Mason 1982: 205-206). In the first version, the social contrast between the speaker's home life and his current situation is established by comparing an expensive instrument with a humbler piano and the speaker's sense of his remembered life 'Somewhere beneath':

Somewhere beneath this piano's superb sleek black
Must hide my mother's piano, little and brown, with
the back
stood close
That ~~was against~~ to the wall, and the front's faded silk both torn
And keys with little hollows, that my mother's fingers
had worn

In the first version of the poem memories evoked by 'a woman singing' are pleasant
and the poet chooses to indulge in reminiscences:

Softly, in the shadows, a woman is singing to me
Quietly, through the years I have crept back to see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the
shaking ~~tingling~~ strings
Pressing the little poised feet of the mother who smiles
as she sings

Lawrence uses the same constructions in the first two lines: adverb, place, action,
thus blurring the speaker's reactions to the past and present. The return to the past
is wholly voluntary: 'Quietly, through the years I have crept back to see'. He
recalls 'A child sitting under the piano'. The woman singing in the present is
addressing the poet directly, 'singing to me' and 'all her soul is bare'. Yet the

speaker reacts with hesitancy to this musical seduction by comparing her calculated emotion to his more spontaneous experiences at home.

In each of the first three stanzas, the music and singer to whom the speaker is listening are juxtaposed with a memory of his mother. The first stanza ends in the past with 'keys with little hollows that my mother's fingers had worn.' The second stanza begins in the present with 'Softly, in the shadow, a woman is singing to me' and ends in the past with 'A child... Pressing the little poised feet of a mother who smiles as she sings.' The third stanza of this first version opens by describing 'The full-throated woman' in the present and ends with 'hymns gleamed on our warm lips, as we watched mother's finger's glide' in the past. This establishes a subtle conflict between the two women though this is no simple moralised antithesis. Note in stanza three the linking of the woman's song to the sense of belonging to 'old Sunday evenings' with 'And' rather than 'But'.

The young protagonist is caught between two lives: one of which draws him back to the domestic sphere of his mother while the other lures him into the sophisticated world of the 'full throated woman':

The full throated woman has chosen a winning, tiny

song

And surely the heart that is in me must belong

To the old Sunday evenings, when darkness wandered

outside

And hymns gleamed on our warm lips, as we watched

mother's fingers glide

In the fourth stanza, the poem changes tack and introduces 'my sister' in the flush of first love, 'Singing love's first surprised gladness, alone in the gloom.' Despite the speaker's 'raillery' he is 'bound in her shame's heart-spun bands':

is
Or ~~is this~~ / my sister at home in the old front room
Singing love's first surprised gladness, alone in
the gloom.
She will start when she sees me, and blushing,
spread out her hands
To cover my mouth's raillery, till I'm bound in
heartspun
her shame's ~~pleading~~ bands

This naive sentimentality is juxtaposed with the emotionally calculated 'wild Hungarian air' at the beginning of the fifth stanza:

A woman is singing me a wild Hungarian air
And her arms, and her bosom and the whole
of her soul is bare
And the great black piano is clamouring as my
mother's never could clamour

my mother's [illegible] tunes are
And ~~the tunes of the past~~ is devoured of this music's
ravaging glamour.

The stridency of the singer with 'her arms, and her bosom and the whole of her soul laid bare' and the 'clamouring' of the 'black piano' is contrasted with the gentler influence of the mother's piano 'as my mother's never could clamour.' The singer in the present lacks the substance of his subtler memories. The terms used to describe the overthrowing of 'the tunes of the past' are savage: 'devoured of this music's ravaging glamour.' 'Ravaging' suggests not only wild beauty, but also a laying waste. 'Glamour' has connotations of a spell.

In the final published version, the poet's relationship to the past is more problematic. Lawrence has pared away much of the detail and brought the focus more sharply on to the relationship between the speaker, his mother and his past. In this version, the present day singer is mentioned only twice, almost in passing: 'Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;' (Lawrence *CP*: 148, ll.1) and 'So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour' (ll.12). She is no longer a strong rival to the mother; the speaker's attention is focused on his reaction to the 'song' and what it evokes. All sense of choosing to indulge in a memory is lost. Instead, he reacts viscerally to the pull of the past. Whereas in the first version, the speaker reasons that his loyalties still belong at home 'And surely the heart that is in me must belong/ To the old Sunday evenings', in the final version the speaker's reaction is emotional 'till the heart of me weeps to belong/ To the old Sunday evenings at home...' (ll. 6-7). He is taken 'down the vista of years' (ll.2) rather than

choosing to creep 'back to see.' This has rhetorical power. Changes alter the reader's perception of similar episodes in both versions, for example the final two lines of stanza one and stanza two where the child presses the mother's feet and hymns are sung in the parlour.

However, the speaker is aware that the emotions evoked by the music are beyond his control, 'In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song/ Betrays me back' (ll. 5-6). The singer's enacted passion, 'clamour', and the 'great black piano' laying 'appassionato' (ll.9-10) cannot reconnect him to the social world:

The glamour

Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast

Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for the past.

(ll.10-12).

In *Arrows of Desire 2* (2004), Ruth Padel notes: 'as in *Sons and Lovers* [Paul] is almost emasculated or unmanned by the memory of his mother'. That 'Piano' is an emotionally difficult poem will become increasingly evident as one examines the different draft versions.

Significantly, Lawrence was disgusted by the choice of 'Piano' (the final published version) by I.A. Richards in his *Practical Criticism* in 1929. He told Laurence Pollinger on 16th July 1929 that he was 'a bit riled'. Lawrence believed:

The Cambridge don has chosen that poem just to do me harm in the eyes of students and public -- as it is obviously the one really sentimental thing out of the two vols. [of *Collected Poems*].
(Lawrence 1993: 376)

This comment by the poet contrasts with de Sola Pinto's defence of Lawrence's 'controlled emotion' in 'Piano'. He wrote:

The poem has found its way into a number of anthologies, probably because the compilers think it an expression of sentimental nostalgia. It is nothing of the kind; it is an honest record of emotion, which, it is important to note, is *controlled* emotion. (Lawrence *CP*: 7)

Whatever the poet's feeling about the poem, the published version of 'Piano' is a more mature poem, both psychologically and technically.

However, the two versions with which we have so far been concerned, the first draft and the final published text, do not represent all the available existing stages in Lawrence's remaking of the poem. There are three manuscript versions, one in the earliest extant manuscript and two in a notebook Lawrence 'used during the war when rewriting verse for *New Poems*' (Laird 1986: 189-190). There is also a fair holograph from the manuscript of *New Poems* sent to Martin Secker, (Laird 1986: 192) and a page proof, with authorial alteration. Holly Laird hypothesises a

missing fourth draft between the third draft and the fair holograph on the grounds that Lawrence would need a draft 'in which [he] inserted the finishing touches, mostly matters of craftsmanship' (Laird 1986: 192). It is also possible, however, that Lawrence resolved on these changes in his mind as he created the fair copy.

As late as the 1980s, Laird could point out in 'The Poems of "Piano"' that 'a second and third version of 'Piano' had 'not been discussed by scholars' (Laird 1988: 189). However, in 'Wounded Surgeons,' an article published in *The Cambridge Quarterly* in 1982, H.A. Mason uses the facsimile of the first draft of the poem in Vivian de Sola Pinto's article in *Renaissance and Modern Studies* (Mason 1982: 204). He also refers to the other lesser known drafts of 'Piano' transcribed in Carole Ferrier's thesis *The Earlier Poetry of D.H. Lawrence: A Variorum Text* (Mason 1982: 206-208). When Carole Ferrier consulted the notebook containing the two later drafts of 'Piano' it was in a private collection. Today, the notebook and the page proofs are in the Manuscripts and Special Collections at the University of Nottingham, and are available for scrutiny. The version from the fair holograph manuscript sent to Martin Secker is held at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre. These other versions are still not widely known.

How do the transitional versions of the poem add to an understanding of Lawrence's compositional process and the general issue of the literary value of unpublished drafts? Laird feels that 'Lawrence was himself disturbed by the situation recorded in "Piano", and in four separate acts of revision' struggled 'to gain mastery over it' (Laird 1986: 186). She noted Ferrier's intention to include all

the drafts of 'Piano' in the forthcoming Cambridge *Variorum* edition (Laird 1986: 189). With publication of the two volumes of the *Variorum* of Lawrence's poems imminent, it is worth considering the issues surrounding 'versions' of texts before looking in detail at the phases in Lawrence's recreation of 'Piano'.

The University of Nottingham, Manuscripts and Special Collections on-line catalogue dates the drafts in Lawrence's notebooks, although it is not possible to be completely certain. The first draft of 'Piano' dates from between 1906-1908, two years before his mother's death; the second from a decade later, being worked on between January to May 1916, and the third dates from 1916-1918, long after he had left his parental home far behind. The fair holograph manuscript was sent to Martin Secker some time before the proofs of *New Poems* were produced in 1918. By looking at the drafts in chronological succession it is possible to see how Lawrence remade the poem in a series of stages.

'Piano' did not undergo a smooth transition between what Pinto called the 'diffuse' and 'nostalgic' (Pinto 1957: 27) five stanza first version and its three stanza final form. The second version, some eight years after the first, struggles unsuccessfully to use the narrative framework of the first version to present an uneasy picture of the poetic speaker's relationship to his past. The earliest version and the first redraft contain more episodes and are more 'novelistic' than the final version. Laird explains that in the third extant draft, which occurs much later than the second in the same notebook, Lawrence 'dropped stanzas 1 and 4 and substantially altered the remaining three, so that what had been a novelistic anecdote of his family became a compressed epiphany of feeling, with the speaker

of Lawrence as principal actor' (Laird 1986: 190). Throughout, Lawrence maintains an aabb rhyme scheme, but there is a clear shift in the attitude of the speaker of the poem towards the childhood memories that are evoked. Unusually for Lawrence, 'Piano' has both regular rhyme scheme and rhythm.

At this point it is necessary to point out that the most widely available transcription of Lawrence's earliest extant draft, that of Pinto mentioned earlier, contains a mistranscription that has been perpetuated despite a better reading being known. In the first line of stanza three, Pinto transcribes 'The full throated woman has chosen a winning, living song' (Pinto 1957: 26; Lawrence *CP*: 943). Laird notes:

Pinto and Carolee Ferrier disagree on their reading of the word describing "song" in line 9, with Pinto reading it as "living," while Ferrier sees it as "tiny". Although it is awkward for "a full throated woman" to choose a "winning, tiny song" other evidence of Lawrence's handwriting on the two pages of "The Piano" favours Ferrier's reading. (Laird 1986: 189)

Lawrence has not crossed the 't' on this word and it is difficult to decipher. Vivian de Sola Pinto makes an educated guess, based on the evidence of the line and his understanding of Lawrence. Laird suggests that Pinto was misled, drawing his conclusions from Lawrence's later philosophical attitudes:

The notion of "living" music accords with Lawrence's mature philosophy of vitalism, but this draft of "Piano" is a paean to the "little", "warm" and "soft". (Laird 1986: 189)

'Tiny' is an awkward and ingenuous word and one to which Lawrence returns in his redrafting.

Lawrence makes stylistic changes in the first draft which do not change the 'intention' of the poem, but improve rhythm or create more precision, such as 'That stood close to the wall' instead of 'That was against the wall'. Similarly, throughout the drafting, Lawrence shifts between 'shaking' and 'tingling' to describe the 'strings'. 'Shaking' provides a single repetition of the 'ing' in strings whereas 'tingling' is a two-fold repetition, which also affects the rhythm of the line. This brings into question Hans Zeller's extreme idea of 'versions' as quite separate poems. However, Lawrence's poems would lend themselves to Donald Reiman's concept of 'versioning' because of Lawrence's practice of creating whole new drafts which display different perspectives from earlier versions.

Lawrence experimented with including the first version in his manuscript material for *Amores*, to represent 'the period before 1910'. However, Laird notes 'this version differs greatly in mood from the elegies, which record the immediate moments of Mrs. Lawrence's death in 1910' (Laird 1986: 193-194). I would suggest that this altered the spirit in which Lawrence came to revise the poem. The second draft was written between January and May 1916. In this second draft, Lawrence retains the structure and detail as the first version, but makes changes to

the mood. Holly Laird concludes that 'There is something undigested in the new phrases of this draft' (Laird 1986: 190). It is an intermediate stage in poet's thinking, which generates a sense of melancholy but also of resistance to the power of the past. The first two stanzas are fundamentally unaltered. However, in the third stanza Lawrence experiments with a more suggestive word for the evocative 'full throated woman's' 'song'. He tries '~~winning~~', '~~little~~' then '{~~yearning~~}' and '{~~tiny~~}' before selecting 'plaintive.' This is then echoed in the altered conclusion of the stanza 'And hymns gleaming warm on our lips, in a sadness we tried to hide.' In this draft, Lawrence is either trying to evoke the emotional honesty of 'Discord in Childhood,' which acknowledges family disharmony or the sadness in the house during the mother's illness as described in poems such as 'Sorrow.'

Mason explains that 'The need to tell the truth never left Lawrence. A little of the truth was allowed to peep through in the next draft...' Mason concludes 'Of the two moments of truth one was not destined to be taken further: that the children round the piano sang hymns "in a sadness we tried to hide." The other is a confession, in the last line, that the "glamour" lay in the *dead past* and aroused the poet's *hate*' (Mason 1983: 206). This change in perspective has repercussions for the attitude towards the 'sister' in 'the cold front room' who is 'singing her love's young vanity out to the gloom' and defying the speaker's laughter. Laird points out that this change in the portrayal of the sister prepares 'more adequately for the shift to the brazen woman of stanza 5 with her "wild Hungarian air."' She also notes the change of the adjective 'old' to 'cold' to describe the 'front room' between the first

and second versions (Laird 1986: 190). 'Old' is sentimental whereas 'cold' is more complex in effect, passing a value judgement on 'love's young vanity', as well as more adequately evoking a little-used parlour. Lawrence is taking a more critical view of his home life. Despite the woman's 'desire' being made more explicit, the final stanza ends with the speaker looking at his past and resenting its hold upon him. 'And I hate the past, oh I had the past's dead glamour.' This hatred is emphasised by repetition. The 'glamour' has been boldly and startlingly transferred from the new music to the 'dead glamour' of the 'past'. As Hans Zeller notes, 'variation at one point has an effect on invariant sections of the text' (Zeller 1975: 241).

In the third extant draft (A 3: 401), Lawrence decides to omit what has been the first stanza up to now and begins with a reworking the previous second stanza. In condensing the poem to three stanzas Lawrence intensifies its focus. Vivian de Sola Pinto comments:

[Lawrence] wisely decided to start the poem with the most musical line in the draft, only changing "shadows" to "dusk", perhaps in order to avoid excessive alliteration. (Pinto 1957: 27)

Lawrence makes the time of day more specific, 'Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me.' This changes the consonance of the line. The two earlier versions have 'Softly, in the shadows, a woman is singing to me', which uses a threefold alliteration, the shift to 'dusk' internalises the second 's'.

The third extant draft shows more reworking than the earlier manuscripts. Lawrence is moving towards a more effective rhetorical shape for the poem. Discussing the published version, Vivian de Sola Pinto wrote:

For the rather commonplace image of the poet creeping back through years is substituted the far subtler and more impressive image of the woman's singing taking him "back down the vista of years." (Pinto 1957: 27)

However, the line introduces an element of cliché not present in the evocative image of creeping back into the past. Lawrence, having rejected 'down ~~slopes~~', introduces the idea of moving back through a mental landscape. The draw of this memory is overwhelming. Significantly, Lawrence does not have 'Quietly' at the beginning of the line. Vivian de Sola Pinto suggests, "'Quietly" at the beginning of the line is suppressed, probably because it is too much like the repetition of "Softly" at the beginning of the previous line' (Pinto 1957: 27). However, it is more than this: the memory is no longer restful and gentle, but disturbing. Laird comments on Lawrence's difficulty in finding a suitable word to describe this drawing back:

where before he had pictured himself actively creeping "back to see" himself as a child, Lawrence reworked the phrasing several times to describe his helplessness: <Slipping me backwards>, <Beckoning>,

<Throwing me>, until he settled more plainly with 'Taking me back'

(Laird 1986: 190-191).

The original line reads '[illegible] Slipping me backwards down slopes of years, to see'. The alliteration reinforces the slide back into memory, but in the final version of the line, the speaker is taken back through an unfolding view. 'Taking me back' conveys both compulsion and passivity. It lacks the mere gesturing of 'Beckoning' or the violence of 'Throwing me back.'

By removing direct reference to the singer and concentrating on the song in the second stanza of the third version, Lawrence intensifies the idea of being lost in memory. This second stanza is heavily reworked. Lawrence changes '~~a mild, unintelligent song~~' to 'the insidious treachery of song.' Holly Laird suggests that 'that single cancelled word "unintelligent", though clumsily abstract in its context, reveals Lawrence's new conception of his subject as the battle between heart and mind' (Laird 1986: 191). The feeling is evoked 'In spite of myself'. Lawrence rejects the visceral 'Bleeds me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong' for '{Betrays}', which is more consistent with the idea of 'treachery'.

The final stanza of the third extant draft also undergoes reworking as Lawrence conveys a sense of being unable to prevent the hold of the memory of his mother and a loss of 'manhood' as a consequence. Laird's reading in this final stanza betrays a questionable element in her analysis of the drafts. Writing of the changes between the third draft and the copy in the holograph manuscript, she remarks: '[Lawrence] eliminated some overt suggestions of nostalgia, paring down "poignant glamour" to "glamour" and replacing "old, lost days" with "childish

days". Slight shifts in diction like these intensified the incongruity of a power in childhood' (Laird 1986: 193). This is an understandable misreading. Lawrence was often forced to end a line below. Although close, Lawrence never attaches 'poignant' to 'glamour', rather he is experimenting with an adjective for 'days '. In the third draft, he rejects 'Of ~~old, lost~~ days' in favour of '{poignant} days'.

Unusually, Lawrence doodles on the third extant draft, which suggests a pausing for thought and the increasing difficulty of articulating his conception. Among the scrawls of flowers and heads is a comment that appears to read 'my eye', which raises the question whether Lawrence is making a self-disparaging comment about his own poem. Philip Larkin undermined his poetry in this way, writing deprecating comments at the end of poems in his workbook. However, it could also be that Lawrence has reached a level of self-revelation from which he needs emotionally to distance himself.

Lawrence makes further changes in the version sent to Martin Secker, but in the process of writing up the poem rather than as revisions on the manuscript. In fair copy and the published version, this 'insidious treachery of song' becomes 'insidious mastery of song' (Laird 1986: 193). 'Treachery' conveys the sense of being betrayed into the emotion whereas 'mastery of song' suggests the sense of being overpowered. The revised version perhaps has a greater emotional bite, 'mastery' being less expected and less 'literary' than treachery.

Graham Hough complains of the published version that whereas 'most of [the diction] is unobtrusively accurate and sufficient... "hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide" is flat and banal, risks a dreary suggestion of petty-

bourgeois pietism where the intention is to convey warmth and security.' However, he acknowledges, 'to anyone familiar with *Sons and Lovers*, where the gaps left by these words are filled in so solidly and fully this, suggestion disappears' (Houghton 1956: 196). Holly Laird comments 'the offending adjectives, "cosy" and "tinkling", were among the last details inserted, at a moment when Lawrence was almost master of himself and his poem' (Laird 1986: 187). As in Lawrence's prose, he uses a 'middlebrow' vocabulary shunned by more 'literary' writers. Lawrence freely mixes registers and is not afraid to use conventional forms of expression.

In the fair holograph, Lawrence introduces 'And hymns in the cosy, close parlour, the tinkling piano our guide.' He takes 'close' out at the proof stage. 'Tinkling' echoes the 'tingling strings' in the first stanza and contrasts the 'clamour' of 'the great black piano appassionato' in the final stanza. 'Cosy, close' is more effective because it suggests both safety and oppressiveness. Laird concludes that it hints 'at the speaker's ambivalence towards the past' (Laird 1986: 193). In this version he also sacrifices the plosive repetition of 'poignant' and 'upon', with connotations of pathos for the more emotionally challenging 'childish days'. He also introduces the more strenuously emotive 'Down in the grief of remembrance...' instead of 'Away in remembrance.' Lawrence made the alteration to 'flood' at the proof stage. Laird suggests that this is an 'apocalyptic image' (Laird 1986: 193). However I feel that the change, though superficially strengthening the conclusion, actually weakens it by introducing cliché to a powerfully expressed emotion. Not all Lawrence's changes at proof stage seem well judged.

Thus, in reshaping 'Piano' after his mother's death, Lawrence aimed for greater immediacy and honest self-expression. The perspective of the poem undergoes significant shifts as Lawrence uses it as a vehicle for his grief. Laird asserts, 'Curiously like a failed Romantic lyric, the speaker falls from the present into the past without emerging renewed' and 'Unable to lose himself entirely in the past, neither can he regain his manhood' (Lawrence 1986:192). In 'Piano,' Lawrence is caught in the powerful evocation of the past. Later, in the first version of 'Note' to *Collected Poems*, Lawrence concludes:

Instead of bewailing a lost youth, a man nowadays begins to wonder,
when he reaches my ripe age of forty-two, if ever his past will
subside and be comfortably by-gone. Doing these poems makes me
realise that my teens and my twenties are just as much me, here and
now and present, as ever they were, and the pastness is only an
abstraction. The actuality, the body of feeling, is essentially alive
and here. (Lawrence *CP*: 849)

In redrafting early poems at later stages of his life, Lawrence struggled to articulate vividly remembered emotions that were also influenced by his changing life experiences and his reconstruction of the self. The first version has spontaneous intimacy, but shows a priggish readiness to accept the moral superiority of his home background. Although more polished, the final version pushes the boundaries of self-revelation and public confession.

In his earlier draft of 'Note' to *The Collected Poems* Lawrence explains that 'I was twenty-five, and from the death of my mother, the world began to dissolve around me, beautiful, iridescent, but passing away substanceless. Till I almost dissolved away myself, and was very ill: when I was twenty-six' (Lawrence *CP*: 851). The death of his mother was one of the major events in Lawrence's creative development as a poet. His drafts of the poems concerned with his mother show him reforming and reshaping his language in order to come to terms with his turbulent emotions. As is illustrated by poems such as 'Sorrow,' Lawrence hones the detail of his mother poems so that he is able to move from the emotive and personal to the controlled and rhetorically purposive. He moves from the subjective to the symbolic. Although he refines the poems between versions, the basis is still highly personal feeling and experience. The drafts of 'The Inheritance,' with its two competing versions of stanzas five and six, reveal an important characteristic of Lawrence's drafting: the transformative nature of his revisions. These stanzas also demonstrate Lawrence's two competing conclusions to the poem. In 'The Virgin Mother,' Lawrence explores the legacy of his close bond to his mother and extends the poem in order to suggest some hope of meeting the 'future.' Finally, in 'Piano' Lawrence changes an account of his early life into a powerful confession of the power of his past. In a typical Lawrentian spirit, he regards this breakdown as part of the process of recovery and coming back to life.

Chapter 5

'Shut...in a Tower of Words': Dylan Thomas

Thomas's compositional practice is far more intensive than that of either D.H. Lawrence or Philip Larkin. His personal poetic sensibility dictates a need to polish each line to the highest degree. It is clear from his extant manuscripts that Thomas devotes hours of work to particular lines, hours of work which may have little affect on the overall meaning or even impact of the poem.

For both D.H. Lawrence and Philip Larkin, as for most poets, words are first and foremost expressive counters, means of expression. Secondly they are physical, sensuous objects in themselves. For Dylan Thomas it frequently seems the other way round. Vernon Watkins remarked on the 'physical feeling' with which Thomas built up his poetry 'out of a lump of texture or nest of phrases [Thomas] created music, testing everything by physical feeling, working from the concrete image outward' (Thomas 1957:13). Thomas has a kinaesthetic approach to words. In his youth he played word games with Dan Jones, a kind of 'serious play' (Jones 1977: 25) which generated collaborative compositions. Each 'wrote alternate lines,' Jones recalled later, 'the odd ones for me, the even ones for Dylan,' with a 'strict rule' forbidding inference or criticism of 'the other's contribution' (Jones 1977: 26). The boys also created 'hat poems.' Dan Jones remembers:

For these, two hats were needed, one for each of us, and the lines were written on strips of paper which were shuffled and drawn out alternately. No adjustment to the lines was allowed after the drawing.
(Jones 1977: 28)

This demonstrates Thomas's pleasure in creative, linguistic play.

Thomas recalled: 'I wanted to write poetry in the beginning because I had fallen in love with words' (Fitzgibbon 1965: 367). This is the key to understanding his writing process. His obsession with words fuelled his restless experimentation. He viewed the writing of poetry as intensive labour and concluded that 'To me, the poetical "impulse" or "inspiration" is only the sudden, and generally physical, coming of energy to the constructional, craftsman ability. The laziest workman receives the fewest impulses' (Fitzgibbon 1965: 162). This commitment to intensive work is seen in Thomas's approach to drafting. Each individual line is of great importance to him, not simply as the expression of an idea, but as a piece of craft in itself. He 'never released a poem until he had tested every nut and bolt in its body' (Durrell 1961: 36). In the course of composition, Thomas generates far more material than he can use within a poem. His engagement with language drives him to devote much time to the sound and texture of his lines. Some critics have been critical of Thomas's methods. His early word games do seem to show something of a mechanical attitude towards words. David Holbrook finds fault with Thomas's emphasis on "'doing" in language' rather than using it out of 'inner

necessity'. He argues that Thomas purposefully avoids self-revelation (Holbrook 1972: 130).

In this chapter I will focus first on Thomas's vocation poems, in particular the developing drafts of his last great poetic self-dedication, 'Prologue', in which he can be seen to be discovering and transforming his theme in the process of writing and rewriting. I shall then go on to discuss the critical debate concerning Thomas's physical attitude towards words, particularly in relation to 'Poem on his Birthday': his use of thesauruses and lists, of syllabic counts and imposed formal patterns.

Vocation

Throughout his career, Thomas returns to the theme of his poetic vocation. Vocation poems include: 'Especially when the October wind,' 'On no work of words,' 'In my craft and sullen art,' 'Poem on his Birthday' and 'Prologue'. Much of the frustration and self-doubt Thomas experienced as a poet are revealed in these poems. He is both wholly committed to his craft and acutely aware that his compositional process is a labour in words. This chapter will consider poems in which Thomas explores his vocation and then the techniques by which his writing is physically accomplished. 'Poem on his Birthday' and 'Prologue', in particular, will be used to illustrate Thomas's compositional practice. These poems frequently focus on the poet's love-hate relationship with language. In 'Especially when the November wind' (an early typescript of 'Especially when October wind' for which there is no extant manuscript, but which probably came from the lost notebook of

July 1932 - January 1933), (Thomas *NB*: 342) Thomas puzzles over how to convert the world about him into poetry. He is only too aware that 'the heart' can 'sicken/ Of arid syllables grouped and regrouped with care' (Thomas *NB*: 347). Thomas feels trapped by his own process and his need meticulously to rework. His heart 'rebels/ Against the chain of words,/ Now hard as iron and now soft as clouds' (Thomas *NB*: 347-348). Yet the feeling is heady as he is 'drunk on the raw/ Spirits of words.' 'Shut in a tower of words' he struggles to escape: 'How good it is to feel November air / And be no words' prisoner' (Thomas *NB*: 348). He declares:

It is more to be longed for in the end
Than, chained by syllable at hand and foot
Wagging a wild tongue at the clock,
Deploring death, and raising roofs
Of words to keep unharmed
By time's approach in a fell wind
The bits and pieces of dissected loves. (Thomas *NB*: 348)

This first, 'November' version, in four stanzas of uneven lengths: ten lines, seven lines, eight lines, eighteen lines, articulates explicitly Thomas's frustration with his vocation. When Thomas revised it some time before its first publication in the *Listener* on 24th October 1934 as 'Especially when the October wind' he imposed poetic structure by creating four regular stanzas of eight lines. In lines not present in the earlier version, he expresses a visceral connection to his craft:

My busy heart, who shudders as she talks

Sheds the syllabic blood and drains her words. (Thomas *CP*: 18, ll.7-8)

The published poem is more full of portents of winter and of death than the earlier version, though the poet is still 'Shut, too, in a tower of words', with the compulsion to translate his experience into poetry: 'I mark / On the horizon walking like the trees / The wordy shapes of women' (ll.9-10). Natural objects take on the characteristics of words, rather than simply designating objects. Trees have vowels; water makes speeches:

Some let me make you of the vowelled beeches.

Some of the oaken voices from the roots


Of many a thorny shire tell you notes,

Some let me make you of the water's speeches. (ll.13-16)

Throughout the poem, there is a feeling that 'the heartless words' ultimately offer no comfort. Thomas has subtly refocused the early typescript version, with its personal theme of feeling 'chained by syllable at hand and foot' into a more universal poem concerned with the relentless passage of time.

'On no work of words' shows an even greater frustration, in this case caused by writer's block. It is interesting to trace this poem through its earlier draft as the epigrammatic fragment 'Eight' on a torn upper page of the February 1933

Notebook, and then in the more fully worked draft to which he gave his usual working title, 'Poem.' The revised version is written close to the original fragment and is dated 'Laugharne. Sept. 1938' (Thomas *NB*: 303) In an opening stanza which he rejects Thomas makes a close association between his compositional practice and his geographical locality:

 For three lean months now, no work done
In summer Laugharne among the cockle boats
And by the castle with the boatlike birds

A strong sense of the poet in his landscape is also central in 'Poem on his Birthday' (Thomas *CP*: 144-147) and also in 'Prologue' (Thomas *CP*: 1-3). In 'Poem on His Birthday,' the poet is 'In his house on stilts high among beaks/ And palavers of birds' (ll.4-5) and in 'Prologue': 'In my seashaken house / On a breakneck of rock' (ll.4-5). The setting is integral to Thomas's sense of his position as poet because he was usually most productive in this locality.

In 'On no work of words,' Thomas is disheartened at not having written for three months and is highly self-critical:

On no work of words now for three lean months
in the bloody
Belly of the rich year and the big purse of
my body

I bitterly ~~mean to~~ my poverty and craft:
take to task

He is frustrated because he feels a duty to his gift. 'Eight' forms the basis of stanzas two and three of 'On no work of words.' The emphasis is on the need for acceptance and gratitude:

To take to give is all, return what given

blowing the ~~coins~~-quids
Is ~~throwing~~ manna back to heaven

~~Receive, not asking, and examine~~

~~Is looking the gift god in the mouth~~

Thomas concludes 'Poem':

To surrender now is to pay the expensive ~~phantom~~
ogre twice

Ancient woods of my blood, dash down to the

nut of the seas

If I take to burn or return this world which is

each man's

work.

'In my craft and sullen art', one of Thomas's best-known statements of vocation, shows a more mature manifestation of his characteristic physical treatment of

words. Here his rhyme scheme is a complicated near-repetition. Stanza one rhymes: abcdebdecca and stanza two, using the same rhymes as the first stanza: abcdeecca. The final line of stanza one forms a couplet with the first line of stanza two and the poem generates a satisfying sense of circularity, pointed up by the fact that it begins 'In my craft or sullen art' and concludes 'Nor heed my craft or sullen art.' The poet takes a subtly ambiguous attitude to poetic composition. To call writing 'my craft and sullen art' suggest not only witchcraft and sorcery ('craft' and 'art') but also a combination of workmanship and art. It is, however, a 'sullen art.'

'Prologue'

The most mature and characteristic poems in this group concerning vocation are 'Poem on his Birthday' and 'Prologue' or 'The Author's Prologue,' as Thomas's publishers renamed it. Both these poems convey the poet protagonist's reaction to possible death in a nuclear war, a reference more explicit in the drafts than in the final poems. Thomas explained that his 'Prologue' was intended to address 'the readers, the "strangers", with a flourish, and fanfare, and makes clear, or tries to make clear, the position of one writer in a world "at poor peace"' (Thomas 1987: 838).

In 'Prologue', Thomas does not introduce the poet protagonist until line 23. He is in the bardic or heroic tradition of the speaker who sings his narrative, but Thomas's speaker is at 'poor peace':

At poor peace I sing
To you, strangers, (though song
Is a burning and crested act,
The fire of birds in
The world's turning wood
For my sawn, splay sounds), (ll.23-28)

The syntax of this description of his song is problematic. Clark Emery resorts to paraphrase, 'I say I am singing although song is a rebirth from self-immolation, a passionate warbling compared to my ineptly carpentered tunes' (Emery 1971:133).

The poet protagonist's role is to protect his world against the threat of human destruction:

I build my bellowing ark
To the best of my love
As the flood begins
Out of the fountainhead
Of fear, rage red, manalive,
Molten and mountainous to stream (ll.44-49)

His 'ark' is his poetry. Emery notes 'Thomas builds this poem of love to protect himself (and his friends) from the fear and hate rising about them' and '[the flood] must be no less than man-made, man-annihilating war' (Emery 1971: 133).

Thomas often dramatizes his poet protagonist as working late into the night although he himself used to work only from two in the afternoon until seven. The image of working into the night is artistic licence rather than Thomas's poetic practice. Only the animals hear as he toils into the night. Again, Thomas's description of his writing process is obscure:

Heigh, on horseback hill, jack
Whisking hare! who
Hears, there, this fox light, my flood ship's
Clangour as I hew and smite
(A clash of anvils for my
Hubbub and fiddle, this tune
On a tongued puffball). (ll.67-73)

Building his 'flood's ship' is a noisy labour. William York Tindall explains that:

The hewing of his "flood ship" and the clashing of his anvils become the fiddling of a poem. "Fiddle" is a noun, parallel to "Hubbub" and, despite the comma, a verb governing "this tune." (Tindall 1996: 25)

He adds that Thomas's poetic ark, shaping up, becomes "'a tongued puffball" spreading its spores abroad as the tree of the word spreads its flying leaves' (Tindall 1996: 25)

In 'Poem on His Birthday,' Thomas refers to 'the hewn coils of his trade...' (ll.26) and in a prose gloss among the manuscripts to the poet being 'a craftsman in words.' In 'Prologue,' he compares his writing to the building of an ark that will protect the creatures of his locality from the coming destruction. Despite perceiving 'song' as 'a burning and crested act,' he produces only 'sawn, splay sounds' (ll.28). William York Tindall comments:

"Sawn, splay sounds," though cut with care, are clumsy and infelicitous--among the "crudities, doubts and confusions," maybe, that Thomas regrets in his prefatory "Note." To display the splay was his unhappy necessity. The parenthetical and happy definition of his poetry as the "burning and crested act" of a firebird, returning in the world's turning wood implies fire to destroy Sodom and the fires of Lawrentian renewal. (Tindall 1996: 23)

Thomas builds 'my bellowing ark/ To the best of my love' (ll.44-45). As in 'Especially when the November wind,' Thomas portrays himself as drunk on his craft and compares himself to Noah:

O kingdom of neighbours, finned
Felled and quilled, flash to my patch
Work ark and the moonshine
Drinking Noah of the bay, (ll.82-84)

William York Tindall notes that 'Thomas, the self-exposing captain of the ark, drinks "moonshine" like Noah, his great original. Not only illicit spirits of the mountains, "moonshine" is also imagination. That Noah Thomas is drunk on both augurs imperfect navigation' (Tindall 1996: 25-26).

The drafts give an insight into the degree to which Thomas doubted his abilities. On a worksheet now in the Houghton Library (Appendix B4: 405), he wrote:

| |
|---|
| <p>These words are my only ark.</p> <p>These words will drown, down, down, To where on the cold sea bed Better words lie in wait Finer & fiercer</p> |
|---|

If words are his 'ark' they should be protective, but Thomas immediately contradicts this image. His fear is that words will 'drown', the ark will sink and be preyed upon by '{Finer & fiercer} words' than he is able to create.

In both final versions of 'Prologue' and 'Poem on his Birthday,' Thomas reaches a positive conclusion where his vessel is joined by others. In 'Prologue': 'Manned with their loves [multitudes of arks] move, / Like wooden islands, hill to hill' (ll.95-96) and the extended ending of 'Poem on his Birthday' concludes:

More spanned with angels ride
The mansouled fiery islands! Oh,
Holier then their eyes
And my shining men no more alone
As I sail out to die. (ll.104-108)

Although 'Poem on his Birthday' and 'Prologue' end on an uplifting note in which the poet actively affirms his positive attitude in the face of inevitable destruction, this positive depiction of the poet protagonist is not seen throughout the poems' development. Indeed, the poet's very struggle with the difficulties of expression seems itself to have generated the ultimate confidence in his vocation that he wishes to assert.

The Manuscripts of 'Prologue'

'Prologue' began as a letter to a friend in America following one of Thomas's speaking tours. A complex development takes place between the letter and the final poem which, as is typical of Thomas's drafting process, involved many pages. There are one hundred and sixty-six pages of 'Prologue' at the Houghton Library, Harvard University. There is a typescript in the John Malcolm Brinnin Collection at the University of Delaware. In the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre at the University of Austin there are two, fair, holograph copies. Working pages of lines seventy-one to seventy-three and ninety, ninety-one and ninety-four form part

of the *British National Manuscript Collection of Contemporary Poets*. The Collection also contains a full draft of the poem with late changes.

The pages at the Houghton Library do not seem to be in reliable chronological order as comic, doggerel versions of the poem are found after versions where the poem has taken on a more serious purpose. Thomas claimed to Oscar Williams on 3rd March 1953, when he sent him the worksheets in the hope that they could be sold to an admirer in America, that 'I've tried to keep sheets in some sort of order, from the very first germ of the poem -- it was going to be a piece of doggerel written to someone in the States on my return from there to Wales, but soon grew involved and eventually serious' (Thomas 1987: 875).

The manuscripts of 'Poem on his Birthday' number more than four hundred pages. After its first publication in *World Review* in 1951, Thomas sold the manuscripts to Esabella Gardner who subsequently donated them to Harvard University. There are also nearly two hundred pages at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre at the University of Texas at Austin. Most of the manuscripts at Harvard are from the first nine stanzas of the poem whereas those at Austin are light revisions to the first eight stanzas, a substantial revision of the ninth, the four additional stanzas and several complete drafts including a typescript with printer's markings (Fosberg 1979: 295-296). Some of Thomas's drafting is in a notebook which is unlike his adolescent notebooks with their fair drafts and revised versions in that it adapts the same approach as his loose pages of drafting. Although the pages are fixed, Thomas does not work systematically but uses the notebook as though it were rough paper.

'Versions': The Growth of 'Prologue'

Different versions of 'Prologue' in the drafts demonstrate vital shifts in the stance of the poet protagonist and changes in the perceived audience of the poem. They also show the importance Thomas placed upon form and his struggle to achieve it. The growth of this poem seems to support the German theories of 'versions'. There is no clear teleological process from the beginning of the poem to its final form, no sense that the poet is simply moving closer to wording a preconceived plan in his/her mind. There are instead many contingent possible poems which emerge in the process. Indeed, analysis of the drafts reveals that there were three distinct phases in the composition of 'Prologue'. The poem began as a piece of comic doggerel addressed to a friend on Thomas's return to Wales after a speaking tour in America. However, in the course of drafting, the poem gained gravity and depth. There is a long transitional phase in which the poet speaker is indolent despite an external threat which endangers his insulated world. It is in this phase that Thomas begins to impose his complicated rhyme scheme where the first line rhymes with the final line until it forms a couplet between the two stanzas. Thomas produces a substantial number of incrementally differing sustained versions in this phase. In these the poet gradually sheds his indifference and sense of impotency. Finally, Thomas moves towards a positive stance in which the poet speaker actively builds his 'bellowing ark' of words (ll.44) in defiance of the 'flood' (ll.46).

Early, doggerel versions

The early, doggerel attempts seem far removed from the final 'Prologue.' However, they are also clearly part of the development of this poem. Thomas told his friend, John Malcolm Brinnin, "'As a matter of fact, the poem began as a letter to you...I just kept the idea and some of the images and went on with the poem instead'" (Brinnin 1956: 103).

In this phase, Thomas is writing to entertain a private audience by creating a self-deprecating, comic portrait of himself as a poet. This is the Thomas of the correspondence and the early adolescent comic poems. He focuses upon his feelings on returning to Wales and writes a spontaneous poem to someone still in America. Ralph Maud notes that: 'Its origin as epistolary verse is discernible in this introductory poem...' and that the 'colloquial short lines' of the early versions 'provided a ready-made pattern when Thomas saw that he could switch from a personal communication to a more formal "prologue" addressed to the readers of the proposed *Collected Poems*' (Maud 2003: 227). However, even these early 'doggerel' poems are carefully crafted.

Three early versions, found in the Houghton Library, depict Thomas as the drunken poet of his American legend. I have selected these three versions from the extensive drafts because they show subtly different modes of expression. The first shows the origin of wording or ideas which survive in more serious form in the final poem. The second playfully alludes to 'wonderland.' The third is Thomas at his crudest, most self-deprecating and sentimental and is particularly flawed.

Although incomplete, the first version is potentially an effective poem in its own right (see B1: 402). It is strongly rooted in Thomas's Welsh background. He projects an exaggerated caricature of himself as drunken poet. He juxtaposes the natural world of Wales with his inebriated state, punning on 'nightjars' (which are both birds and pints):

At home sweet Christ at last
Wet Wales and the nightjars
Memory at half mast
In the barlight of the stars,

This first version follows the rhyme scheme of a Shakespearean sonnet (abab cdcd efef gg) and is divided into quatrains and a final couplet through bracketing. There is also a neat copy of the same text among the worksheets. He seems to have intended to write a series of such sonnets as a further five lines appear under this text. In the lines which appear after the complete sonnet, a wild wordplay between 'spewed' and 'pewed' unites seaside landscape, pub life and Welsh chapel traditions:

The fishwife cross gulls gab,
The pub doors bellow wide,
spewed
Hymn ~~singing~~ eel and dab,

Lurk
Toady in the pewed [illegible] tide

Lurk For the town to flush

The concern with poetic craft elaborated in the final poem is already present in rough form here in this version. His words, he says are roughly cut into shape: 'This rough hacked chunk of / pea green poppycock and love.' This will become in the final version: 'I hack/ This rumpus of shapes' (ll.36-37). The comical 'The pub doors bellow wide' might be the origin of 'I build my bellowing ark/ To the best of my love' (ll.44-45). The origins of the final poem are present in these early lighter versions, but there are vivid turns of expression not found in there. He returns to 'Six months' poems and dishes / Caked in the cracked sink still.' The parallel between the neglect of housework and of writing is effective. As has been seen from 'On No work of Words,' Thomas was frustrated with himself when he had not written for some time.

Thomas states that this is an ephemeral piece which should be read and then destroyed:

Across the doggerel sea
With lurching hand I shove
And, once read, let it sink
Back in the dolphin's drink

This will become one of the serious themes as Thomas enters later phases of drafting. Here, Thomas simply insists that his American correspondent should not bother with it once it is read.

In the second version, Thomas is still insisting on the spontaneity of his poem:

This blue impromptu ink
With a ballpoint I shove
~~Across~~
With poppycock & love
 painted
~~Across the whales' white drink~~
With a ball point I shove

He plays with the assonance of 'u' in 'blue' and 'impromptu' to give the suggestion of something dashed off. Similarly, although the drafts appear to be written in fountain pen, he maintains the idea that they are scribbled quickly by insisting they are written in 'ballpoint.' He is still asserting that the letter is sent 'with poppycock and love', but by writing 'With a ballpoint I shove' rather than 'with lurching hands I shove', he focuses upon the writing process rather than his tremulous hands. This shows a characteristic self-dramatisation.

In this version Thomas's imagination is taken by a new set of allusive images to 'wonderland' and 'the looking glass'. He focuses oddly on the idea of having to read the poem in reflection. This may have sown the seed of the idea of making each stanza a reflection of the other:

For you looking glass to read
 Though no wonderland indeed
 But a plain record of
 Poppycock and love

Characteristically, Thomas experiments with expanding the description of the sea by introducing piled adjectives:

The whales' white drink, the sea
 Between [illegible] you and me
 Green sink, the jumping sea
 The spouting
 hold
 For you to read before
 Your looking glass, all eyes,
 All eyes, your looking glass,

'{~~Spouting~~} sea' may have been suggested in a characteristic transferred epithet by the 'whales.' However, Thomas rejects this in favour of his original, more animated version where the adjective is transferred to the wider element: 'jumping sea'. In line 43 of the final poem, Thomas has, with similar inventiveness: 'From fish to jumping hill!'

This second version ends with a complicated pun. He changes Dutch courage into an adjective, which is echoed in the name of the ship, the S.S. Amsterdam, with a further pun on 'currant' and 'current' for good measure. This is in keeping with his 'wonderland' theme of nonsense:

The Dutch coureagous (sic) booze,

The sapphire current jam,
Atlantic

~~In the The~~ On the SS Amsterdam

This is an inverted boast which suggests that he is aware of his drinking but remains in control. He is using poetry to work through his personal situation.

The third of these manuscript versions offers evidence which suggests a specific recipient. This would help to offer a likely date for the draft. From the deleted line '~~I send, dear Ruth,~~' Ralph Maud believes that this draft was addressed to Thomas's hostess in San Francisco, Ruth Witt-Diamant. This has led Maud to conclude that 'the poem was either begun, or taken up completely afresh, in May 1952, after Thomas's second visit' (Thomas *CP*: 176). In this version Thomas puns extravagantly on his Welshness and his lack of 'Scotch'. He continues to maintain the strong sense that the poem is just dashed off, though there is a note of shamefaced defensiveness about this pose:

At home sweet Christ at last,

Wry, Welsh, & far from Scotch,

My pecker at half mast,
This ~~unamended~~ potch
Of ~~love &~~ poppycock and love

This version has the crudest diction of the three: 'Across the fucking sea.' However, it emphasises that although the poet may be befuddled, 'Out of a backward head / And all the logic cracked', his sentiments are genuine:

For Though the ~~hacked~~ rhymes are hacked
rude

Out of a backward head

And all the logic cracked,

~~black~~ racked

The ~~racked~~ heart is not dead

which

From ~~where~~ the inner sense

~~thin~~ black

Of this tubthump comes

This seems to draw on ideas also found in the first of these versions, where the 'poppycock & love' are 'raw hacked' and the second, which plays with the ideas of reflections, 'a backward head'. In the third version, Thomas seems to be punning on 'inner sense' and 'innocence', and comically portrays his poem as a mere 'tubthump'.

The final lines undermine the gallantry of the previous lines by suggesting that his sentiments lack bite and force. He portrays himself as weak:

[illegible] whole &
The ____heart immense

[illegible]
Though it [illegible] on crumbs

but
And if it had teeth

this time
Would, by ~~now~~, have none

These three early comic versions have similarities, particularly their rough spontaneity and intimate tone. But they also differ in their level of politeness, perhaps because Thomas considered sending the poem to different recipients. In subsequent versions Thomas moves away from his light-hearted stance, re-conceiving the poem on a more serious level. In the next transitional phase, the returned poet protagonist is aware of the threat of death which hangs over his insular world, but is inactive and indifferent.

The Transitional Phase

In the transitional phase of drafting this poem, Thomas generated a large number of subtly differing sustained texts. This section will consider four of them. It is possible to place these in a rough chronology by identifying where specific lines have emerged. As Thomas begins to transform the poem, he abandons direct references to returning home from America such as 'So at home at last' to the more enigmatic allusion to a 'town' or 'city' which is 'Eternal waters away'. This shifts focus on to the location of an anticipated reader, with the possessive 'your' to the more universalised 'From your {the} city {cities} of nine / Days night'. Many

critics have commented on these enigmatic lines. Ralph Maud suggests that '[Thomas's] long reading tour across the North American continent is glanced at in the phrase' (Maud 2003: 228). The manuscripts confirm this interpretation.

In the first of these transitional version, the speaker finds that 'nothing is good' at home. This sets a tone of serious unease absent from the doggerel versions. The speaker is indifferent to the fate of his own soul, '{And nothing I care}/ {For my tangled soul}' and completely passive in the face of threat 'And nothing I do / All the tame time still / Although the wind howls/ ~~Wild~~ From the world's edge'. For Thomas's generation this would have had the connotations of the nuclear wind in the aftermath of an atomic war.

In the version entitled 'Poem', (B2: 403). Thomas expands this group of lines to articulate explicitly his sense that he is already as good as dead despite being in his familiar place, and that his words too are already moribund. In his apathy, he is reconciled to this state:

I find this death good,

There's nothing I care

 jangling
For the tangled soul

And nothing I do

All my tame time still

Though a great mouth howls

From the world beyond

These lumpish words' graves

Thomas has animalised the 'wind' of the previous version into 'a great mouth' and his words are consigned to 'lumpish...graves'. In each case at this phase of drafting the poet protagonist is indifferent.

In the third version, there is a significant shift from being indifferent to his own fate to being indifferent to the wider fate: 'For {For} the common ~~good~~ soul'. Thomas revises '~~All my slumber~~ still' to '{But grow silly &} still', increasing the sense of idiot indolence which he attributes to himself in this version. The threat has moved closer: 'Though a wild mouth howls/ From the hills beyond'.

In the fourth version (B3: 404), Thomas introduces the image of 'any ~~leaping~~ {outrageous} shoal' as the thing to which the speaker is indifferent. This locates the threat in the speaker's immediate locality. He is indifferent to everything beyond his immediate environment:

There's nothing I care

outrageous
For any ~~leaping~~ shoal

Further than a curlew's call

From my bay in the small dusk

And nothing I do

tribes
my own [illegible]
But talk with the ~~small dusk still~~

Though a [illegible] seabeast howls

surge

From the ____ beyond

Using the image of a 'seabeast' is more consistent with indifference to the '{outrageous} shoal,' but it seems more distant and mythic than the threat 'From the hills beyond'.

Thomas has consciously changed his audience for the poem, and it seems that he is beginning to regard it as a potential 'prologue' to his *oeuvre*. This is explicitly explored in a worksheet at the Houghton Library (B4: 405), the wording of which suggests that it is from the same period of drafting as the version above. On this worksheet, Thomas works out to whom to dedicate the poem. There is what may be a list of possibilities, but these are obscured by crossing out. However, it is clear that he settles on 'To J.M.B' (John Malcolm Brinnin). Under his dedication, he lists self-deprecating accusations of 'arrogance,' 'bombast' and 'showing-off.' Thomas mentioned to Brinnin that Caitlin had accused Thomas of wanting to go to America for 'flattery, idleness and infidelity' whereas 'The right words were: appreciation, dramatic work and friends' (Brinnin 1956:154). This may perhaps have suggested Thomas's list.

Thomas carefully dates this page 'Laugharne. June 1952.' with characteristic stress on the place and exact date of the worksheet. John Malcolm Brinnin insists that he saw the poem on his visit to Laugharne in June 1951. However, this is not borne out by the manuscript evidence as the dates which appear on the drafts refer to 1952 including the titles of some of the early doggerel such as 'Letter on Returning to Wales from the United States of America, 1952' (Thomas *CP*: 176). 1952 was the year in which Thomas was preparing his *Collected Poems*.

The worksheet clearly relates to the version above as there are the lines:

There's nothing I care

For ~~the~~ any leaping shoal

Further than a curlew's call

This is also corroborated by the fact that Thomas considers setting the version above in 'June' rather than the original 'sprayed high spring.' At the top of the worksheet is: 'In a slant crabbed hand / On these leaves,' anticipating lines 29 to 32 of the published poem, where we read of 'these sea thumb'd leaves / That will fly and fall / Like leaves of trees and as soon / Crumble and undie.'

The poem is now explicitly one of dignified vocational commitment:

At poor peace I write

~~These rhymes of~~ prologue

These prologue words

Significantly, he then refers to the poem as though it is a dramatic prologue which is being addressed to an audience. At this stage in the drafting he becomes a public poet. The idea which is to become 'strangers' in line 24 of the final poem occurs to him, but does not yet use that term. In the worksheet he has:

These [illegible] curtain raising

To you I don't know

He then trials 'outriding words' or ones which lead the others like the 'bellwether' sheep. Finally on this page, Thomas explores how closely the unknown reader can empathise with him:

To your ears & eyes

[illegible]

Dear [illegible] I do not know,

You [illegible] souled

for a minute

who hold

A breath / the same soul

These words

The 'Dear reader,' convention only brings to his mind the reflection that he does not actually know the readers. He tries to convey that for a short space of time 'a minute' or 'A breath,' his audience should identify completely with the poet. Thomas uses this kind of direct address in *Under Milk Wood* (which he was also writing at this period and which is referred to in some of the transitional versions) in order to induce his audience to identify with the narrative: 'From where you are, you can hear their dreams' (Thomas 1992: 3.) In his prose note to *Collected Poems*, Thomas explained that 'The prologue in verse, written for this collected edition of my poems, is intended as an address to my readers, the strangers' (Thomas 1953: vi).

The Final Phase

In the final phase of drafting, Thomas establishes the stance which is characteristic of his later poems. In the face of destruction, his love of the natural world makes him defiant, 'I build my bellowing ark/ To the best of my love' (ll.44-45). These lines appear in late sustained versions (see B5: 407; B6:408). This echoes Thomas's defiance in 'Poem on his Birthday' where 'He sings towards anguish' (ll.20). In both cases, in the process of drafting these poems, Thomas moves from resigned indifference to active defiance.

In one of the late sustained versions of 'Prologue' in the Houghton Library, Thomas's reaches a formulation of his final concluding statement:

earth sun
 Poor peace as the sun sets
 Never [illegible] than now
 more glorious
 ...
 We shall ride out in a prayer
 Under the stars of Wales,
 And, hail, the multitudes that toss
 And babble on the lost good lands!
 Manned with their loves, the great arks moves,
 Worshipping the flood's wrath.

He strikes a positive note and is beginning to formulate his belief that his ark will be joined by others, in a kind of general salvation. Characteristically, Thomas suggests that the setting sun is '{more glorious}' and of more importance in the face of the coming destruction. Similarly, in 'Poem on his Birthday' Thomas insists: ' That the closer I move/ To death, one man through his sundered hulks,/ The louder the sun bloom/ And the tusked, ramshackling sea exalts' (ll.91-94). In the version of 'Prologue' above, Thomas employs overtly religious language which suggests an acceptance of the flood's destructive forces: 'We shall ride out in a prayer' and 'Worshipping the flood's wrath.' The version in the British Library ends in the same way as the published poem with the wholly affirming: 'My ark sings in the sun/ At God speeded summer's end/ And the flood flowers now' (B6:409).

The strong sense of vocation which Thomas's expresses in his poems is substantiated by the evidence of Thomas's long writing process in the extant manuscripts of 'Prologue.' Thomas's 'ark' of poetry is a painstakingly wrought vessel. William York Tindall comments that: 'Arks, the products of craft, are shaped-- and in his trimmest crafts are glory holes' (Tindall 1996: 26).

Thomas as a Collector of Words

As a child and adolescent, Thomas would pin poems and stories around the parlour (Lycett 2003: 120). It was possible to 'follow the progress of a poem around the room from one storyboard to the next' (Lycett 2003: 26). Andrew Lycett notes 'Dylan liked his poems to be visual, engaging the eye as well as the ear. From an early age he also drew spiky little pictures' to accompany the poems (Lycett 2003:

26). His method of ordering his writing is very physical. As well as experimenting with writing in fragments, Thomas would also try to squeeze entire stories onto the cardboard of flattened boxes. Gwen Watkins recalls that '*The Orchards* ...was written in his minute hand on the inside of the cover of a large cardboard box ...since he found it helped him to see a story in its entirety rather than on successive pages' (Watkins 1983: 27). J.H. Martin, a friend who knew Thomas as a young poet, reports that he kept with him 'a small notebook containing a medley of quite ordinary words' that he would experiment with placing in poems. When unable to find the right word, Thomas 'would sit with his mouth partly open, hoping to pick up a promising word from someone's conversation.' Finally, he would 'open a book at random and experiment with any likely word in the top of each successive page' (Martin 1964: 235). Thomas also compiled an extensive rhyming dictionary which he called his 'Doomsday Book,' in 'a brown paper folder' (Lycett 2003: 120). Thomas was an avid collector of words.

Thomas's mature mode of drafting also shows these kinaesthetic elements. His drafts show innumerable variants and complex lists of rhymes. These are often arranged according to similar endings (as in rhyming dictionaries). Thomas described himself as 'a painstaking, conscientious, involved and devious craftsman in words,' (Fitzgibbon 1965: 371) who believed that:

Every device there is in language is there to be used if you will.

Poets have to enjoy themselves sometimes, and the twistings and convolutions of words, the inventions and contrivances, are all part

of the joy that is part of the painful, voluntary work. (Fitzgibbon 1965: 371)

Describing his poetic technique, Thomas explained:

to whatever wrong uses I may apply my technical paraphernalia, I use everything and anything to make my poems move in the directions I want them to: old tricks, new tricks, puns, portmanteau-words, paradox, allusion, paronomasia, paragram, catachresis, slang, assonantal rhymes, vowel rhymes, sprung rhythm (Fitzgibbon 1965: 371).

It is worth focusing upon this statement in detail. Firstly, it is a rich example of Thomas's long and list-packed prose. Secondly, Thomas selects particularly those linguistic devices that demand great dexterity with language and play on words: 'portmanteau words' are packed with the sense (and sound) of two words; 'paronomasia' plays on words which have the same root or the same sound as each other; 'paragram' changes (usually initial) letters of words; 'catachresis' is an abnormally stretched metaphor. Don McKay concludes: 'In his use of such devices as pun, displaced clichés, transferred epithets and catachresis, we sense a willed grotesquerie in Thomas's craft, a deliberate violation of decorum' (McKay 1986: 377). Thomas also draws attention to his 'assonantal rhymes' and 'vowel rhymes' which give a sophisticated musical quality to the poems. Thomas is interested in the

sound and texture of words as much as their apposite meaning. Caitlin Thomas remarked upon his 'concentrated mutterings, and mumblings, and intonings' as he was writing (Ackerman 1996: 155). He tested lines by ear.

Caitlin remarked also on her husband's 'reams of discarded lists of rhyming words; the innumerable repetitions and revisions' and how, after five hours' work, he would 'present me proudly with two, or three fiercely belaboured lines' (Ackerman 1996: 155). This mode of composition involved far more close work on sections, individual lines and words than either D.H. Lawrence or Philip Larkin. It is noticeable how extensively Thomas varies his adjectives and verbs or hunts for nouns which shift the imaginative effect of a line. Yet in many cases, it is not possible to detect from the published poem that Thomas has lavished attention on rewriting lines. Having looked at the way Thomas trials individual lines in his manuscripts, John Ackerman has commented that 'The original version tends to differ from the final one in terms of stylistic expression, rather than theme' (Ackerman 1996: 154). Thomas imposes order upon his process which otherwise might involve an infinite possibility of variations by using tight poetic structures.

While it is possible to look at all the extant manuscripts of a poem by D.H. Lawrence and to follow the linear progress of a poem by Philip Larkin, Thomas's methods of writing produced 'innumerable sheets.' The manuscripts of 'Poem on his Birthday' and 'Prologue' demonstrate that Thomas's created sundry intermediary versions, sometimes with quite different emphasis from each other, in order to maintain control over his compositional practice. There are also a

multiplicity of worksheets on which Thomas works intensively on lines or groups of lines. He has an intensive approach to his craft.

It will be useful to focus on three characteristic practices

- i) Firstly, he continually generates synonyms and alternative formulations of lines, often through the use of thesauruses or reference books.
- ii) Secondly, he attempts to impose a cohesive rhyme scheme, sometimes by the mechanical method of making rhyme lists and establishing syllabics. It is Thomas's extensive use of these techniques of listing which makes his writing practice distinctive.
- iii) Thirdly, Thomas brings his scattered drafts into several intermediate versions, often differing markedly from each other, which finally yield the 'final' poem.

i) *Thesaurus Lists and Reference Books*

The most striking illustration of Thomas's distinctive approach to words is his habit of writing numbers and lists of words in the margins of his manuscripts. David Holbrook explains that 'The lists in fact are from Roget's [*Thesaurus*], and others are perhaps from Brewer's *Art of Versification* or some other technical guide' (Holbrook 1972: 127). Holbrook complains that these provide 'frozen metaphor' as 'What we can find in Roget...because he lists so many near-synonyms, is a source of words which are "unusual" --though lacking the unusualness which is impelled by a need to express some fresh aspect of experience' (Holbrook 1972: 129).

Holbrook insists: 'Thus a proportion of the associations, and maybe a significantly large proportion, are not from Thomas's inner response to words, but from Roget's associations' (Holbrook 1972: 129). Dan Jones expresses a similar disappointed reaction, noting that his discovery of this after Thomas's death made him 'modify to some extent the opinion [he] was inclined to hold about the relative importance Dylan gave to word-meaning' (Jones 1977: 70-71). It is easy to see how negative critical deductions can be drawn from this element in Thomas's drafting practice. However, Thomas demonstrates his commitment to craft through an interest in proliferating the exhaustive juxtaposing of words for their musical effect.

David Holbrook discusses at some length one of the sustained manuscript versions of 'Poem on his Birthday' on which Thomas has made extensive lists for these lines and noted thesaurus numbers. He looks up these references to establish what Thomas has taken from *Roget's Thesaurus* (Holbrook 1972: 128-129). Holbrook concludes that: 'A creative writer would surely rather use Roget to know what to avoid, than to find something more personal, more relevant, more *exact*?' (Holbrook 1972: 128). His objection to Thomas's use of a thesaurus is that it involves the use of synonyms when 'one would expect closer attention to meaning, trials of the shape of a line, rewriting in the struggle with words and with meaning' (Holbrook 1972: 127).

However, Thomas takes pleasure in exploring language to stimulate his compositional practice. The process and the imaginative journey are as important to Thomas as the final published poem. One of the greatest joys of having access to Thomas's manuscripts is to share the poet's excitement in stretching the possible

and infinitely rich formulations of lines. One may be reminded of Hans Zeller's remark that 'a text is something to be created from the semantic inventory of language' and for the writer 'synonyms exist ...in the broadest sense of the word' (Zeller 1975: 241). The polymorphous nature of Thomas's practice are heard in the recording of Thomas's unfinished 'In Country Heaven' in which a number of different voices speak variants of lines from manuscript sources, creating a sense of Thomas's exploration of imagery and sound.

Notable in 'Poem on His Birthday,' is the way in which Thomas seeks for alternative words:

Through wynds and shells of drowned
Ship towns to pastures of otters. He (ll.23-24)

These lines vary between the first printing in *World Review* and that in *Collected Poems*. In the former, they appear as:

Through the lull of the drowned
Lanes to the pastures of otters. He (Thomas 1951: 66-67)

What does Thomas actually achieve by making such alternative formulations? He is creating a rich inventory of alternatives, a proportion of which are drawn from an external source. It is the aesthetic sensibility that Thomas applies to making his selections that requires the craftsmanship. In formulating his lines Thomas sets

himself a technical challenge in the same way as he does when imposing upon himself a particularly challenging poetic form.

Holbrook's analysis focuses on Thomas's three draft attempts at what were to become lines 23-24 (B7: 410). The first is:

 wynds
Through the ~~wynds~~ of the drowned
Towns to the ~~island~~ of otters. He
 pastures

Holbrook suggests that Thomas rejects wynd as '[h]e is, perhaps, trying to avoid it as an archaic word' (Holbrook 1972: 128). Yet in all his attempts on this page Thomas is playing with sound in a highly characteristic way: 'wynds' has verbal echoes with 'islands.' Similarly, Thomas plays with echoes in 'linns' and 'hills' in the formulation that appears in the left hand margin lower on the page:

 The linns of the long
 drowned
Hills to the pastures
/ of otters.

Finally, at the bottom of the page, Thomas plays with the image by offering 'streets' and 'doors' as alternatives for 'lanes':

~~streets~~
Through the lanes of the drowned
Sea towns to pastures of otters. He
doors

Holbrook asks:

What makes the difference [between versions of the lines]? If there is a difference it should perhaps be found in the inevitability of words which press their claims for relevance, to be selected for reasons of poetical economy from a mood. What I mean here by *mood* is the unifying dynamic of inner Symbolism associated with a particular life-problem, or life-rhythms. Has this poem such unity of symbolic energy? (Holbrook 1972: 129-130).

He feels that Thomas's changes are not driven by 'inner necessity' (Holbrook 1972: 130). Whereas Holbrook sees the essence of poetry as distillation to a single meaning, Thomas regards each line as an opportunity to explode language in order to reassemble or transfigure both written expression and image.

Through lists Thomas is able to test out an even greater variety of possible formulations without as much laborious repetition. It is revealing to try some of the words in the context of Thomas's lines to try to experience some of the poet's possible mental processes. For example, from the lists which appear on the extended draft which Holbrook reproduces it is possible to try out lines that

Thomas never wrote in full. The words from Thomas's list are indicated by bold italics. For example, he could have made:

Through the *scallops* of the drowned

Sands to the *islands* of otters. He

or:

Through the *gardens* of the drowned

Acres to the *muzzles* of otters. He

He is striving to convey the underwater world in which the 'small fishes glide' to the 'otters' that will eat them (ll.22-24), but his word choices create images with differing visual effects. Thomas focuses on the significant nouns of location within his larger scheme of animals moving unconsciously to their deaths. He has no fixed concept of the seabed which he is describing.

On another of the drafts pages of 'Poem on his Birthday' now in the Houghton Library (B8: 411) Thomas plays with the idea of nature drowned and sterile, flitting between images of submerged or drowned deserts, countryside and towns. He systematically lists alternatives. For example, '~~Through the combs of the drowned/~~ Counties' as opposed to '~~Through deserts, dark & drowned.~~' Throughout the recursive process, which moves from 'glass' through 'deserts' to 'stones,' he maintains the preposition 'Through' at the beginning of the line. Thomas experiments with single nouns and two nouns, which is one of the differences between the two published versions. In his list he does not strike out 'Through the

lanes of the drowned/ ~~Sea~~ Towns.' This suggests it represents a preferred version. At the bottom of the page, Thomas moves close to the structure of the lines in the second published version:

;small fishes glide
wynds
Through quays & sails of drowned
Ship
Sea towns to pastures of otters.

His choice for the second published version is 'wynds and shells', 'shells' suggesting both a drowned and abandoned town and something from the sea, whereas 'quays & sails' evoke only a 'Sea town'.

On one of the worksheets in the Houghton Library (B9: 412), Thomas makes a diverse list of different kinds of places and notes numerous *Roget's* references, including '344: plain' and '371: the economy or management of plants'. Thomas picks out from the thesaurus' listings 'pasturage' and 'orchard'. 'Orchard' is one of the favourite stock words in Thomas's lexicon. When a poet is searching for a word to fit a particular line, one might expect a list where the words have a similar meaning. Thomas's approach generates more diverse words. There are ones which relate specifically to a sea town setting such as 'Harbours', 'Wharves' (which is one of the words which he ticks) and 'Docks'. Others relate to tenement buildings or narrow streets: 'Tenements', 'Alleys', 'Cellars' and 'Wynds'. Others evoke the homes of animals: 'Lairs' and 'Dens.' Characteristically Thomas experiments with a number of possibilities at once.

This is just one example of the way in which Thomas can become fixated with exploring a verbal strand through a particular group of lines. Thomas's process is so laborious because of the way in which he immerses himself in the exploration of language. This attitude to words requires utter dedication and the dexterity to manipulate sound so that the finished poem flows effortlessly despite the work that has been put into its creation.

Thomas was fascinated by details which might not necessarily find their way into the poem. In the drafts of 'Poem on his Birthday' Thomas lists creatures which feed upon each other. He notes:

mackrel (sic) feed on the young of other fish whales (?) feed on the
floating life of the sea, plankton then TUNNY feed on them

He has clearly spent some time looking up different types of fish and shark. He lists them as well as unusual fish names such as: 'Rorqual = Blue Fish {Whale}'; 'labyrinth fish (see lungfish)'; 'Devil Fish or Manta' and 'angler fish is luminous & black.'

In 'Prologue,' Thomas makes notes under the title 'Ark.' These are:

built of Gopher wood. Or cedar. Or cypress

Ark was built in Chalden, near Babylon.

Computed to be ½ acre. 81062 tons.

3 stories. Lowest for beasts, middle for food, top for Birds & Noah.

As when he works with *Roget's Thesaurus*, he uses external sources to stimulate his composition. It is characteristic of Thomas's practice to look for authority or inspiration in published sources. Thomas seems to be hoping to find something that will trigger his ideas in the same way as he would open books at random to get a word from which to begin a poem.

ii) Rhyme Scheme and Form

Thomas is remarkable for the deliberation with which he sought to impose complex structures and rhyme patterns on his poems. 'Poem on his Birthday' is unified by internal rhyme and assonance. For example in stanza one, the 'ea' in 'sea' (ll. 2) is echoed in 'beaks' (ll.4) and 'a' in 'grave' (ll. 6) with 'age' (ll.8). The complexity of his sound blends are reflected in his lists that appear in the drafts.

In a letter to E. F. Bozman of 28th June 1952, Thomas explained the absorbing and time consuming process of writing 'Prologue':

I began to write a prologue in verse, which has taken the *devil* of a time to finish...I set myself, foolishly perhaps, a most difficult technical task: The Prologue is in two verses... And the second rhymes *backward* with the first...Why I acrosticked myself like this, don't ask me. (Thomas 1983: 838)

William York Tindall comments that 'Verbal displacements increase the fun. Internal sounds, especially alliteration (e.g. Lines 34-36), atone for the displacement of rhyme' (Tindall 1996: 22) and 'What he was after here was not a shape of sounds but a shape for the idea of shape, something to suit creation, his theme... He calls the results of his serious play "a rumpus of shapes"' (Tindall 1996: 21-22). The length of 'Prologue,' one hundred and two lines in two stanzas of fifty-one lines, makes this an astonishing feat. The final line of the first stanza forms a couplet with the first line of the second stanza. He rhymes to this central point, making the first line rhyme with the final line of the poem until they meet in the centre. This pattern was illustrated in the early editions of *Collected Poems* by numbering the equivalent lines. The ambitious scheme shows Thomas's meticulous craftsmanship and, characteristically, his need to discipline his writing within a strict formal framework. Derek Stanford has remarked:

The forethought and dexterity of this plan, of what D.G. Rossetti termed "fundamental brain-work", are obvious. And no less excellent is the passing care with which each line of the poem is written. (Stanford 1964: 142)

The evidence of the published 'Prologue' suggests the attention Thomas lavished on the poem. As it increased in length, Thomas twice resorted to denoting his scheme by means of letters against lines.

In the drafts of 'Poem on his Birthday' Thomas creates complex rhyme lists which play with initial and internal sounds as well as rhymes. For example:

bowed
boughs
bound
brown
browse
brow
cowl
cowed
down
foul
growl
hound

'Bound' and 'hound', 'brown' and 'down' and 'cowl' and 'growl' are full rhymes. The rest play on letter blends: 'bow ', 'cow ', 'brow ', 'row' and 'ou'.

In 'Prologue,' Thomas establishes his complex rhyme scheme as the poem assumes a more serious purpose. The idea of writing a poem which rhymes to the centre emerges during the transitional phase of drafting. In one of the earlier transitional versions, Thomas notes the rhyme scheme by putting letters by the lines. He may have intended to switch around lines 'i' and 'h' in the first section as

can be seen from his lettering of these lines. Yet, despite meticulously maintaining his rhyme scheme Thomas slips when revising lines 7 and 8 and their rhyming lines 17 and 18 which he interlines the wrong way around. Lines 7 and 8 are 'And nothing I care / For my tangled soul.' He changes line 17 'Of ~~hare, mole and dove~~' (which would have rhymed with the original line 7 'And ~~all full of love~~') to 'Of {scarecrow & hare}' He adds line 18 'Pigeon, ~~Badger~~, preacher & mole' which rhymes with line 8. In subsequent versions, he has corrected this reversal. Similarly, he crosses out 'Tally in the wood' which leaves him with no rhyme for 'Where nothing is good' and in later versions he tries 'Haloo in Milk wood'. Thomas does not have his final central rhyme, but creates a couplet with 'Wild From the world's edge/ Hoo in the spring hedge.' However, by the version entitled 'Poem' (B2: 403) Thomas has established the central rhyme of the 'farms' and 'To Wales in my arms.' In this version, Thomas employs his rhyme of 'last' and 'mast' from the comic versions as the beginning and ending of the poem 'home at last' and 'With the sun at half mast.' When Thomas expands later versions he has to add lines to the second section.

Elsewhere in the drafts, Thomas projects the ultimate length of the poem. First he has '40 lines a verse' then '44 lines.' He works out that if he has two stanzas of 88 lines, he will have 176 lines in all. He even projects the more ambitious '160 lines a verse'. Thomas seems to need a sense of the poem's overall scheme in order to complete it. Ultimately, the final poem is two stanzas of fifty-one lines.

This sophisticated control of an extended rhyme scheme is only achieved with some effort. In one of the versions from a late phase of drafting of 'Prologue' (B5:

406-407), he tries lettering the first twenty-six lines A to Z. At line 27 he again letters lines A to Z. At the centre of the poem, he revises his lettering in order to make this system work:

A To the best of my love

B As the flood begins

C (Out of the fountainhead

D Of fear, rage red, manalive)

E Molten and mountainous to stream

F Over the wound asleep

G Sheep white cresting farms

G To Wales in my arms

F Hoo, there, in castle keep

E You king singsong owls, who moonbeam

D The flickering runs and dives

C Their dingle furred deer dead!

B Huloo on plumbed bryns,

A O my ruffled ring dove.

In the late sustained version in the British Library (B6: 408-409), Thomas has two pages with a stanza on each. This layout may have made it easier to check the pattern in this final stage of revision. The final revision to line 7 might have

been dictated by the revision to line 96. He alters 'Froth, flute, ~~brushwood and branch~~' to 'fin and quill' and '~~Animal islands haunch to haunch~~' to 'Like wooden islands, hill to hill.' 'Branch' rhymed with 'haunch' whereas 'quill' rhymes with 'hill.' Maintaining such a complex scheme requires close attention to detail. Thomas is imposing this on himself as it has little impact on the reader until it is pointed out.

iii) Intermediate Versions

Having created lines on a working sheet, Thomas would often incorporate them into a sustained version. There are traceable relationships between his rough pages and the large number of neater, sustained versions which Thomas generates. The early versions grow incrementally in length. The number of sustained versions which Dylan Thomas produces varies with the needs of a given poem. There are, for instance, at least seventeen versions of 'Poem on his Birthday'. Fourteen of these are in the papers at the Houghton Library and the rest at Austin. Thomas also uses a printed copy of the version published in *World Review* as a base text onto which to add the neat, holograph revisions of his extended text.

In 'Prologue', Thomas's writing falls, as we have seen, into three distinct phases, beginning as comic doggerel addressed to someone in the United States, and progressing through a transitional phase where the poem becomes more serious, with the gravity of an artist's manifesto. In the final stage the poet- speaker becomes a Noah-like figure whose ark of poetry braves the flood of man-made destruction and is joined by others. In the Houghton manuscripts, there are five or

six sustained doggerel versions from the first stage of composition. There are nineteen versions that appear to be from the transitional phase. Finally, there are thirteen sustained versions from a late phase of drafting, and a version with final revisions is in the British Library. In addition there are three neat versions and a typescript at Austin.

One of Thomas's methods was to bring sections to a useable state and then draw lines on either side and tick them to indicate that they were ready for inclusion in an intermediate version. In a late phase of 'Prologue,' Thomas makes a neat copy of the first fourteen lines but then continues to work on lines 6 and 7 and line 12. Having used the lower part of the page for his workings, he writes out the final version of lines 6 and 7 under the fourteen lines. 'Prologue' is remarkable for the number of attempts Thomas makes at the opening lines in the late stages of drafting which he converts into worksheets because he is still unhappy with lines 6 to 8. On this page, he indicates that they are ready to be transferred into an intermediate version:

PROLOGUE

This day winding down now
At God speeded summer's end
In the torrent salmon sun,
In my seashaken house
On a breakneck of rocks

| | | |
|-------|---------------------------------------|--|
| | Tangled with chirrup and fruit, | |
| | flute | |
| Froth | Flute, foam, fin and quill | |
| | At a wood's dancing hoof, | |
| | By scummed, starfish sands | |
| | With their fishwife cross | |
| | Gulls, pipers, cockles and sails | |
| | birdlike lonely | |
| | Out there, yonder, men | |
| | Tackled with clouds, who kneel | |
| | To the sunset nets, | |



Out , there, tiny, men

| | | | |
|---|--|------------------------------|--|
| ✓ | | Tangled with chirrup & fruit | |
| | | {illegible} | |
| | | Froth, flute, fin, & quill | |
| | | At a wood's dancing hoof | |

Thomas's drafting seems to have been more intensive and prolific than that of any other poet of the century.

It is the intensity of Dylan Thomas's compositional practice and his compulsion to hone each line that gives his mature poems such as 'Poem on his Birthday' and 'Prologue' their exhilarating sense of readerly pleasure. Thomas takes to a heightened level his poet's fascination with words as infinitely engaging sensuous objects. In Thomas's writing, the pains he takes with the selection of every

adjective, noun and verb give a literary density to his writing. However, by the same token Thomas's obscurity and the sense that, although it is possible to feel the mood of the poem, individual lines defy a reductive prose gloss is in part also a result of his method of composition. Having identified the peculiarities, the next chapter will attempt to offer a plausible explanation for this highly creative and experimental mode of writing.

Chapter 6

Poetry, Dyslexia and Stringing the 'Bait': Dylan

Thomas

Dyslexia

It is the contention of this chapter that Thomas's methods of composition show characteristics consistent with an identification of mild dyslexia. Although Dylan Thomas does not appear to have manifested any major difficulties in learning to read, his highly visual and sensual approach to language and specific challenges with writing organisation might suggest such a diagnosis. This will be explored by highlighting some of the enigmas of Thomas's writing methods and personality which have puzzled his contemporaries and commentators. The creation of poetry, after all, frequently depends on a subversion of the conventional functional use of words, one of the salient symptoms of dyslexia. We need to be careful here with definitions. In *In the Mind's Eye*, Thomas G. West writes:

We may hesitate to apply the term "dyslexic"...to someone with only two or three [dyslexic] traits, especially if they are present only in mild form. Yet these same traits may be tremendously important to a given individual case when they contribute in a significant way,

positively or negatively, to a person's major abilities or accomplishments. (West 1997: 131)

I would argue that it is what may be termed the mildly dyslexic elements of Thomas's compositional methods which give his poetry its characteristic qualities. Thomas was highly intelligent and gifted. Intelligent people with dyslexia can compensate for any negative aspects and capitalize on non-conventional thinking to stimulate creativity. Throughout his career, Thomas reiterated that for him writing was not a rapid or easy process, but one which demanded time and intense dedication. He explained to Pamela Hansford Johnson that:

My facility...is, in reality, tremendously hard work. I write at the speed of two lines an hour. I have written hundreds of poems, & each one has taken me a great many painful, brain-racking & sweaty hours. (Thomas 1987: 51)

The composition of individual poems posed different challenges. This chapter will offer a general discussion of the issue of dyslexia, and then conclude with an analysis of Thomas's extensive manuscripts for 'The Ballad of the Long-legged Bait'. The poem is one of Thomas's most 'difficult' and original works and one whose narrative organisation has baffled critics. It offers, as we shall see, a test case for the idea of dyslexia in Thomas's work.

Thomas's drafting behaviour seems to go beyond meticulous craft. The approaches Thomas employed to order his writing show his awareness of the

challenge of writing organisation. One characteristic of dyslexia is that 'writing is a slow process and may involve many drafts if despair doesn't set in first' (<http://www.dyslexia-uk.org/ChildCharct.html>). A major reason for redrafting is to gain organizational control over the material. Obsessive copying out is characteristic of intelligent dyslexics. Thomas was prepared to devote substantial periods of time to the gradual development of his poems, both in terms of redrafting and copying out after minor changes. Aaron, Philips and Larsen have identified this exaggerated tendency to learn through extensive trial and error as characteristic of a dyslexic way of thinking (Aaron et al 1998: 538). Arguably, Thomas's obsessive and highly experimental approach to his poetic lines, illustrated in the last chapter, contribute to the case for identifying his as a dyslexic approach to composition. Many of his contemporaries have commented on the exhaustive way Thomas experimented with rearranging and revising phrases and syntax. Lawrence Durrell recalls 'I saw one phrase which filled a whole exercise book [of Thomas's], repeated over and over again in different ways' (Durrell 1961: 38). Similarly, Vernon Watkins notes that Thomas 'used separate work-sheets for individual lines, sometimes a page or two being devoted to a single line, while the poem was gradually built up phrase by phrase' (Thomas 1951: 17).

In their study of dyslexic traits in T. A. Edison, Aaron, Larsen and Philips note that '[Edison] thought in a visual and tactile way with the aid of little drawings, sketches and models' and Edison's method 'was visuo-spatial and gestalt rather than analytic and linear' (Aaron et al 1998: 528). As we have seen this is also a characteristic of Thomas's writing. Mo Kiziewicz points out a tendency

among dyslexics to enjoy the physical act of writing and to make concrete the act of reordering ideas. She explains that:

Dyslexic people often enjoy the physicality of writing and will have many drafts which are written on and pasted up and physically sculpted before reaching the final work. (Kiziewicz 2007: 97)

Thomas's conception of 'Ballad of the Long-legged Bait' was typically visual and sensory. Particular visual images were predominant. Watkins recalled that:

The poem is full of visual imagery. It was so much a visual poem that [Thomas] made a coloured picture for it which he pinned on the wall of his room, a picture of a woman lying at the bottom of the sea. (Watkins 1983: 91)

A strong visual-spatial sense is often characteristic of dyslexia. The Dyslexia Arts Trust notes that 'It can even be an advantage to poets and prose-writers because they too need to draw on visual and sensual awareness in order to produce their best work' (<http://www.rmplc.co.uk/orgs/nellalex/Dysabout.html>). Throughout his life, Thomas had a multi-sensory approach to writing. He created an image that he kept as a reminder. This shows intermodality (expressing an idea in one form before translating it into another). It is related to Thomas's need to pin illustrated parts of his poems around the parlour when he was a child and adolescent.

Thomas's writing process suggests a variation on possible dyslexic characteristics. Significantly, in 'Prologue' and 'Poem on His Birthday,' Thomas works from concrete images and triggers complex chains of ideas and associations by using Roget's *Thesaurus*. This suggests a highly associative mode of thinking, a trait found in dyslexics which could be of real advantage to a poet.

An identification of mild dyslexia would explain one of the most consistently used adjective employed to describe Thomas's personal traits: 'innocence.' Despite all his escapades and excesses, Thomas retained a child-like quality that endeared him to those who knew him. He could also be selfish and frustrating in his demands for others to help him organise and orchestrate his everyday life. Dan Jones, who had been a friend of Thomas since childhood, has suggested that Thomas often exaggerated his drunkenness and his clowning because essentially he was quite shy and did not know how to react in uncomfortable situations. Yet, this shyness was coupled with the tendency to become utterly absorbed in the conversation of other people. A characteristic of dyslexia is this kind of paradox. Dyslexics can show frequent 'poor judgement in social and interpersonal situations' and 'Behaviour often inappropriate for situation, and consequences apparently not foreseen' but also are 'very sensitive to others' (West 1997: 283).

Research suggests that dyslexics take longer to lose child-like qualities because they do not switch to left, hemisphere dominance but have greater right hemisphere or equal dominance. Thomas G. West explains that:

It is often observed that one essential characteristic of creativity is a "childlike" view of the world, full of freshness and flexibility... [some children] grow using both sides of their brain or mature with a greater facility with the right hemisphere than is usual. This may lead to some degree of confusion, ambivalence, and awkwardness, but the intellectual resources may be profoundly richer thereby. (West 1997: 24)

Thomas maintained an experimental attitude to language. Despite being a lively and intelligent child, he did not excel at school and seems to have found it difficult to concentrate consistently. He often truanted to write his poetry. Although excelling in English, Thomas acknowledged that he was not a good student. In a talk before a poetry reading, Thomas explained:

You know the kind of mock self-deprecating writers who always boast they were boobs at school; that their place in the form was always black-marked bottom...I must say I was awful. Whether this was because of stupidity or arrogance I am still not asking myself. (Fitzgibbon 1965: 44)

Dyslexics often find school difficult but can excel in some subjects, even English literature, whilst not in others (Peer and Reid 2005: 12-13). Despite once gaining

'98% in the Central Welsh Board examination for English...[Thomas] failed everything else' (Fryer 1993: 31-32). He avoided examinations in other subjects:

It became a standing joke in the staff-room at Swansea Grammar that whenever examination time came round, Dylan would be ill and away from school. (Fryer 1993: 31)

Suzanne Roussillat notes that:

The young Dylan... disconcerted his school-fellows by steadily remaining at the bottom of the class, though the son of the English master. He was a bad and weak pupil in every subject, but English, where he was exceptionally brilliant. (Roussillat 1961: 3-4).

However, although Thomas was talented in English Literature, even as an adult he had difficulty ordering his thoughts. When commissioned to write essays on established poets, he would ask Vernon Watkins to help him identify the key points because he had too many ideas and could not distil these easily himself. He confided in Watkins that 'Harvard University wrote to ask me for something for their special magazine in honour of Eliot--just a paragraph or two...I've a heap of notes, none of which seem really satisfactory' and asks Watkins for 'Just a few comments or notes' (Thomas 1957: 42- 43).

Hyperactivity and going off at tangents or becoming distracted is often a sign of dyslexic tendencies. There is a striking anomaly in disposition between Thomas's ability to concentrate single-mindedly on his poetic vocation and his tendency to become easily distracted in conversation. Rousillant remarks upon Thomas's behaviour during her interview with him:

He forgot to answer questions. He interrupted himself to ...scribble on a scrap of paper strange drawing or upside-down angels with devil hooves...Then conscious that the interview must be unusual for somebody coming from a world of conventions, he concluded and repeated again and again, "You must be disappointed, I am an awful man". (Rousillant 1961: 11)

However, her judgment is more tolerant than the poet's self-condemnation:

An awful man? No, but an exuberant personality, full of zest, with an insatiable appetite for life and its pleasures; and an artist, whose first gift was enjoyment, an unbridled enjoyment of the abundance and luxuriant richness of life. (Rousillant 1961: 11)

There is a widespread misunderstanding that the dyslexic person will struggle so much with reading that he/she will not read. Thomas's father read to him constantly (Fitzgibbon 1965: 36) providing a strong role model and supporting

his learning. This reinforcement from his intellectually dominant parent was significant. Thomas's latent difficulties did not manifest themselves in obvious ways partly because he had a background particularly conducive to overcoming dyslexia. His father was an English master at Swansea Grammar School and encouraged Thomas's love of English literature and writing poetry. His father read Shakespeare to him from a very early age. Thomas's initial engagement with language was sensory and he speaks not only of 'the sound' but of 'the colours the words cast on my eyes.' He recalls that:

The first poems I knew were nursery rhymes, and before I could read them for myself I had come to love just the words of them, the words alone. What the words stood for, symbolized or meant, was of very secondary importance...I cared for the shapes of sound that their names, and the words describing their actions, made in my ears; I cared for the colours the words cast on my eyes. (Fitzgibbon 1965: 367)

Thomas was encouraged to read whatever appealed to him:

It was when I was very young, and just at school, that, in my father's study, before homework that was never done, I began to know one kind of writing from another...My first and greatest, liberty was that I was able to read everything and anything I cared to. I read

indiscriminately, and with my eyes hanging out. (Fitzgibbon 1965: 368-369)

Thomas G. West insists that 'Dyslexics do not necessarily avoid reading' and can be 'as interested as anyone in the content of books.' As with any other reader, 'much depends upon their level of curiosity, their intelligence, and their range of interests' (West 1997: 58). Dan Jones noticed that Thomas's reading was confined to what most interested him. He concluded that 'Dylan's reading was intensive, rather than extensive' (Jones 1977: 68).

Research at University College London is exploring the link between poor sense of rhythm and dyslexia (http://www.ich.ucl.ac.uk/pressrelease/pressrelease_0046). Despite his devotion to poetry and the intensity with which he worked on his art, Thomas, like W.B. Yeats, lacked a natural sense of regular musical rhythm. Thomas's use of syllabics as a way of ridding himself of his 'policeman rhythms' (Thomas 1987: 189) also reveals that he perhaps did not have a natural sense of conventional, musical rhythm. Dan Jones believes that '[Thomas] never established in his mind the obvious connection between word-stress and musical accent' (Jones 1977: 67). He tells of how Thomas and he decided to enter a competition for a poem to the tune of the *Londonderry Air*. Thomas asked Jones how many syllables the line contained, as 'with much finger counting,' he produced his line. Jones explains:

When I saw his line, a thousand times better than mine, I was aghast. There were ten syllables all right, but only three stresses. "Look here, you can't sing the tune to that." "Why not? It has ten syllables, hasn't it?" ...It was impossible to explain to Dylan why it does not follow that a phrase of music requiring ten syllables cannot be sung to *any* ten syllable line. (Jones 1977: 67)

Thomas did return to 'accentual metre, for parody, satire, or occasional verse,' (Jones 1977: 67) but in his serious poetry, he used syllabics and tested every line by ear. This lack of innate rhythm is perhaps striking in such a conscientious craftsman. Unlike Lawrence, who abandoned early attempts at metre for the free-verse line, Thomas imposed upon himself highly disciplined and complex patterns, but ones not based on regular musical rhythm.

Obscurity

Thomas was always highly perceptive about the processes of his own writing. He recognised that his early poetry had the faults of 'frequent muddleheadedness,' 'rhythmic monotony' and 'overweighted imagery that leads too often to incoherence.' He defends himself against an accusation of 'surrealism' because 'every line *is* meant to be understood; the reader *is* meant to understand every poem by thinking and feeling about it' (Thomas 1987: 205). In an early letter to Pamela Hansford Johnson, Thomas explains that: 'the images are *not* mixed; they are severely physical all through; what gave you the impression of "mixedness"

was the conscious rapidity with which I changed the angles of the images...the poem (if you'll still allow me to call it that) is certainly not *mixed* in any way at all; it is on one level and one note, with one idea and one image, changed and transfigured as that image may be' (Thomas 1987: 77). Thomas is thinking associatively in a series of metaphysical images with a constantly shifting centre and point of view.

Thomas's 'obscurity' was frequently the result of intensive working with the words of a poem. He famously complained to Vernon Watkins in 1936:

I seem, more than ever, to be tightly packing away everything I have and know into a mad-doctor's bag, and then locking it up: all you can see is the bag, all you know is that it's full to the clasp, all you have to trust is that the invisible and intangible things packed away -- if they *could* only be seen and touched -- worth quite a lot (Thomas 1987: 223).

He criticises his own tendency to condense his poetry until its meaning becomes difficult to unpack. Yet he insists that his poetry has real substance and value. Further, Thomas expresses frustration at the sheer concentration of his poetry:

I'm almost afraid of all the once-necessary artifices and obscurities, and can't, for the life or death of me, get any real liberation, any diffusion or dilution or anything, into the churning bulk of words.
(Thomas 1987: 223)

David Holbrook cites this statement in a critique of Thomas's poetic practice and its results:

The implication here is that Thomas's poetry *ought* to be full of meaning, if only he were capable of organising his utterance... What is so extraordinary is the extent to which readers and critics have been prepared to take "the mad-doctor's bag" on trust. (Holbrook 1972: 124).

He is highly critical of Thomas's compositional practice, noting 'when we examine Thomas's process of composition it is remarkable how much is done from the outside merely mechanically' (Holbrook 1972:127). His analysis leads him to offer a 'schizoid diagnosis'; 'Dylan Thomas ...at times ...seems to deliberately to have sought to create and preserve chaos in his work' (Holbrook 1972: 2, 6). However, an identification of dyslexia offers a more concrete explanation for Thomas's mode of composition and his image packed poetry.

Given the intensity of his compositional practice, Thomas was offended when he was accused of lacking 'control' over his poetry. In a letter to Henry Treece, he refuted Stephen Spender's accusation that 'Thomas's poetry is turned on like a tap; its just poetic stuff with no beginning nor end, shape, or intelligent and intelligible control' (Thomas 1987: 297). Sustaining the metaphor, Thomas declared that his poetry is rather 'watertight compartments,' arguing that 'much of the obscurity' of his poems is, in fact, the result of highly wrought craftsmanship

which leads to 'rigorous compression' and that 'the last thing they do is flow.' They are 'much rather hewn' (Thomas 1987: 298).

Writing was never an easy process for Thomas. It was a craft. Stephen Spender's accusation that his poetry lacks 'control' has chimes with much of the criticism levelled against Thomas' 'obscurity.' However, Thomas's poetry was the result of intensive work and if anything a bent towards overworking and distilling his ideas and images. Individual words and their sounds assumed huge importance for Thomas. Such intensity of approach and a tendency to use extremely compact images is characteristic of dyslexic writing.

Louis MacNeice praises Thomas's freshness and his 'craftmanship', observing: 'many of his poems are obscure but it is never the obscurity of carelessness; though I, for one, assumed it might be when I first read his early work in the 1930s' (MacNeice 1961: 85). MacNeice concludes that:

One glance at a Thomas manuscript will show the almost incredible trouble he took over those elaborate arabesques that could yet emerge as fresh as any ...expected from the born lyric poet.
(MacNeice 1961: 86)

He went on to point out the fact that although Thomas '*was* a born lyric poet... it was a birthright he worked hard to secure' (MacNeice 1961: 86). Thomas's poetry was the result of craft and not an unproblematic lyric fluency. Many poets redraft, but MacNeice recognized that Thomas was exceptionally painstaking and that 'no

writer of our times approached his art with a more reverent spirit or gave it more devoted attention' (MacNeice 1961: 86). Yet MacNeice at first believed that Thomas was guilty of 'carelessness.' Despite his obvious poetic talent, his earliest published poems evoked criticism for their inscrutability.

Thomas discussed his poetical methods at some length with the American poet John Malcolm Brinnin. His description of his method shows that he was able to work backwards and forwards from any point in the poem and that he would allow the poem to 'accumulate' from a phrase. A word could come from the dictionary or another poem. This 'prime mover' needed to be 'set'. Thomas could "locate" it within a pattern of other words or phrases or lines that, not given had yet to be discovered: so that sometimes it would be possible to surmise accurately that the "given" unit would occur near the end of the poem or near the beginning or near the middle or somewhere between' (Brinnin 1956: 104). Clearly, Thomas had a holistic sense of the poem's shape and pattern. Bill Read notes that Thomas 'usually had an idea for a poem's eventual length before he began, and would then decide how many lines to give to each of its sections' (Read 1965: 113).

Handwriting and Spelling

Little substantial research has been undertaken into the link between dyslexia and handwriting. In order to test my hypothesis that Thomas shows dyslexic tendencies, I collected samples of handwriting from the Hull University Dyslexia and Dyspraxia group. These students illustrate a spectrum of dyslexic writing and many samples show some unconventional shaping of letters. Thomas's writing

shows signs of malformation in specific letters, especially 't' (which often appears as an elongated 'r'), 'y' and in the inconsistent fusion in the letters of 'of.' Critchley and Critchley note that:

Difficulty in deciphering the writing of a dyslexic also results from malformed letters. Strange fusions may connect one letter to the next so as to produce an unconventional symbol (Critchley and Critchley 1978: 45).

There is evidence that someone in Thomas's family occasionally corrected his handwriting in a supportive way. William Moynihan notes that in extant 'juvenile poems' there are 'some in a hand similar [to Thomas's hand] but more mature.' He concludes that 'an older member of the Thomas family copied over Dylan's earliest poems before they were submitted to newspapers – and if [Thomas's father] did not act as amanuensis for the child poet, he certainly had a dominant influence' (Moynihan 1996: 18). Thomas was aware (and self-conscious) about his handwriting. In 'My hero bares his nerve' he writes that:

I hug to love with my unruly scrawl
That utters all love hunger
And tells the page the empty ill. (Thomas *CP*: 14)

In a letter to Pamela Hansford Johnson he apologises for 'the characterless scrawl God and a demure education gave me' (Thomas 1987: 20). As a poet, he was able to see and comment playfully on the interesting effects of his malformation of 't.' In a letter to Vernon Watkins, Thomas comments 'Two men could go in one of Hughes's suits, though he has offered me one with tails. (that looks like rails, doesn't it?)' (Thomas 1957: 73).

Thomas's style of writing has always appeared as an anomaly considering the complexity of his working methods. Bert Trick describes Thomas's 'little crabbed writing' (Trick 2003: 167), and Lawrence Durrell comments: '[Thomas] wrote slowly, I found to my surprise, and with difficulty in that small square hand' (Durrell 1961: 38). Thomas's biographer, Andrew Lycett has described Thomas's 'tiny, backward-slanting, childlike hand' (Lycett 2003: 120). Speaking of a worksheet from the 'Author's Prologue,' Philip Larkin remarked 'it's odd to find Dylan Thomas's complexities expressed in the most regular of schoolroom characters' (Larkin 2002: 119). He emphasizes the immature aspects of Thomas's writing. Dyslexia is frequently perceived as merely a difficulty with spelling, handwriting and reading. However, Thomas's spelling is competent, but he has blind spots about particular words that he uses frequently. In his first edition of Thomas's notebooks, Ralph Maud records meticulously Thomas's spelling errors (even where they were subsequently self-corrected). He notes that 'Footnotes are provided for (a) all Thomas' misspellings, (b) notably syntactical irregularity'. He does not record 'occasional slips of the pen made by the poet at the time of first writing the poem... misshapen letters, [and] careless irregularity in verse lines'

(Maud 1968: 278). Thomas has particular difficulty with 'sc' as in 'muscle,' even though this is one of the stock words in his early poems. In 29, 'A Section of a Poem called "Hassan's Journey into the World,"' in the 1930 notebook, Thomas spells 'syncopate' as 'sncopate'; 'penetrate' as 'penentrate,' 'incorporeal' as 'incopereal' and has 'ei' in 'Believe' (Maud 1968: 285).

Noticeable in Thomas's letters is the frequent misspelling of proper names and Paul Ferris, who has edited Thomas's letters also notes that Thomas has a number of spelling 'blind spots' such as 'Disillusion ("dissilusion"), separate ("seperate"), disappoint ("dissapoint") and propaganda ("propoganda")' (Thomas 1987: xvii). Ferris also notes what he believes are 'copyist's errors,' as 'Thomas was a careful, often laborious drafter of letters throughout his life.' These include 'oe' in 'people', 'where' for 'were,' 'it's' for 'its' (Thomas 1987: xi-xii). Similarly, Mary Dee Harris Fosberg notes that in her computer collation of 'Poem on his Birthday' although 'Mispelled words might... appear to be errors...Thomas occasionally spelled a word differently at different times, and I reproduce what he wrote' (Fosberg 1975: 40). In his drafts for the first phase of 'Poem on His Birthday,' Thomas spells 'mushroom' as 'musroom' and 'mackerel' as 'mackrel.' In 'Ballad,' Thomas notes down 'birds and enemes attack' and 'And the sensual ainamls of the skull' Although anyone could make these kind of mistakes, in a poet so clearly in command of language they may form part of a larger constellation of characteristics that suggest dyslexia. It is important, however, not to overstate the number of mistakes in spelling. Thomas has clearly mostly overcome his spelling challenges, but he does very occasionally make spelling slips. There is still an

implicit association between dyslexia, poor spelling and assumed lack of intelligence. There is no reason why dyslexics, especially those who are mild to moderately dyslexic cannot learn the rules of spelling. However, they may still make slips. Finally, engaging in extensive personal writing (especially, as with Thomas, with a dictionary and thesaurus at one's elbow) is an excellent way of overcoming spelling challenges.

Syntax

Many critics have noted Thomas's original use of syntax. However, they are divided as to whether it detracts from Thomas's poetry or adds to its effectiveness. William T. Moynihan notes that the 'piled-up phrases and clauses so characteristic of many of Thomas's poems' require the 'reader' to 'patiently search for subject, verb, object, and so forth until the riddle of syntax is solved or until boredom or irritation concludes the search' (Moynihan 1996: 84). Further, Moynihan insists that 'Thomas's syntactical complexities are, finally, one of his serious defects.' Although Thomas has a 'genius' for turning 'commonplace words into something fresh and original... one of his deficiencies [is] that he was unable to achieve syntactical clarity' (Moynihan 1996: 85-86). This syntactical risk-taking breaks down conventional single meanings to create a plethora of potential interpretations. Critchley and Critchley remark on the appropriateness of the poetical line for dyslexics as 'syntax can be jettisoned in a way which would be impossible for an essayist. Or it might be that the author's thinking is a little nebulous and ill-defined' (Critchley and Critchley 1978: 63-64). Dylan Thomas

plays wilfully with restructuring and re-treading sentences and has an anarchic and experimental attitude to grammar and syntax. Bert Trick recalls that:

we held the belief that the academicians had emasculated a lot of the meaning of our words, that the grammarians had gutted them...we used to experiment, fill up sheets of paper, write a sentence and then re-write it, transposing words so that you got this new meaning.
(Trick 2003: 161)

Thomas's complex syntax is in many instances a conscious experiment in the transmuting of nouns into verbs. Don McKay remarks upon the difficulty of reading Thomas which leads critics to supply meaning where it is unclear:

It is very tempting to read beyond the poem, supplying such connections as syntax, argument, and dominant symbol as though the poet has absent-mindedly omitted them. (McKay 1986: 385)

McKay, however, finds the lack of clear 'subject' exhilarating. He quotes from Sonnet II of 'Altarwise by owl-light':

The horizontal cross-bones of Abaddon,
You by the cavern over the black stair.
Rung bone and blade, the verticals of Adam,
And, manned by midnight, Jacob to the stars (Thomas *CP*: 59.).

McKay notes all the potential ways of reading these lines and the mutations of nouns into verbs. He concludes that 'There is a good deal of local and immediate excitement generated by the obvious associations and the potential relationships an indeterminate syntax allows' (McKay 1986: 384). A quality of Thomas's more obscure poetry is its compact and multiple meanings.

In explicating Thomas's more challenging poems, Ralph Maud resorts to what he describes as 'rephrasement' where he intersperses 'the poem's text' with 'explanatory words and phrases in square brackets at the point most needed' (Maud 2003: xvi). Maud describes this as 'a way of talking the reader *through* the difficult terrain rather than talking *about* it' (Maud 2003: xvi). At times in his explications Maud resorts to putting the main verb in capitals. He does this in the explication of 'A grief ago.' (Maud 2003: 10).

Thomas consciously experiments with syntax and grammar, but there is also evidence of an unusual use of grammar in some less opaque poems, such as 'On No Work of Words.' He uses the connective 'and' without linking it to rest of the phrase: 'and the big purse of my body / I bitterly take to task my poverty and craft', omitting also the necessary 'for' (Thomas *CP*: 78). That this is an omission rather than a use of 'and' as a comparative as in Irish can be seen by the fact Thomas originally had 'and the big purse of my body/ I bitterly ~~mean to~~ {take to task} my poverty and craft.' Thomas is striving for a circular shape to the poem that ends and begins with a reference to work. The final lines are 'Ancient woods of my blood, dash down to the nut of the seas / If I take to burn or return this world which is each man's work' (Thomas *CP*: 78). 'Dash' is elusive as it is unclear

whether it is an imperative, the verb (in which case the comma is misleading) or to be dashed down and 'it is each man's work to burn or return this world'. Thomas perhaps shows dyslexic characteristics in his tendency not to construct his images and syntax on a linear model. Thomas's poems are like sand held in the hand. Although they appear to have a shape, on close inspection this disintegrates and defies all attempts at line by line analysis.

'Ballad of the Long-legged Bait'

The way in which Thomas composed 'Ballad of the Long-Legged Bait,' an early mature work written between 1940 and 1941, can be used to illustrate the possible dyslexic tendencies in his writing practice. By analysing the manuscripts it is possible to see how Thomas marshalled his 'huge armful of words' (Reid 1961: 54). It was Thomas's technique of stringing his bait, as it were, which gives the poem its particular effects. Unlike the extant drafts of the late poems, where Thomas worked intensively on individual lines and stanzas on worksheets and created a number of intermediary versions, in 'Ballad' Thomas produces several versions of the opening but only one full holograph version of the final poem. However, the process here is no less fragmentary. The argument is not that Thomas is employing compositional techniques unknown to other poets but rather that the intensity and obsessive quality of the application indicates mild dyslexia. In 'Poem on his Birthday' and 'Prologue,' his experimental approach is demonstrated primarily by the intensity with which he works on variations of individual words and lines, suggesting an obsessive need for perfection. In 'Ballad'

the larger construction and coordination of the sections indicate also that he is challenged by the task of organising a long narrative poem.

Though it may not be apparent to many readers, the theme of 'Ballad' is the act of sex resulting in conception. The poem leaves a general impression of sexual consummation described in terms of the ravishing of the bait by sea creatures. However drawing analogies between the sea creatures and either the fisherman's sexual desires or the attention of rivals is more problematic. There is always a certain approximation or obscurity in Thomas's poetic effect. In this poem there is a strong forward impulse and a sense of overarching narrative but the poem somehow does not fully communicate the poet's vision to his reader.

John Ackerman's critique of 'Ballad' highlights characteristics that could be explained by the hypothesis of dyslexic tendencies. Referring to the obscure 'organisation' of the poem, Ackerman concludes:

Because of the loose verbal structure... the imagery in the poem becomes diffuse and the narrative thread is lost. There are whole stanzas whose meaning is obscure and some could be omitted without loss. Both the language and the narrative lack organization, and it is significant that Thomas never used this loose ballad form again. His imagination, in itself fiery and intense, required a strong formal discipline to achieve its most satisfactory expression.
(Ackerman 1996: 135)

Ackerman identifies the fact that it is the 'loose ballad form' which apparently causes difficulties for Thomas and contrasts this with a need for 'a strong formal discipline' or framework. Thomas used form in poems such as 'Prologue' to discipline his composition. It is recognised that giving students with dyslexia a writing frame or form can be beneficial. Ackerman suggests that Thomas has difficulty selecting and organising the ideas in 'Ballad': 'the imagery of the poem becomes diffuse and the narrative thread is lost.' Similarly, Derek Stanford accuses the poem of 'repetitiousness, and ill-planned management of its narrative' (Stanford 1964: 119). Ralph Maud suggests that 'we will probably have to forgo the normal expectations of narrative where one event causes another succeeding event.' He concludes that 'to avoid the frustration of attempting to find normally motivated dramatic action, we will be better off if we take these narrated experiences as a series of tableaux, dioramas that constitute a thesaurus of sexual intercourse' (Maud 2003: 54). The fragmentary way in which the poem was constructed may have contributed to this sense of 'a series of tableaux.'

In order to explain Thomas's choice of imagery, critics have suggested possible influential precursors for the poem: John Donne's 'The Bait' and Rimbaud's 'Bateau Ivre'. In 'The Bait,' the speaker flatters his mistress by describing how the fish will be drawn to her by love:

When thou wilt swim in that live bath,
Each fish, which every channel hath,
Will amorously to thee swim,

Gladder to catch thee, than thou him (Donne 1956: 76).

In a wild exaggeration of Donne's far-fetched 'metaphysical' conceits, Thomas transforms the sexual flirtation of the earlier poem into an extended description of the fisherman throwing to 'the swift flood/ A girl alive with his hooks through her lips;' until 'All the fish were rayed in blood' (Thomas *CP*: 126-132, ll.22-23). Rather than a gentle river, where the amorous fish crowd around the beloved, Thomas sends his hero away from land (which represents marriage, domesticity and church) onto the teeming sea to fish with 'the gold gut that sings on his reel' and 'the bait that stalked out of the sack' (ll.14).

Nathalie Wourm discusses the possible influence of Rimbaud's 'Le Bateau Ivre' upon the 'Ballad,' citing critics who have traced the impact of *Rimbaud: the Boy and the Poet*, which contained a translation of half the 'Le Bateau Ivre', as an influence upon Thomas's imagination (<http://www.dylanthomasboathouse.com>). Although in 1952, Thomas claimed he did not understand why anyone should detect the influence of Rimbaud on his work, in a 1941 letter to Vernon Watkins he had referred to himself as 'the Rimbaud of Cwmdonkin Drive'. Wourm points out that Thomas finished the poem 'a month before referring to himself as a Rimbaud'. She speculates that Thomas would have been acquainted with Norman Cameron's translation through *New Verse*, published in 1936 (<http://www.dylanthomasboathouse.com>). In his extravagant poem, Rimbaud describes the experience of being drunk as a voyage through the New World (Rimbaud 1942: 40).

Thomas did read Donne and was certainly aware of Rimbaud. The Symbolist influence of 'Le Bateau Ivre' could explain why Thomas was drawn to a weird and symbolic use of the ballad form, but it says little about the way in which the writing of the poem was physically accomplished. Ralph Maud has attempted to discredit the assumption of a direct link between Thomas's 'Ballad' and literary precursors on the basis of the long process of composition through which Thomas took his poem:

It seems rather odd to think of Donne's short love poem-- or any poem, for that matter-- as the source of a *Ballad* whose composition took over a hundred arduously worked sheets of paper. If Thomas was really depending in Rimbaud or Donne for any aspect of form or content, he certainly made a very convincing show of the opposite.
(Maud 1963: 3-4)

It is certainly the case that Thomas makes something quite distinctively his own out of whatever direct or indirect sources he uses. The poet offered a widely commented upon explanation of his work. He told W.Y. Tindall that in 'Ballad': 'a young man goes out to fish for sexual experience, but he catches a family, the church, and the village green. Indeed, he himself is caught by his bait' (Jones 1963: 77). He also explained that to Tindall that 'whales' represent 'rivals.' Ralph Maud has offered a biographical reading of the poem based on Thomas's jealousy of Caitlin Thomas's habit of thinking about other men during sex. Thomas has

doodled 'Caitlin and Dylan' on his manuscript (Maud 2003: 55). The poem relates directly to two of Thomas's earlier works. He shows a need to re-visit and rework the similar imagery. The first is a story, originally published in *Seven* in Spring, 1939. Ralph Maud comments:

Thomas's prose piece, "An Adventure from a Work in Progress" has a boat voyage and shares much of its vocabulary with "Ballad"; but since it is more stubbornly obscure than the poem, it offers no opportunity for elucidation. (Maud 2003: 60)

There are verbal echoes which are distinct enough to suggest a direct relationship. 'An Adventure from a Work in Progress' opens with a sexually symbolic voyage which echoes stanza two of 'Ballad.' In 'An Adventure,' he has 'The boat tugged its anchor, and the anchor flew up from the seabed like an iron arrow and hung poised in a new wind' (Thomas 1971: 62). Thomas has a similar flying anchor in "Ballad": 'Boat with its anchor free and fast / As a bird hooking over the sea, / High and dry by the top of the mast' (ll.6-8). In 'Adventure' there is 'a slow snow-storm whose flakes fell like hills' (Thomas 1971: 62) which appears in stanza thirty-four of 'Ballad': 'And the flakes fell like hills' (ll.136). In 'An Adventure,' there is a mysterious woman who shifts shape as he holds her. Some of these descriptions may have suggested the idea of the bait:

He held the woman drowning in his arms, her driftwood limbs, her
winking ballast head of glass; he fought with her blood like a man
with a waterfall turning to fishdust and ash, and her salvaged
seaweed hair twisted blindly about his eyes. (Thomas 1971: 63)

There is also a direct foreshadowing of the imagery in 'Ballad' in 'Into her lying
down head' (Stanford 1964: 119) where Thomas explicitly articulates his anxiety
about his partner thinking of other men during sex. He uses the image of whales as
rivals:

Into her lying down head
His enemies entered bed
...
Last night in a raping wave
Whales unreined from the green grave
In fountains of origin gave up their love. (Thomas *CP*: 94, ll.1-2, 7-9)

In one of the most revealing remarks concerning his compositional processes,
Thomas told Alastair Reid that writing 'Ballad' 'had been like carrying a huge
armful of words to a table he thought was upstairs, and wondering if he could
reach it in time, or if it would still be there' (Reid 1961: 54). This suggests a
certain creative chaos in Thomas's approach to composition. He sees this as the
process of taking the words 'upstairs', transferring them from mind onto paper. In
this transition there is the anxiety that elements of the poem will be lost before he

has an opportunity to place them on 'a table,' which may itself have disappeared. Characteristically, Thomas saw it as 'an armful of words' as though the words were physical objects. These are only loosely grouped and in constant danger of being dropped. It is only by returning to the manuscripts that it is possible to see how Thomas's approach to composing the poem contributed to the effect of the finished work.

Thomas creates a number of sustained versions of the opening of the poem, which he uses to establish the rhyme scheme. After this he works intensively on blocks of stanzas. In the current arrangement of the extant drafts there is no indication that Thomas continued to work on the poem in a completely linear fashion. However, there is evidence on some of the manuscripts, where he has calculated the number of lines he has completed so far, that Thomas had some sense of the way in which his sections fitted into the larger scheme of the poem. It is however, very difficult in the case of Thomas, unlike those of D.H. Lawrence or Philip Larkin, to discuss the development of the poems in the manuscript drafts in a linear, or straightforward way.

There are varying attempts at groups of stanzas on the rough sheets of drafting. Describing his writing techniques, Thomas revealed that he worked between his worksheets and the final version of a poem: 'bit by bit I copy out the slowly developing poem... and, when it is completed, type it out' (Thomas 1987: 182). This might hold the key to Thomas's method of composition for 'Ballad.'

The most striking feature of Thomas's drafts, for example, is their sheer volume. The surviving worksheets show that Thomas was not exaggerating when

he said 'I write on innumerable sheets of paper' (Thomas 1987: 182). Indeed, the manuscripts of 'Ballad' cover some one hundred and fifty two pages. These include a full, holograph version of the poem and an amended typescript. This led Donald A. Stauffer to remark that:

Although it would take months to assimilate fully the gargantuan collections for Dylan Thomas's long poem "The Ballad of the Long-Legged Bait", five minutes is enough to confirm the impression of his unmatched and unreined imagination, the prodigality and massiveness of his sensual Symbolism which would make a whole school of fleshy poets look like minnows. (Stauffer 1948: 53-54).

'Ballad' is two hundred and sixteen lines and the longest poem that Thomas ever completed (Ferris 1978:182). Therefore, it could be expected that he would generate substantial workings for this poem. However, it is the way in which Thomas constructed the work, by bringing together runs of stanzas from numerous worksheets as though completing a jigsaw or mosaic, which gives the poem its characteristic features.

Thomas wrote on scrap paper, often blue letter-writing paper. This is most noticeable in the extensive extant drafts of 'Prologue' and 'Poem on His Birthday.' It was possibly a matter of chance that Thomas chose blue paper, but he does use it with some consistency in the sets of extant worksheets I have had the opportunity to examine. Blue is more restful to the eye and therefore makes script easier to

read (Everett 2005: 91). A noted dyslexic trait is to work better on coloured paper because it inflicts less glare on the reader (Pumfrey and Reason 1991: 169).

Quite often the reverse side of a sheet of drafting is upside down. Thomas seems to have turned pages from the bottom. This could have been the result of turning back the pad, but there is corroborative evidence in an anecdote concerning Thomas's first television appearance that he did find orientating objects, especially under pressure, problematic. For a dyslexic person orientating objects can be challenging. He had 'covered the backs of several envelopes in his tiny handwriting.' In front of the camera, Thomas became caught in a looped reading cycle:

All went well at first, but by the slipping of some ratchet of word-memory Dylan suddenly found himself at the beginning again, and, to our horror, we heard a repeat; then, at the same point, the same thing happened. (Jones 1977: 80)

This is suggestive of combination of dyslexic traits. Thomas seems to have turned the envelope in such a way as always to begin at the same point and his short-term memory failed him, which led him to repeat himself unintentionally.

A further possible dyslexic trait is Thomas's compulsion to make a new version of a poem every time he made a minor correction. John Malcolm Brinnin recalls noting the sheer volume of subtly different manuscript versions and remarking that 'Dylan would add a single word or phrase, or a new punctuation, then recopy the whole poem in longhand.' Thomas showed Brinnin 'more than two

hundred separate and distinct versions' of 'Fern Hill'. Thomas explained that it was 'his way of "keeping the poem together," so that its process of growth was like that of an organism' (Brinnin 1956: 103-104). Bill Read explains that 'After the whole first draft had been completed, the real work began. Every time a change was made in the text, he would recopy the entire poem by hand and begin again' (Read 1965: 113). However, this clearly proved an unworkable method in the case of the long poem 'Ballad.' Although Thomas produces a number of intermediate versions of the opening of the poem, there is only one completely sustained holograph version. This is divided into four line stanzas each of which is ruled off from the next with a line across the page. This is a different approach to marshalling a poem than that which can be seen in other sets of extant manuscripts and was, perhaps, dictated by the narrative thrust of 'Ballad.' Vernon Watkins, who witnessed the growth of 'Ballad' notes that 'I saw this poem grow from its first fifteen lines through all the stages of its composition. [Thomas] wrote four-lined verses in pairs' (Watkins 1983: 91). The manuscript evidence shows that this cannot be strictly true, but seems to have been true to the spirit of Thomas's composition; he did concentrate intensively on runs of lines.

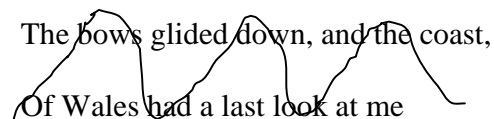
The manuscripts demonstrate that Thomas had a strong idea of the structure of the opening and a basic rhyme scheme which he increasingly refined. At the first stage of drafting (pages 1 to 8 of the extant manuscripts), he already has elements of phrasing which will remain consistent throughout the drafting process, although there are some revealing differences between the drafts. Close examination reveals that his numbering of the pages is inaccurate. Page 2 (more

correctly page 1) shows perfect full rhymes ('land / fishermanned') and lines four and five form a neat couplet: '[illegible] {Sailing}Boat with its {weed winged tailed} anchor free / As a bird [illegible]{hooking}over the sea'. On page 1 (written after page 2) Thomas uses the more subtle half-rhyme 'coast / fast': 'The bows glided down, and the ~~land~~ {coast}' and 'Boat with its anchor free and fast.'

Thomas is striving for a fairly consistent eight-syllable count. Yet, despite a musical quality to his lines, there is no regular scansion. This might suggest that he is testing lines by ear rather than appreciating stresses. The attempt to establish the opening before drafting the rest of the poem is a strategy common to many poets, including Larkin, and is not in essence dyslexic. However, Thomas's habitual intensive and obsessive reworking of his openings, goes beyond that of other poets. On the pages numbered 3 and 4, Thomas attempts to exert control by notating the rhyme scheme. On page 4 he combines this with syllabic counts, thus: '8a 8b 8c 8a 9d 8c 8b 8c 8d 9b 8c.' The last line actually has only five syllables, 'Said the looking land.' Thomas perhaps intended to indicate that it should be eight syllables to fit his scheme; perhaps he intended to expand it later. However, in the end he keeps this short line in later versions. Thomas's drafts show him maintaining complex rhyme and syllabic patterns throughout the development of the poem, through to its publication.

It is interesting to note that the drafts move from a named protagonist, 'Samson Jack' through a stage which toys with a first person narrator to a final version which has an unnamed fisherman-hero. The title 'The Voyage of ~~Jack~~ Samson Jack' appears on page 2, and this has entered critical commentary on the

poem. William T. Moynihan comments that: 'The hero of the "Ballad" is closely identified with Samson' (Moynihan 1996: 257). On the strength of this allusion he sees the theme of the poem as 'a modern variation of the Samson story-- a man daringly marries the woman he most desires and is brought by the deed into servile captivity' (Moynihan 1996: 259). However, on page 4 Thomas introduces a first person narrator instead of this named protagonist: '{~~Had a last look at me~~}' replaces: 'Had a last look at Samson Jack.' This is made most explicit at the bottom of the page where he tries:


 The bows glided down, and the coast,
 Of Wales had a last look at me

This makes the poem significantly more personal in tone and brings the poet speaker closer to the biographical poet.

On page 6, however, Thomas moves to a different strategy, abandoning this first person narrator in favour of a universalized hero. In his first attempt, he crosses out 'The bows glided down, and the coast / Took a last look at Samson Jack.' His second attempt, on page 6, has what was to become the final version of the opening three lines: 'The bows glided down, and the coast/ Blackened with birds took a last look / At his thrashing hair, his whale-blue eye.' Page 5 verso demonstrates the extent to which Thomas uses visual markers to organise his ideas. He divides the page into areas, with a representation of the sea with a boat sailing on it. (This visual approach is visible in an even more graphic way in

Thomas's maps of Llaireggub.) On the verso of page 6 Thomas uses his working title 'Poem', used also in the notebooks and in the worksheets for 'Prologue' and 'Poem on His Birthday.' Experience of Thomas's drafting suggests that he uses this title when he has progressed some way with his drafting. It seems to indicate that he is taking control of the drafting process. By page 6 verso he has established stanzas one to three in their final wording and has worked on stanzas four and five. These last two stanzas he now rejects, reformulating them on pages 7 and 8.

The sense of 'ill-planned narrative' which has been noted by critics is in part the result of Thomas's approach to drafting. The drafts show Thomas consistently working to build ideas into connected sequences of stanzas. His approach is however, somewhat piecemeal. This can be illustrated by looking at the way in which Thomas builds up stanzas twenty-two to twenty-five. Thomas's reference to 'Nightingale and hyena' is not immediately comprehensible. Although the reference to the scavenging hyena celebrating the bait's death is tenuous but at least intelligible, the reference to the 'nightingale' is more problematic. Ralph Maud has suggested that through 'the nightingale (romantic love) and hyena (love of carrion) the poet expresses in a compressed way the whole spectrum of love's condition' (Maud 2003: 56).

One of the themes of the poem is the way in which the sexual act leaves the fisherman spent and drained. In stanza thirty-one of the final poem, Thomas writes: 'Always goodbye, cried the voices through the shells, / Goodbye always for the flesh is cast / And the fisherman winds in his reel / With no more desire than a ghost' (ll.121-124). Page 55 picks up this line of imagery:

He has flicked the world from his wrist,
See, see what he drags from under
Mountains & galleries to the crest,
up
Sang and howled the finned-in-the-feather

Sea-horse-curved & iceberg-lit
Nightingale & hyena
~~Out of the graveyard in the water~~
~~He [illegible] the long-legged bait.~~
lifts
Slowly he lifts the long-legged bait
Out of the graveyard in the water.

A vague and also rather unpleasant eroticism is implied, the world being drawn forth from the protagonist's sexuality.

Ideas and streams of imagery are coming thick and fast, and seem under rather loose control. The ordering of images in the stanzas bears little relationship to the final published sequence. Thomas, for instance, first attempts to link what will become stanza twenty-nine to a version of stanza twenty-three, and then switches to what will become stanza twenty-four.

At the top of page 48, Thomas attempts stanza twenty-three:

Sing and howl through sand and anemone

Valley and sahara in a shell

Oh, ho, the flesh ~~was~~ his enemy's

He ~~cast her [illegible]~~ in a living girl.
threw to the sea

This is closer to the published poem. But at the bottom of the page he strings together what are to become stanzas twenty-four and twenty-nine:

Always goodbye to the long-legged bread

~~He trailed at the heels of his boat~~

Broken
~~He Scattered~~ on the paths of his heels,

For the salty birds fluttered & fed

Lucifer that bird's dropping

Out of the sides of the north

Has melted away and is lost

Is always lost in her vaulted breath

All this suggests a restless arbitrariness in the way he constructs his stanzas in drafting.

'Ballad of the Long-legged Bait' is not one of Thomas's best-realised poems, being notable for the occasional vivid line, such as 'Whispered the affectionate

sand', (ll.9) or 'A wind throws a shadow and it freezes fast' (ll.130). Thomas's compositional practice of creating a mosaic of sections which he cements into a unified poem, and of treating words as physical things as much as expressive counters produces both strengths and weaknesses. It could be argued, however, that this tension in the language is perhaps an apt parallel or enactment of the poem's theme: the conflict between sexual freedom and marriage. The poem's strange way with words will however continue to divide critics. The mixed and far-fetched allusions, the bad-taste sexual imagery, and above all the poem's element of dyslexic willfulness of vocabulary and syntax will continue to be a touchstone of reactions to the poet, dividing readers between those excited by the euphoria of his linguistic transgression, and those who find it merely muddled and obscure.

Chapter 7

'Verbal Device': Philip Larkin

Larkin insisted that his compulsion to write poetry came from the need to preserve an emotional response to something he had experienced: 'a feeling that you are the only one to have noticed something, something especially beautiful or sad or significant. Then there follows a sense of responsibility, responsibility for preserving this remarkable thing by means of a verbal device that will set off the same experience in other people, so that they will feel *How beautiful, how significant, how sad*, and the experience will be preserved' (Larkin 2002: 78). Access to the manuscripts gives a unique insight into the fine-tuning of this 'verbal device,' revealing how the poem was constructed and what impulses the poet considered and rejected in the course of composition.

Larkin always remains in control of his compositional process. He creates a single time-specific series of drafts. Unlike Thomas, where part of the challenge is in establishing a likely chronology for his composition, Larkin works systematically in a bound volume thus there is a clearly traceable process of composition. He explained, 'If a poet uses a notebook...the whole chronology of composition may be preserved...' (Larkin 2002: 120). This is especially pertinent to Larkin's process because he creates workbooks which contain all the material evidence of his composition rather than just notebooks of his late drafts. We are

thus able to chart the stops and starts in the development of particular poems, and in some cases the simultaneous interweaving or juxtaposition of two or more different poems.

'Deceptions' and 'Absences'

'Deceptions' and 'Absences' were begun in 1950, although Larkin returned to the final stanza of 'Absences' in 1951. Larkin noted the quotation from Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (which prefaces 'Deceptions') around January 1950 on page 92 of Workbook 1. He drafted the poem between pages 94v and 96v and revised the final stanza on page 100 of Workbook 2. Larkin drafted 'Absences' between pages 109 and 116 of Workbook 2. Page 115 is dated 28/11/50. He returned to the final stanza on page 129 probably some time in 1951. Larkin is frequently seen as moving, during 1950, from his early Romantic phase of the 1940s to the harder 'less deceived' manner of his work in the 1950s. The 'feminine' influence of Ruth Bowman, his one time fiancée, and his childhood friend, James Sutton, is overlaid but not replaced by the 'masculine' influences of Kingsley Amis and Larkin's lover, the English lecturer, Monica Jones (Carey 2000: 52-54). The manuscripts reveal that this was not a straightforward substitution and throughout his career Larkin continued to strike various, often unstable balances between impulses towards the emotional and the 'undeceived'. It is only by being aware of what Larkin excluded in the process of composition that it is possible to appreciate the way in which Larkin's imagination is turned in conflicting directions in the course of capturing a specific 'experience.'

Several of the poems from this period, 'Dry Point', 'If, My Darling' and 'No Road', for instance are, like 'Deceptions', highly self-critical. Looking at some of the poems Larkin wrote in this year, Andrew Motion perceives: 'sexual wretchedness, veering loyalty, isolation' (Motion 1994: 189). The 'sexual wretchedness' which Larkin explores in 'Deceptions' is his implied complicity with the rapist despite his sensitive reaction to the girl's distress. This bleak idea was dominant in Larkin's template for the poem, but in the process of drafting he could not free himself from his tendency towards elevated imagery. The imagery in the drafts draws on 'frost,' a significant trope in Larkin's writing. This emphasises the purifying nature of suffering upon the victim and temporarily detracts from uneasy identification with the perpetrator. In 'Absences,' Larkin also explores a recurrent trope of 'attics,' places of 'sexual guilt, shame, disappointment and fear' (Chesters 2005: 49). Whereas in the published poem, these are cleared of the speaker's presence, in the drafts he is constantly pulled back into a perpetual, Kafkaesque 'courtroom' and 'case.'

Larkin suggests that it is possible to evoke a shared response with his readership. However, as the critical reactions to 'Deceptions' demonstrate, Larkin's readership is not always prepared to accept the poet's conclusions. Larkin's personal struggle with this poem, as it is revealed in the drafts, demonstrates that he recognised how problematic his conclusion might appear. Yet having tried to gloss the woman's suffering in exquisite imagery, ultimately he returns to the sad significance of the poem's earliest inception. In 'Absences,' Larkin obliterates any trace of his attempts to explicate the poem's emotional experience in the drafts to

create an ambiguous, final line open to complex interpretation. One of the most defining characteristics of Larkin's poetry is his ability to create a conclusion to a poem which both makes a statement and has a certain ambiguity.

James Booth explains that 'Deceptions' 'reflect[s] the grim, guilt-ridden impasse which the engagement [to Ruth Bowman] had become by this time' (Booth 1992: 21). He notes that: 'One may suspect that the image of rape [in 'Deceptions'] is an extreme metaphor for [Larkin's] immediate personal feelings concerning his engagement, hence the histrionic tortuousness of his tone' (Booth 1992: 112). Manuscripts can often reveal biographical details which say something about the poet's state of mind or preoccupations although not necessarily directly about the personal context of the poem. 'Deceptions' might be seen as obliquely evocative of his personal relations, while the drafts of 'Absences' mingle with drafts of 'Since the majority of me,' which more directly concerns the breakdown of his engagement.

According to the manuscripts, Larkin reached a penultimate version of 'Deceptions' on 20th February 1950, but he did not return to revise the second stanza in Workbook 2 until over ten months later, on or after 4th November 1950. The stanza appears immediately below 'Wires,' which was dated 'Before breakfast 4/xi/50.' In his revised version, Larkin introduces the detached language which characterises the second stanza and embodies a significant shift in his style. In contrast to 'Deceptions,' between abandoning the drafts of 'Absences' and publishing the poem, Larkin cuts out all obvious reference to complicity and guilt to leave 'Such attics cleared of me! Such absences' as a freestanding line. In June

1950, Larkin made an important physical and creative break with his former life by moving to become sub-librarian at Queen's University in Belfast. As has been shown in the chapter on 'Compositional Practice,' Larkin acknowledged that this new position provided the right conditions to stimulate his writing. Both poems were completed after this significant move. Graham Chesters explains that: 'Larkin wrote "Absences" soon after he arrived in Northern Ireland... The end of the engagement coincided with this move...Skeletally, such is the emotional background against which "Absences" was written' (Chesters 2005: 50-51). In 'Absences,' Larkin's complex feelings, which stifle his ability to create a complete imaginative escape, are played out in the drafting.

The drafts of both poems contain significant and revealing imaginative 'misdirections' which have left little impact on the published poem. These demonstrate that the relationship between the two elements of Larkin's style, aestheticism and a new hard, demotic empiricism, is not simple. 'Deceptions' shows a shift to the more detached diction associated with Kingsley Amis and the 'Movement'. However, as A.T. Tolley has already shown in *Larkin at Work*, the manuscripts reveal that Larkin explored the Romantic imagery of 'part' of the girl or her 'ghost' preserved in frost by her suffering. Yet, Tolley's idea that this is a false direction on Larkin's part, overlooks the fact that Larkin already had a version of his second stanza on the first page of drafting. This Romantic deviation seems a conscious attempt to articulate his philosophy of suffering in exquisite imagery before he returned to his premeditated conclusion. By contrast, the final version of 'Absences' apparently presents a pure Symbolist epiphany: 'Such attics

cleared of me! Such absences.' In the drafts, however, the poet explores, on a very different level, a petty sense of guilt, described in terms of a Kafkaesque courtroom, which drags him back from his contemplation of a place without his presence. Graham Chesters concentrates solely on the influence of Symbolism and does not mention the obvious allusion to *The Trial*.

A striking feature of Larkin's *oeuvre* is its range of linguistic registers from the vernacular, sardonic and realistic to the emotional, Romantic and transcendent. He is constantly drawn either in the direction of 'Romanticism' or the pared style of 'The Movement'. The mix within the poems is finely balanced. Importantly, the drafts reveal Larkin negotiating his impulses towards heightened expression on the one hand and language stripped of all its delusions on the other. Even within the same work Larkin can be seized by the need to explore a particular leaning towards either impulse. Writing a poem is never as straightforward as simply putting down the words at the dictation of inspiration. For a poet as emotionally complex as Larkin, it could often be a case of balancing conflicting impulses. It is the striking of the perfect balance between these drives that gives Larkin's poetry its delicacy and muscularity.

Larkin's rigorously linear method of composition allows him to explore imaginative byways without losing aesthetic control. By drafting stanza by stanza, he is able to recognise and exclude misdirection. In 'A Neglected Responsibility,' Larkin demonstrated that he perceived drafting as a process which moved towards final perfection: 'A manuscript can show the cancellations, the substitutions, the shifting towards the ultimate form and the final meaning' (Larkin 1983: 99). The

poems dealt with in these chapters on Larkin illustrate his ability to reject material despite an investment of labour and imaginative work. In the case of the poems analysed, this allows Larkin to bring his work to fruition rather than losing his way in false directions. As will be seen in the next chapter, this was more of a struggle in the case of 'Love Songs in Age' than with the two poems analysed here.

The Manuscripts

As we saw in Chapter 3, Larkin's compositional practice is more systematic than that of any comparable English poet. Eight notebooks contain almost all of the drafting for his poems between December 1943 and November 1980 (Tolley 1997:1). He donated the first workbook to the British Library in 1964; the other seven were deposited by his executors in the Brynmor Jones Library following his death in 1985. The other main source for his drafts are the occasional typescripts which survive, giving an intermediate version between workbook and published poem.

Larkin prefaces 'Deceptions' with a quotation from Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*. It is taken from volume four: 'Those that will not work,' a title that might have appealed to a poet who would later write 'Toads' and 'Toads Revisited.' Some critical attention has been paid to Larkin's choice of quotation and the way in which he employs it. There is especial interest in the way in which Larkin takes this from its context, which is a middle aged woman recalling her fall. He selects a passage with physical immediacy which describes the aftermath of her violation and contains none of Mayhew's moral censure on the

woman. Stephen Cooper remarks that: 'When Larkin quotes from Mayhew, his work prompts a very different response to the girl's situation. The repetition of the personal pronoun-" I was drugged;" "I did not regain consciousness;" "I was ruined" and "I was inconsolable" (my emphasis) -- aligns the reader with the girl's perception (as reconstructed by the narrator) so that we experience her exploitation' (Cooper 2004 : 130).

Yet it seems that Larkin needed time to reflect before the quotation stimulated his imaginative process. In the gap between writing the quotation and beginning the poem, Larkin clearly dwelt upon it as his vision of the woman's psychological state as well as the overall trajectory of the poem emerged in a concentrated space once he began to write. The drafts of the poem which was to become 'Deceptions' do not appear until pages 94v to 96v of Workbook 1. Larkin then left the penultimate version of the poem, which he considered complete enough to date, for several months before coming back to redraft the second stanza on page 100 of the Workbook 2. Even after this prolonged drafting process, the poem's effect is unusually unresolved and emotionally tangled for a poem by Larkin.

The drafts of 'Deceptions' have been explored in A.T. Tolley's, *Larkin At Work* (Tolley 1997: 28-34) and in less detail in *My Proper Ground* (Tolley 1991 164-166). Between the two critical works, Tolley not only extends the scope of his criticism, but has also clearly returned to the manuscript in order to decipher words that he had previously regarded as 'indcipherable' (Tolley 1997: 28-29). The re-evaluation of 'Deceptions' presented here will question Tolley's transcription of the

manuscript in order to create a new perspective upon Larkin's conception of the text.

A.T. Tolley selects 'Deceptions' and 'At Grass' for his study because they reveal Larkin shifting to his characteristic style of drafting, whereas previous poems in Workbook 1 usually show less complex working (Tolley 1997: 19-34). The revealing insight which the drafts of 'Deceptions' give into Larkin's processes have been recognised since Workbook 1 was made available for study. There is unpublished correspondence in the Larkin Archive revealing that after his donation of Workbook 1 to the British Library Larkin was approached by an English lecturer at St. Mary's College, Strawberry Hill (a teacher training college) who wanted to use slides of the manuscripts. Her aim was 'by means of the manuscripts' to 'shake the students' belief in the poem which springs complete and immaculate from the mind of the poet' (DPL (2)/3/53/33). Typically, Larkin had strong reservations about releasing unsatisfactory work. He was concerned to preserve the privacy of his drafting process although also tried to be co-operative: 'I am not enthusiastic about having my mistakes shown to the world, and I should be adamant in the case of *unpublished* poems. One early draft of a published poem might be possible if this would meet your needs...' (DPL(2)/3/53/33). Jean Boyle selected 'Deceptions' from *The Less Deceived* because there were certain features in the drafting that she could illustrate to her students: 'I would like to talk to the students about the possibilities of balance in a poem, and to cite particularly your varying phrases in the different states of the poem, and the choice of "bridal" London, the mind "open like a drawer of knives" and the rhyme words' (DPL

(2)/3/53/33). These are noticeably significant characteristics of Larkin's drafting and will be discussed later. Jean Boyle was enthusiastic about her students response to the drafts: 'The excitement I felt was shared by the students...The restrictions which you made on what might be copied helped me to focus the lecture on the detail of that poem to our advantage' (DPL(2)/3/53/33). 'Deceptions' offers a highly concentrated example of Larkin's drafting as it shows intensive work over the five pages that appear in Workbook 1. At this time, Larkin was still in possession of Workbook 2 and the final revisions were not in the public domain.

Significantly, the drafts of 'Absences' mingle with those of other poems. Larkin drafted some of the first stanza of 'Absences' on page 109 of Workbook 2. On page 110, there appears the overtly Symbolist poem 'Verlaine'. By contrast to the elevated imagery of Larkin's description of the rain on the sea that appears on page 109, 'Verlaine' is a salacious poem addressed to a 'Country beauty.' This demonstrates how Larkin may have been drawn to Symbolist poetry because of its variety of registers. The Symbolists reflect two sides of Larkin's character: the beautiful and the aesthetic and the carnal and demotic. Graham Chesters has noted that 'Verlaine' is a translation of 'Mademoiselle ***' (Chesters 2005: 50). Larkin captures Verlaine's frank diction:

They set in our blood

A soft stupid fire

That drives us crazy

Arse, balls and belly

As Larkin clearly translated this poem from the original, this contradicts his mischievous pronouncement later in his career that it was impossible to know another language well enough to appreciate its poetry and that he could not imagine *High Windows* as *Hautes Fenetres* (Larkin 1983: 69).

Larkin continued the drafts of 'Absences' on pages 111 to 116. On page 116 he apparently breaks off again to draft 'Since the majority of me,' which uses legal or parliamentary language. Immediately below this draft of 'Since the majority of me,' Larkin returns to 'Absences.' It will be argued that at one point in his compositional process Larkin considered incorporating: 'Such attics cleared of me! Such absences!' into 'Since the majority of me.' Finally, Larkin makes a further unfinished attempt at the conclusion of 'Absences' on page 129. The final drafting which produced the poem as published in *The Less Deceived* occurred outside the workbook. Either this is lost, or (more likely) Larkin made these alterations as he typed the version to be published.

'Deceptions'

'Deceptions' is among Larkin's most critically contentious poems as the poet uses the metaphor of rape to assert that the victim is always 'less deceived' than the perpetrator. Whereas many critics appreciate the way in which Larkin identifies with the psychological consequences of the girl's violation in the first stanza, in the second stanza the shift to a more impersonal register has been questioned. By creating this particular 'verbal device,' Larkin has polarized his readership into those

who take exception to the detached tone of the second stanza and those who defend the emotional boldness of the poet's stance. In 'Reading "Deceptions"- A Dramatic Conversation', Graham Holderness's formalist critic, Cleanth, complains that:

The second half of the poem is a denial of the first,... a failure of poetic imagination. Everything that was in the first half realized in precise images is here translated into lifeless abstractions...where previously the poet was concerned to dramatize the exactness of an imagined experience, here he takes refuge in the detached activity of "reading." (Holderness 1997: 86)

The near scientific language of 'readings' which make the second stanza so unpalatable was introduced at a late stage in the writing process not, in fact, until Larkin returned to revise the second stanza in Workbook 2. The final shift in diction takes place only once Larkin has left the poem for some time. This seems to be a conscious decision by the poet to distance himself emotionally from the woman's suffering despite acknowledging that this is no real consolation.

Janice Rossen insists that: 'A question such as "Is it really worse for the rapist because he is less deceived than the girl is?" seems academic and cruel on the critic's part, if this is indeed what the poet is proposing' (Rossen 1997: 89). Ultimately, she cannot accept the poem's thesis:

I do not think that one can have it both ways: Larkin as detached poetic observer and Larkin as sympathetic to human suffering. While not ignoring the aesthetics of the poem, the callousness which it exhibits and the sadism which it in part condones ought at least to be seen as problematic -- and a limitation in Larkin's art. (Rossen 1997: 154)

Both Rossen's and 'Cleanth's' readings make a similar ideological judgment that the poem's conclusion is either 'a failure of imagination' or 'limitation in Larkin's art.' Therefore, it is necessary to address the extent to which the nature of the way in which the poem is expressed affects Larkin's communication with his readers in this poem. 'Deceptions' is an ideologically challenging poem. This uneasy balance between empathy and detachment is key to most critical discussions of it. Larkin's Romantic 'misdirection' might suggest that the poet too was disturbed by the poem's conclusion.

In contrast to Rossen, Andrew Swarbrick insists that 'Larkin is concerned to show how sympathy can never compensate for suffering and that identifying with suffering is fraught with potential moral dishonesty' (Swarbrick 1995:57). He concludes that:

The poem refuses to traffic in easy sympathy and instead admits to a shameful identification with the man violently imprisoned in desire and the delusion that desire can be fulfilled. (Swarbrick 1995: 59)

The conclusion with its identification with the rapist was intrinsic to the way in which Larkin conceived the poem from its inception. On page 95, the second page of drafting, Larkin identifies with the perpetrator's sexual arousal as well as the conviction that this leads only to 'fulfilment's desolate attic.' The lines emerge after a reworking of stanza one.

Salem K. Hassam in *Philip Larkin and his Contemporaries*, directly addresses Larkin's attitude at the ending of the poem:

The rapist's sexual fulfilment is only an illusion. It turns into a sexual disappointment as he is more deceived than his victim This is what Larkin calls the "big finish" of this poem. One aspect of Larkin's poems is that some of them start with an event (here, the rape of a girl) which develops into a general statement... Here, the general statement is more a value placed on suffering than a consoling statement. (Hassam 1988: 27-28)

In order to understand Larkin's ending it is vital to appreciate his philosophy of suffering. In drafting 'Deceptions', Larkin clearly knows that his final statement will lead him to the conclusion that the rapist's actions bring him only into 'fulfilment's desolate attic.' However, in his 'misdirection' Larkin also struggles to express his belief that the victim's suffering is like a purifying 'frost.'

Discussing his choice of title, *The Less Deceived*, Larkin explained that it gave 'a certain amount of sad-eyed (and clear-eyed) realism'. He suggests that if the audience 'pick up the context they might grasp my fundamentally passive attitude to poetry (and life too, I suppose)' (Hartley 1988: 299). 'Deceptions' addresses the themes of the collection. The title of 'Deceptions' was 'originally "The Less Deceived" and was an 'allusion to Ophelia's: "I was the more deceived"' (Hartley 1998: 299). Larkin defined his approach to poetry as one 'which believes that the agent is always more deceived than the patient, because action comes from desire, and we all know that desire comes from wanting something we haven't got, which may not make us any happier when we have it. On the other hand suffering -- well, there is positively no deception about that. No one *imagines* their suffering' (Hartley 1988: 299). In an 'Interview with John Haffenden,' Larkin stresses his identification with the sufferer:

The more sensitive you are to suffering the nicer person you are and the more accurate notion of life you have... As I tried to say in 'Deceptions' the inflicter of suffering may be fooled, but the sufferer never is. (Larkin 2002: 52)

There have been various criticisms of the way in which Larkin realizes this belief. J.B. Goode concludes that:

The supreme virtue of the poem is, however, that the poet recognizes his own limitations too; his sympathy can only be partial because it is qualified by his own desolate desire, like the seducer, he is deceived because he feels the disgusting violence of male desire and is therefore, only capable of complete identification with the blind frustrated man. (Goode 1988: 134)

Whereas in his statements, the poet identifies with the passivity of the victim, this critic focuses upon Larkin's identification and therefore disturbing complicity with the rapist. Challengingly, Larkin had a clear sense of his final lines from early in the development of the poem. He was, in fact, fighting a form of self-censorship. Despite having a clear, initial trajectory for the poem and the relationship between the two stanzas, he shies away from the implications of his concluding statement. Instead Larkin, through his dramatized speaker in the poem, attempts unsuccessfully to collapse the historical distance between the girl and the poet speaker by creating the conceit that 'part' of her or her 'ghost' returns to the place of violation. However, ultimately he is able to recognise the untruthfulness of his elevated imagery. When Larkin comes to revise the second stanza in Workbook 2, he is already moving towards a more masculine diction. A.T. Tolley contextualises it thus:

Coming as the revision does, after Larkin had written the sardonic "If, My Darling" and "Wants", the tone of the changes is

understandable. Perhaps Larkin was readying the poem for inclusion in *XX Poems*, published in 1951. (Tolley 1997: 34)

By using the evidence given by the workbook's fixed chronology and the bibliographical detail that 'Deceptions' was first published in *XX Poems*, Tolley is able to speculate upon a specific reason for Larkin's apparently radical shift in diction. 'Deceptions' vividly illustrates Larkin's contrasting impulses. Yet despite his desire to sustain the exquisite tone of sympathy from the first stanza, Larkin ruthlessly returns to his difficult statement about the pressing nature of 'Desire.'

The Growth of the Poem

The development of 'Deceptions' has three distinct phases. As the rapidity with which Larkin is able to realise the overall structure of the poem demonstrates, he has undertaken a substantial amount of mental composition before the poem reaches the page. The evidence on pages 94v (see C1:413) and 95 of the workbook shows that Larkin clearly has a sense of the overall trajectory of the poem, including his ultimate conclusion. However, despite the clarity of his vision Larkin tries a different tone in which he begs the girl to see his speaker's point of view: 'See yourself as I see you' and introduces the idea of her 'radiant in painful frost/Radiant because unable to pretend.' He persists in this 'misdirection' between pages 95 and 96. On page 96v, Larkin reaches his penultimate version (see C1: 414), which leads to his conclusion and was complete enough for Larkin to date. However, in a final act of revision in this third phase, Larkin returns to the poem

on page 100 of Workbook 2 and subtly refines his phrasing (see C3:415). There is a strong teleological drive in Larkin's mode of composition.

He completes his drafting of 'Deceptions' in five pages of Workbook 1 and a further page of Workbook 2. Unlike Lawrence's manuscripts, there can be little dispute that Larkin's drafts of 'Deceptions' include every stage of drafting which he set on paper. Larkin does not dash off a spontaneous version and rewrite a different version in a new context. Instead, he works systematically until he has enough of an opening stanza from which to explore further directions in which to take the potential poem without fundamentally altering his opening. Larkin characteristically works in a limited number of drafts towards a stable first stanza, at which point he establishes his rhyme scheme. His compositional practice allows him to polish individual stanzas without losing direction. He does not begin the second stanza until he has a full working version of the first stanza. Larkin continues to refine his expression in the first stanza, writing it out before working on the second stanza right up until the penultimate version. However, although in this case Larkin rapidly establishes the first six lines of the first stanza, he has difficulty with the final couplet and struggles with the eighth line of the poem, subtly altering his rhyme scheme to overcome this problem. These are the lines which form the bridge to the second stanza. In order to gain an understanding of Larkin's mode of composition for this poem, it is necessary to trace his subtle changes to the first stanza and his more substantial work on the second stanza. On page 94 (C1: 413), the first page of drafting, Larkin makes a few tentative attempts at the opening line of the first stanza before reaching the evocative image of being

able to 'taste her grief.' These convey historical distance, '~~Now it's so long ago,~~' and the girl's lack of support, '~~Where can they be found.~~' He then moves closer to identifying with the girl's feelings: '~~Even from such a distance I can feel.~~' This leads to a powerful identification with the drugged girl's grief: 'Even so distant I can taste the grief, / Bitter and [illegible] {sharp} with stalks, he ~~freed~~ {made} you gulp.' Drawing from his historical source from Mayhew, where the woman recounts 'Of course I was drugged, and so heavily I did not regain consciousness till the next morning,' Larkin creates an image which suggests empathy between speaker and subject. This is far more powerful than his previous attempts. Stephen Cooper comments 'What began as a literal sensation for the girl becomes, for the speaker, a metaphorical one as their shared "taste" of the experience unites them against the act's brutal reality' (Cooper 2004: 130). It sets the tone for the poet's close appreciation of the girl's reactions in the rest of the stanza.

Even on this first page, Larkin seems to have a clear vision of the details of the opening stanza: the traffic; London turning from the girl; the light which will not allow her to hide the evidence of her 'scar' and her mind 'like a drawer of knives.' A.T. Tolley comments that:

The images of dazzling light and moving traffic are also there in his first draft: characteristically they arise from a psychological *observation* -- that for those in pain, light seems harsh and the world callously concerned with its own business. (Tolley 1997: 29)

However, each time Larkin writes out this stanza he makes incremental changes which hone and perfect his expression. In line 3 Larkin originally tries to anthropomorphize the sun as cruel and indifferent: 'The heartless pattern of [illegible]{sun, the brisk, brief}.' However, in revising the line in his next attempt, Larkin reaches a far more imaginatively effective description of the moving light: 'The ~~heartless pattern of sun~~{sun's ~~cold pattern~~ [illegible]}{occasional print}, the brisk brief.' Similarly, in line 6 Larkin attributes greed to the light in his first attempt: '[illegible]{[illegible] And the ~~day~~ light greedy} [illegible] and unanswerable and wide.' In revising the line Larkin tries 'high' before reaching 'tall.' Interestingly, critics have noted Larkin's use of the 'light, unanswerable and tall and wide' as a symbol of an inescapable presence that torments the raped girl (Swarbrick 1995: 58). If 'the irresistible power of daylight' is 'in some way like the man who has mastered and violated her...' (Holderness 1997: 88) then the choice of 'greedy' links the light to the man's sexual desires.

Unlike Thomas, who will play exhaustively with variants, Larkin's working of line 4 demonstrates his ability to select the most apt wording. In his first attempt, Larkin struggles to select the right quality of sound for the carriages:

~~Jingle~~ ~~Passing~~ of wheels along
~~Rasping~~ ~~Trotting~~ horses [illegible] / the street outside

These vary from sounds which suggest horses and their bridles: 'Trotting' and 'Jingle' to the neutral word 'Passing' and the more grating 'Rasping.' Larkin's tests possible verbs within a single draft of the lines. In redrafting the stanza beneath

Larkin reaches: 'Worry of wheels'. This conveys the girl's nervous state and also has connotations of the sense in which a dog will 'worry' sheep. She is harassed by the sounds outside. Graham Holderness's *Cleanth* points out: 'the noise of wheels from the street outside sounds like her own anxiety' (Holderness 1997: 85-86). Larkin creates an effectively concentrated line. This is reached by a mental process which leaves no alternatives or evidence of Larkin's thinking. It is the choice of the most apt word rather than an attempt to consider and evaluate every possibility.

In a longer process, Larkin gradually refines line 5, describing London's rejection of the girl. Larkin's revisions add resonance and poetic force. He remarked in 'Operation Manuscript' that 'a writer will often put down the "prose" word while groping for the "poetic" one' (Larkin 2002: 120). This seems to illustrate his point. The line begins on the first page of drafting as 'All London {striding} ~~walking~~ quickly the other way.' This remains 'All London walking quickly the other way' in the attempt at the complete stanza beneath and on the next page, page 95. In a highly active draft on the third page, page 95v, Larkin experiments with describing London as '~~Heedless~~' and '~~Unheeding~~'. He experiments with verbs, but only 'swerves' is uncrossed out and legible. Then on the fourth page, page 96, Larkin moves from '~~heedless~~' through the judgmental '{cold-eyed}' to the language of sexual morality '{virgin}' London.' He varies the verb, trying 'swerves' and '{~~swerving~~}' before settling on 'streaming,' suggesting numerous people and speed. Finally, in the penultimate version of the poem on page 96v (C2: 414) Larkin moves from '~~virgin~~ London' to '{~~maiden~~}' and

'{bridal}', emphasising the connotations of womanly modesty and virtue. He replaces 'looks' with 'bows,' indicating Victorian propriety turning from the girl:

~~maiden~~ bridal bows
Where ~~virgin~~ London ~~looks~~ the other way

This line is far tighter than the earlier versions and demonstrates the way Larkin's incremental changes perfect the line. Similarly, Larkin introduces the idea of moral censure on the girl in line 7. In his second attempt at the stanza on page 94v, he begins with the awkward 'With nowhere to secrete the scar, no [illegible] {shame}.' This suggests the girl is unable to hide the evidence of her violation and 'secrete' forms an internal rhyme with 'street' in line 4. However, on page 95v Larkin reaches: '~~Gives nothing to protect the scar~~ {Forbids the wound to heal} and drives.' This suggests first that the 'light' in line 7 exposes the 'scar' and then that it actively censures the girl: 'Forbids.' Typically, Larkin oscillates on 95v between 'scar' and 'wound', 'wound' suggesting something open whereas a 'scar' is healed but has left an indelible mark.

Larkin finds perfecting lines 8 and 9 more challenging. On the first page of the drafts of 'Deceptions' (94v) Larkin has already established his image of 'a drawer of knives' to describe the girl's sharpened sensitivity. His first attempt at the end of line 8 is illegible, but line 9 is:

~~thoughts like open~~ ~~drawer~~
~~Your memories glittering like a [illegible] of knives~~

Immediately below, Larkin makes a rhyme with 'shrives' to emphasize that the girl's '{shame}' (mentioned in line 7) cannot be covered:

...No concealment shrives

Your mind lies open like a drawer of knives

A.T. Tolley comments that:

When ["Your memories glittering like a box of knives"] is changed to the final, "Your mind lies open like a drawer of knives", the image of the knives has changed from a visual one to an implicitly tactile and threatening one of sharpness, showing how an image can suggest new possibilities of apprehension. (Tolley 1997: 29)

Larkin moves from a highly sensory evocation of her 'memories' or 'thoughts' 'glittering' like blades, which echoes 'light unanswerable and [illegible] {high} {tall} and wide' in line 6, to the far plainer formulation 'Your mind lies open like a drawer of knives.' Larkin pares away detail even after he has created a powerful image in its own right.

Larkin draws on religious language to convey the inability of the girl to 'hide' her 'shame' and her lack of absolution (lines 7-8). However, as A.T. Tolley notes "'shrive"...may have seemed to introduce religious suggestions of absolution that were out of keeping with the final tenor of the poem. Indeed, the phrases in which

it appears, "no concealment shrives", "No cover shrives" hardly makes sense' (Tolley 1997: 30).

On page 95v, the third page of drafting, Larkin abandons attempting to create a couplet in favour of rhyming 'day' in line 9 with 'way' in line 5 and introducing 'drives' in line 7 to rhyme with 'knives' in line 9. The concluding lines on this page do not seem fully processed although Larkin seems to be making some allusion to the woman's descent into prostitution:

...and drives

[illegible] [illegible]
Shame from [illegible] [illegible] to be hawked by days
[illegible] the shadows [illegible]

In an especially active revision on page 96, the fourth page of drafting, Larkin contrasts the girl's pain and isolation with 'gregarious day' which intrudes upon her solitude and forces open her mind:

lets
.../ gregarious day

~~Jerk~~ [illegible] [illegible] Hold ~~Keep~~
~~Jerk~~ [illegible] / your mind open like a drawer of knives
~~Pull~~

Larkin's choice of verbs suggest forceful opening, '~~Jerk~~' and '~~Pull~~', or keeping open against her will 'Hold' and '~~Keep~~.'

It is not until the penultimate version on page 96v, the fifth page of drafting, that he reaches the final formulation of the concluding lines:

... All the unhurried day

Your mind lies open like a drawer of knives

This contrasts the easy leisure of the slow passage of the day with the girl's pain. There is no hint in the published poem that this was such a drawn out process of composition. Larkin has gained mastery over his expression.

A.T. Tolley has noted the rapidity with which Larkin establishes his rhyme scheme for the first stanza of 'Deceptions' on the first page of drafting although he adds that 'only the rhyming words in lines seven and eight were to be changed later; and these were to be the lines in the first section on which he was to expend the most effort in redrafting' (Tolley 1997: 30). Altering line 8, frees Larkin from having to create an awkward rhyming couplet with 'shrives' and 'knives'. The first stanza of 'Deceptions' has the rhyme scheme: abaccdede. On the first and second pages of drafting, pages 94v and 95, Larkin has not established the rhymes for lines 7 and 8. Instead of an end rhyme in line 7, he creates an internal rhyme of 'hide' in line 8 with 'wide' in line 6. He then tries to create a couplet with 'shrives' in line 8 and 'knives' in line 9:

And light unanswerable and [illegible] / and wide
With nowhere to secrete the scar, no [illegible]
...
For yours to hide against by. No concealment shrives

~~Your mind lies open like a drawer of knives.~~

Larkin makes another attempt at this scheme on the next page, page 95 before establishing his final rhymes on page 95v, the third page of drafting. He introduces 'drives' at the end of line 7 to rhyme with 'knives' at the end of line 9 and 'day' at the end of line 8 to rhyme with 'way' in line 5. As has been seen above, Larkin makes incremental changes to these lines until they reach their final form in the penultimate version on page 96v. The second stanza of the penultimate version rhymes: abacabac. This is the same scheme as the final draft of the second stanza on page 100 of Workbook 2 and also of the published version. Most of the rhyme words are the same except that the penultimate version of line 13 is 'Illusions scatter pain is most emphatic?' whereas in the final version is more impersonal: '...readings grow erratic?'

On page 94v, the first page of drafting (see C1: 413), Larkin already has the essence of his poem. By the bottom of page 94v, Larkin has the opening three lines of the second stanza which he graphically divides from his work on the first stanza with a line across the page. Even at this point, the poem's dramatized speaker is pointing to the fact that the only consolation he can offer the girl is that she is without illusion. He reaches the concluding lines on the second page of drafting, page 95, after revising the opening stanza. Indeed, it is possible to speculate from the rhyme scheme that the two fragments belong to the same stanza, with a few missing lines. If put together they would form:

Across the slum of years I would not dare

Console you if I could. What can ~~be said~~ ^{console}

Except that you, ~~lying and weeping~~ ^{lying} there
...

he should sweat so
marvel at ~~stumbling~~
I ~~think of his hot stumble~~ up the stair

To burst into
~~And bursting into~~ fulfillment's (sic) desolate attic

The concluding lines anticipate the famous culminating lines of stanza two. The only consolation he can offer the woman is that although she is the obvious victim, the rapist's imposing of his desire leads him to 'fulfilment's desolate attic.' The lines forge a close imaginative link between the speaker and the perpetrator and, disturbingly, the perpetrator's sexual arousal. Larkin at first has 'I ~~think of his hot stumble~~ up the stair,' before reaching the more visceral 'I {marvel at} {he should sweat so}.' The lack of gratification afforded by the violation is made explicit in the original version of the second line: '~~And bursting into~~ fulfillment's desolate attic.' These lines are bracketed which indicates that he intended to use them later. A.T. Tolley writes:

It would seem that [these two lines] appeared to be a misdirection
when first written at the commencement of [the second] section; but

were later found to provide an appropriate conclusion. (Tolley 1997: 31)

However, Larkin emphasised that: 'I used to find that I was never sure I was going to finish a poem until I had thought of the last line. Of course, the last was sometimes the first you thought of! But usually the last line would come when I'd done about two-thirds and then it was just a matter of closing the gap' (Larkin 1983:58). In addition, he insisted on the importance of having lines associated with a poem: 'the idea for a poem and a bit of it, a snatch or a line -- it needn't be the opening line -- come simultaneously' (Larkin 1983: 52). Significantly, for 'Deceptions' these include the humble admission that 'I would not dare/ Console you if I could' and the image of 'fulfillment's (sic) desolate attic.' This makes Larkin's imaginative deviation from this trajectory important. By missing the fact that the second stanza appears on the first page of drafting, page 94v, Tolley reaches a subtle misreading of the poem's development. He is wrong to conclude that:

"I would not dare console you if I could" emerges on the page before the final draft. ... It is only after he put it behind the phrase "Across the slum of years," so it is broken by the line end, that he lets it stand. (Tolley 1997: 32)

In fact, the drafts of 'Deceptions' demonstrate that Larkin was moving back to the phrasing he established early in his drafting process. He gradually reduces

Romantic elements as he drafts and redrafts. Larkin makes a final condensed attempt at the stanza on page 96, the fourth page of drafting:

Across the slum of years I would not dare
to be said
Console you if I could. All ~~one can say~~
To suffering ghost a substance is that there
sharp
~~long~~ scald
In that ~~illegible~~ frost pretence is frozen out

The lines are close to those temporarily abandoned on page 94v. The imagery of 'frost' is reduced to the phrase 'pretence is frozen out.' 'Scalds' not only creates a strong verbal echo with 'console,' it suggests both affliction and extreme cleansing. It also recalls the ice/fire *oxymoron* of Petrarchan love poems.

The most suprising feature of the drafts is the imagery which depicts 'part' of the girl or her 'ghost,' 'radiant in a frost/ Of suffering- radiant because unable to pretend.' The speaker begs her to 'See yourself as I see you,' reversing the polarities of the final version by asking the girl to empathise with the poet. On pages 95 to 96v, Larkin makes his imaginative deviation. One of the problems of these attempts at stanza two is that they collapse Larkin's historical distance in the conceit that some element of the girl might have survived as a consequence of her extreme suffering. His imagery is exquisite and expresses his philosophy of suffering in Romantic terms:

If at this distance your grave pinched in and lost
Any part of you keeps going back to that room,
See yourself as I see you, radiant in painful frost,
Radiant because unable to pretend.

Stephen Cooper notes: 'a consideration of the unpublished drafts indicates an enduring respect for the girl' and 'Larkin is fascinated by the way the girl's unmitigated suffering grants her a "radiance" precisely because it renders her "unable to pretend." Like Katherine Lind, the "Girl in Winter" who also felt the chill of being an outsider, the raped girl acquires a sanctified state simply by being a victim' (Cooper 2004: 132).

A.T. Tolley perceives the 'misdirection' as symptomatic of the 'strong pull' of 'Romanticism' (Tolley 1997: 32). The address to the frozen girl mutes the painfulness of the poet's direct address to the girl. But Tolley's judgement is perhaps too simple. This glimpse of an alternative, more highly wrought version of the poem, suggests perhaps that it could have been a different work altogether, with a dignity and strange beauty absent from the final version. This image of the girl purified by suffering suggests the moral superiority of the passive victim with a vivid moral self-contempt on the poet's part muted in the final version. Tolley insists, "'Radiant" signals a reaching for some sort of transcendence in the face of agony that characterises the experience. The gesture is redolent of *In the Grip of Light*...the manner from which Larkin was trying to free himself' (Tolley 1997: 32).

On page 96 verso of the first workbook (see C2:414), Larkin reached a full version of 'Deceptions.' He seems to have regarded this as complete, dating it '20/2/50.' In this, as it turned out, penultimate version, Larkin established many of the final changes to stanza one and created a complete stanza two which differs significantly from the published version.

Larkin's first stanza in this penultimate version is already highly wrought as it has been through an intense incremental process of drafting in the previous pages. In the first stanza, there is a subtle sense of the girl being ostracized from respectable society and marked by her violation, 'And light, unanswerable and tall and wide/ Forbids the scar to heal, and drives/ Shame{out of} shadow.' Larkin alters 'shadows' to 'hiding' in the published version. Whereas 'shadows' gives a pleasing alliteration and links to the imagery of 'light,' 'hiding' emphasises the desire to hide the shame. This stanza conveys the painful passage of time on the day in which the girl regains consciousness and her raw emotions, '...All the unhurried day/ Your mind lies open like a drawer of knives.' There is a change of tense to 'lay open' in the published version, which places the first stanza firmly in the past.

It is the alternative formulation of stanza two which makes this penultimate version of the poem particularly significant. Larkin's message is far more explicit in this version of stanza two than in his previous attempts, but is less coldly detached than the revised stanza two:

 have buried
Slums, years / you: I would not dare

Console you if I could. What can be said,

Except that suffering scalds deceit, and where

Illusion scatters, pain is most emphatic?

And you would hardly care
~~I do not think you~~ care

less deceived
That you were ~~nearer truth~~, stretched on that bed,

breathless
panting
Than he was stumbling up the ~~eager~~ stair

To burst into
~~And bursting~~ fulfilment's desolate attic.

There is a new grim sense of finality here: 'Slums, years have buried you,' contrasting with the previous imagining of the girl's ghost returning from her grave. However, the metaphors are more mixed than they are in the final version.

In line 14 Larkin changes '~~I do not think you~~ care,' which might suggest the girl was indifferent to the more humble acknowledgement that '{you would hardly care}.' In the redraft and the published version, Larkin hones this further to 'For you would hardly care.' Interestingly, in line 15 Larkin originally has 'That you were ~~nearer truth~~, stretched on that bed,' before introducing '{less deceived}.' 'Nearer truth' conveys the sense that the girl, through her suffering, is less deluded than the rapist. This late introduction of 'less deceived' is significant as it would become the title of the collection and Larkin would re-title the poem 'Deceptions.' No title appears anywhere on the manuscripts. Also in line 15, Larkin has 'stretched on that bed,' which conveys the girl's vulnerability. In the final draft of the stanza in workbook two, he has 'doped on that bed,' which explicitly links the scene back to

the first two lines of stanza one. In the published poem, he reaches 'out on that bed,' which shows that she is unconscious and completely passive. In line 16, Larkin experiments with a number of words before reaching 'breathless stair.' 'Breathless' and 'panting' indicate both the result of a rapid ascent and sexual expectation. 'Eager' conveys the pressing nature of the desire. By attaching an adjective which describes the man's anticipation to the 'stair' Larkin is able to succinctly express the man's sexual excitement.

Larkin redrafts this stanza on page 100 of Workbook Two (C3: 415), introducing the dispassionate language which A.T. Tolley has noted is 'redolent of the Movement' (Tolley 1997: 33). He drafts the second stanza immediately below 'Wires,' which he dates 'Before breakfast 4/xi/50.' As they appear on the same page, this might suggest that Larkin drafted them on the same day. An interesting bibliographical point is that in editing Larkin's *Collected Poems* Anthony Thwaite gives a false sense of the final poem's chronology as he dates 'Deceptions' as completed in its published form on 20 February 1950. But in the months between reaching what he considered enough of a finished version to date and his final conclusion, Larkin has radically changed his register.

In the final revision Larkin introduces the terms 'exact' and 'readings grow erratic' in lines 12 and 13:

Slums, years, have buried you: I would not dare

Console you if I could. What can be said

~~always true cheats~~ but
 and is exact, ~~and~~ where
 Except that suffering's ~~never~~[illegible]but where
~~takes over~~ takes is logging, takes over
 Desire [illegible], readings grow erratic?

For
~~And~~ you would hardly care
 That you were less deceived, doped on that bed,
 Than he was, stumbling up the breathless stair
 To burst into fulfilment's desolate attic

Despite the fact that the poet still humbly admits to not being able to 'console' the woman, some critics feel that this language downplays the girl's pain and neutralises the crime committed against her. Larkin tries other versions before reaching 'suffering {is exact}', including 'suffering never cheats' and 'suffering's always true' which convey his sense that she is 'less deceived.'

Larkin changes 'takes over' to 'takes charge' in the published version of line 13, which seems to suggest the perpetrator has no responsibility for his actions. Larkin is determined to introduce near-scientific terms and experiments with 'Desire {is logging}, readings grow erratic...' The 'readings' are 'erratic' because it is 'Desire' which records them. Graham Holderness's formalist, Cleanth, concludes:

Larkin's attempt to dramatize the man's experience fails by
 comparison with the achieved realisation of the woman's: and the

attempt again to link emotion with physical surroundings-'breathless
stair', 'desolate attic'- seems merely mechanical in comparison.

(Holderness 1997: 86)

Janice Rossen perceives the ending as 'problematic.' She asserts that although 'The poet shows compassion for the girl's suffering' he also 'shows a great deal of sympathy with the man who attacked her, and thus ends the poem with a marked detachment from the woman's suffering, which he begins the piece in describing' (Rossen 1997: 152). Surely 'he' here is the speaker of the poem. As 'Cleanth' clearly sees this figure is a clever way for Larkin to objectivise and dramatize his embarrassed guilt. It is arguable that the excluded material, which continues the close identification with the girl's emotions but in a more abstract form, or the version of the final stanza in Workbook 1, would have answered these criticisms.

A.T. Tolley, aware of the difficulties presented by the second stanza, asserts, 'The rhetorical disclaimer "you would hardly care" does not quite effectively dominate the effect of the rather academic consolation -- "you were less deceived"' (Tolley 1997: 34). Tolley draws attention to 'The long drafting, with its eliminations and a final return to the later point' in order to demonstrate 'Larkin did not in the end feel secure in the direction in which he took the poem at its conclusion'. Tolley has speculated that 'Larkin had no clear sense of the development of feeling when he embarked on [the second section] of the poem, in contrast to the feelings so clearly evoked by the description of the girl's situation in the first section' (Tolley 1997: 34). However, this is not borne out by the evidence

of the drafts although the manuscripts demonstrate that Larkin recognized his conclusion was challenging. He had a clear sense that the poem would end with the rapist's lack of 'fulfilment' and the assertion that the girl at least has no delusions.

Tolley notes the importance of the theme of lack of fulfilment in Larkin's poetry:

The question of whether "fulfilment's desolate attic" refers to the act of the rapist or to fulfilment in general is a question that familiarity with Larkin's poetry might make natural. (Tolley 1997: 34).

If 'fulfilment's desolate attic' is examined in isolation rather than in the context of identifying with the actions of a rapist, it suggests failed idealism. It is an illusion that the sexual act offers any kind of fulfillment.

The manuscripts reveal, firstly, that there was a possible potential version of 'Deceptions' using the imagery of frost that never came to fruition. Larkin possessed a strong teleological view of poetry and would not have regarded any such contingent versions as poems in their own right. However, to a critic seeking to understand Larkin's drafting process such evidence is of enormous significance. His deliberate approach allowed him to hone his expression and to experiment with new ideas. Yet, despite the fact that the imagery of frost and scalding fired his imagination he was still prepared to abandon it when he saw that it would unbalance the poem. The final draft of stanza two demonstrates that Larkin was moving towards a different 'Movement' style of writing. But the process by which

he reaches this point shows that this still co-existed (as it did throughout his life) with a strong Romantic impulse.

'Absences'

Criticism of 'Absences' has usually focused upon the support it gives to the influence of Symbolism on Larkin's poetry. Andrew Motion concludes that '[Larkin's] three mature collections...were all written after he had moderated his youthful interest in the Symbolists, but it nevertheless asserts itself repeatedly and to considerable effect' (Motion 1982: 74). Although Larkin often obstinately denied the influence of *'foreign poetry'* upon him (Larkin 2002: 25), he did joke that 'The last line [of 'Absences'] ...sounds like a slightly unconvincing translation from a French Symbolist' (Larkin 2002: 17). Graham Chesters speculates:

For Larkin, the sense of the last line being a translation might have been provoked by the structural (and thematic?) similarities with the last, isolated line of Gautier's 'Terza Rima': 'Sublime aveuglement! Magnifique default!' (Chesters 2005: 57-58)

Indeed, the conclusion of 'Absences' could be read as a pure Symbolist epiphany: 'Such attics cleared of me! Such absences!' James Booth considers that 'After a beautiful passage of word painting the final isolated line shifts vertiginously and without warning to a completely different image' (Booth 1992: 161). In the drafts, this line was originally the opening to a longer stanza. Yet, with typically

Larkinesque poetic economy his published poem bears few traces of the trajectories taken in this process.

Andrew Motion notes that Larkin had read 'an anthology called *Nine French Poets*. (He said Laforgue's "Winter Coming On" was "the poem I've been trying to write all my life". In "'Absences" and the unpublished "Verlaine"', Motion asserts, Larkin 'adapted French sources' (Motion 1994: 202). However, Graham Chesters insists that there is no equivalent original to 'Absences' in French: 'At most, it echoes (sometimes faintly) seascapes found in Baudelaire ("Le Voyage"), Rimbaud ("Le Bateau ivre", "Mouvement") and Valery ("Le Cimetiere marin")' (Chesters 2005: 57).

The final line plays on a familiar trope of the Symbolist poet in his attic garret. Chesters explores the way Larkin wilfully misreads his Symbolist sources. He concentrates particularly on the image of 'attics' and its Baudelarian precursors:

If we accept the implications of the fact that...Larkin ascribes a certain Frenchness to "Absences," then Baudelaire's "Paysage" from "Tableaux parisiens" section of *Les Fleurs du mal* offers a straightforward intertext; the poet in his garret wilfully creates an imaginary poetic universe to escape from the tribulations of the everyday, a landscape from within a shuttered room. The "attics cleared of me" could point to the sweeping aside of such mythic self-portraits with their inevitable subjectivity. (Chesters 2005: 49)

'Absences' explores an abnegation of self through the contemplation of a place free from the speaker's presence. Larkin insisted that it was 'its subject matter' which explained his fondness for the poem, as 'I am always thrilled by the thought of what places look like when I am not there' (Larkin 2003: 17). Considering the final line of 'Absences' in the context of Larkin's *oeuvre*, the poem reaches the same transcendence as 'Here': 'Here is unfenced existence: / Facing the sun, untalkative, out of reach,' (Larkin *CP*: 137, ll.31-32) but in personal terms using the pronoun 'me.' However, Graham Chesters detects a degree of self-criticism even in the final line of the published poem:

the intimation of the self as encumbrance or embarrassment ("cleared of me") suggests something more, a deeper self criticism that goes beyond the play between objective and lyrical readings of descriptive text. Why should the poet celebrate so triumphantly his own exclusion? Is it his own tainted self that threatens the purity of the scene? (Chesters 2005: 48)

This is certainly present in the manuscript material. In drafting 'Absences,' Larkin struggles to reach an adequate concluding statement and on pages 113 of Workbook 2 considers an assertion of the transcendent 'innocence' of sea and sky without the speaker's presence. On pages 115-116 and 129 there is an objective acknowledgement of being dragged back from transcendence by a sense of petty guilt, described in courtroom imagery.

Graham Chesters concentrates on the way in which the poem and its drafts relate to the Symbolists. There is also the more obvious influence of Kafka's *The Trial* on the ultimately rejected courtroom imagery. As in Kafka's *The Trial* the speaker is unable to escape: 'But here the courtroom fills, the case restarts/ Dingy coughing argument.' Larkin associates 'Such attics cleared of me! such absences!' with Kafka's courtrooms hidden at the tops of flights of stairs. Chesters notes the difference that excluding the courtroom imagery makes to the conclusion of the poem:

Had this final version retained the courtroom drama, the exclamations would have been the place of articulation between exterior and interior, objective and subjective, descriptive and narrative. The hypothetical poem would have buttressed Motion's biographical view of the poet struggling with guilt and shame during his early days in Belfast. Instead by jettisoning the "stale inaudibilities" in an act of compositional cleansing, Larkin leaves us with a poem ending suggestively with an ambiguous line of exclamation which may indeed be "a joyous assertion of freedom" as well as an oblique confession of inner guilt and dinginess. (Chesters 2005: 54)

Ultimately, Larkin transcends any overt explanation of guilt and leaves a conclusion open to the reader's interpretation.

The trope of the attic threads through Workbooks 2 and 3. Larkin revises his second stanza of 'Deceptions' with 'fulfillment's desolate attic' on page 100 of Workbook 2 before uses the image in 'Absences.' 'Such attics cleared of me! Such absences!' appears first on page 113 of the same workbook. The theme is taken up with a mixture of Movement self-mockery and Romanticism in 'Unfinished Poem.' The drafts of 'Unfinished Poem' are found on pages 181-188 of Workbook 2 and pages 3-7 and page 85 of Workbook 3. Here, the speaker hides from death in his 'emaciate attic' and is liberated from the fear of death by an implicitly female figure.

Tellingly, some revealing jottings at the beginning of Workbook 3 demonstrate that Larkin is unable to abandon his line 'Such attics cleared of me! Such absences!' He mingles this line with a French quotation in which he appears to accuse himself of cowardice:

The curve of silence

The curves of silence

Je suis poltron, moi (Fantin Latour)

Such absences

Drawing attention to 'Deceptions' and 'Unfinished Poem,' Graham Chesters concludes that:

These textual attics, whether part of the myth-kitty or a tighter network of personal intertexts, reinforce a reading of the final exclamation as the reflective poet's response to inner revelation, a leap from the external models of infinity and purity to what would be his own emotional equivalent as poet. (Chesters 2005: 49)

Larkin's return to this trope suggests that it held a strong emotional resonance for him which is augmented by the evidence of the drafts both in material found in the course of writing 'Absences' and also in 'Unfinished Poem,' which remained unpublished during the poet's lifetime.

The Growth of the Poem.

'Absences' took its origin from an emotional 'experience' or metaphorical epiphany which Larkin wished to preserve. This is the sense of a sea and skyscape completely beyond the reach of land or human observation. The initial evocative phrase remains consistent throughout the drafting process: 'Rain patters on the sea...' although characteristically, as will be seen in 'Love Songs in Age,' he refines the line in which this appears. Larkin expends some imaginative energy in selecting images and a means of expression to capture his scene. He marshals the poem in a concentrated number of drafts by using a *terza rima* scheme. On page 113, where Larkin explicitly denotes the rhyme scheme by lettering the lines, it is clear that he envisages a final stanza which would conclude the poem with a couplet. There is clear evidence in the drafts that Larkin maintained this intention

throughout his drafting process. He continues to make incremental changes to his opening as he works on his conclusion. This is characteristic of Larkin's compositional practice although, interestingly, between drafting the poem and publishing it Larkin makes structural changes. Throughout the extant drafts Larkin has envisaged the poem as broken into three line stanzas. There is no extant typescript for 'Absences.' However, at some point in revising the poem for publication Larkin combines his two opening stanzas to create a stanza of six lines. He keeps what is now his second stanza as three lines and concludes with a one line stanza by a bold act of excluding lines from his concluding stanzas.

The celebrated last line, 'Such attics cleared of me! Such absences!' appears for the first time on page 113. Although he begins by attempting to integrate the line completely with his landscape he gradually expands this image to include that of being dragged back to 'a courtroom.' This seems to trigger further associations until he is ready to abandon his opening image of the sea and incorporate his final line into a draft of 'Since the majority of me.' Although he rejects the idea, this is one of the contingent versions through which the poem passes. In the Appendix, I give three significant, near complete contingent versions. The first, on page 114

(C 4: 416), gives a revised version of page 113, the phase in which Larkin remains focused upon his sea imagery. By contrast, on page 115 (C5: 417) Larkin has introduced the 'courtroom' imagery and the sense of being dragged back from lofty contemplation. However, here it still directly follows Larkin's most polished version of his sea and skyscape stanzas. Larkin dates this page '20/11/50.' Given

the radical shift which takes place on page 116 (C6: 418), this may indicate that Larkin considered abandoning the poem in this form.

Most significantly, in an unusual move for Larkin, he takes this concluding stanza and attempts to work it into 'Since the majority of me,' which uses a consistent vocabulary of litigation. As on page 94v of 'Deceptions,' Larkin draws a line across the page before introducing the stanza which is recognisably from 'Absences.' Although Graham Chesters notes that a draft of 'Since the majority of me' appears on the same page as 'Absences' (Chesters 2005: 53) he has not noticed that it in fact forms a complete poem in itself. Larkin continues to draft 'Since the majority of me' on pages 117 and 118. On page 129, he makes two attempts to create a final conclusion to this poem in which he explicitly articulates a sense of 'disgrace.' It might be read as reflecting his state of mind at the time, but it does not prove an adequate conclusion. Yet, the poem is important enough to return to a few years later freed from the overt confession of wretchedness seen in these drafts. He included 'Since the majority of me ' in his privately published *XX Poems* in 1951, though he did not publish his pared down version of 'Absences' until the *Less Deceived* in 1955.

In order to illustrate the way in which Larkin drafted 'Absences,' it is necessary to pay some attention to the way Larkin selects images for the opening of the poem. As in 'Deceptions,' there are lines which demonstrate Larkin's ability to hone and refine an idea. This can be shown by tracing lines 4 to 6 through the drafting process. It is only once he is fairly satisfied with the beginning that Larkin

strives to move towards his conclusion and there are significant imaginative 'misdirections'.

On page 109 and pages 111 and 112 Larkin concentrates on establishing what will become stanzas one and two in the published poem. On page 113, he marshals what he has of the poem so far and creates two lines of what he regards as stanza three. He tries to write a further stanza beginning 'Such attics cleared of me! Such absences.' On pages 114-115 he continues to fine tune his opening as he creates further stanzas. Larkin's process of establishing what will become the first stanza requires a subtle selection from possible images and details describing the rain falling on the sea. He is striving to establish his rhyme scheme from the outset and this shapes his choice of images. He rapidly establishes a complex *terza rima* rhyme scheme. On page 111, the first line of the first stanza ('waters') rhymes with third line of the first stanza ('craters.') The second line of the first stanza ('afternoons') rhymes with the first line of the second stanza ('water-dunes') and the third line of the second stanza ('lagoons'). In the initial stages of the drafting process, Larkin tries explicitly to articulate the contrast between the sound and impact of the rain and the immensity of the seascape in the opening three lines.

On page 111, his second page of drafting, he experiments with alternative descriptions for the 'craters' made by the droplets:

Rain patters on the sea, water to waters,
A small sound in a giant afternoon,
A sighing floor | peopled with
 provoked to tiny craters;
 speckled with

'[P]rovoked' suggests the rain is goading the sea and 'speckled' conveys the pattern of the water drops; '{peopled with}', however seems at odds with the theme of absence. As early as the first page of drafting Larkin has also drafted what he regards as his second stanza in order to establish his rhyme scheme. Nevertheless he makes four further attempts at his opening stanza. Through a process of refining, he gradually abandons the rhyming of 'waters' and 'craters' and chooses rhyme words that will remain consistent throughout the rest of his drafting process. By the fifth attempt, he has reached:

Rain patters on the sea. It tilts and sighs

Running floors collapsing into hollows,

And wind roughens its skin
~~{illegible} flanks roughened~~ contrariwise
~~{illegible}~~

On page 112, the second page of drafting, Larkin makes three attempts at the refining the opening two stanzas. By the bottom of the page, he has abandoned the image of 'A roughnecked wind' that appears in the previous two attempts, and after much working reaches 'spray-haired' to describe the movement of the wave:

on the
 Rain patters ~~on the sea~~, that tilts and sighs,

Fast-running floors, collapsing into hollows,

Tower Suddenly, ~~{illegible}~~
~~{illegible} Waves {illegible} walls Driving~~ Contrariwise
~~{illegible}~~
 spray-haired

This stanza remains stable in each version that Larkin writes out on pages 113-115 and into the published poem. By contrast, the second stanza, in which Larkin strives to express the sense of the sea's ceaseless movement and its isolation, proves far more problematic to stabilise. Larkin begins by explicitly articulating 'Shoreless vivacity {excitement}' on page 111. In trying to find an adjective for the 'lagoons' that form in the momentary calm between waves, he experiments with words that suggest isolation as well as transience:

While
 And rough winds rub the gloss off water dunes
 Running like walls, floundering to calm again-
 excitement hollows cursory brief
 Shoreless vivacity, lonely, transient lagoons
 unobserved

Three attempts at this second stanza appear on page 112. In the second attempt, he excludes the words 'shoreless' and '{landless}':

sleek
 dark
 Buffets the shine off sleek-skinned rising billows
 is playful all day long
 Waters out there with water is at play
 has landless
 Swells there; breaks there; is shoreless; steeps and shallows

Larkin will eventually transfer 'shoreless' to his description of the sky in the next stanza that first appears on page 113. The word 'shoreless' emphasises distance from land which Larkin finds exhilarating.

By the bottom of the page, Larkin is moving towards the essence of his stanza but not its tight expression:

~~blows over~~ ~~more~~
 drops another
 A wave [~~illegible~~] like a wall, [~~illegible~~] follows,
 Tumbling and scrambling. Out of sight all day
 Sea never tires.

In a particularly active draft on page 114, Larkin plays with the idea of 'soiled' to suggest both land and taint before reaching the final formulation of the line:

A wave drops like a wall; another follows,
~~Thundering scrambling and thundering scrambling~~
 Wilting ~~Tumbling and scrambling~~ / tirelessly at play

ships

~~sight of land~~ ~~soiling~~ Where there are no eyes and
 no
 shallows
~~Out of the shore's sight and the soiled shallows~~
~~Beyond the shackles of land and soiled shallows.~~
 shadows

A neat copy of this stanza appears on page 115, where Larkin considers replacing 'drops' with 'droops'. 'Drops' suggests falling whereas 'droops' is a more gradual collapse.

On page 113, Larkin creates his first sustained attempt at the whole poem and explicitly indicates his rhyme scheme by lettering the lines. In this version and the one which appears on page 114, Larkin concentrates on exploring the landscape emptied of the speaker's presence. This mental evoking of an imagined landscape is more in keeping with Larkin's Symbolist precursors. However, later in the drafting the image of 'attics' will suggest a court 'case' from which the speaker can find no imaginative escape. On page 113, he indicates a missing line in the third stanza and seeks to employ an awkward half rhyme between 'corridors' with 'absences.' His fourth stanza is directly related to his images of the sea and sky. However, he is unable to create a concluding couplet:

C And over the sea the yet more shoreless sky,

Blown, lighted corridors

D ~~Riddled with wind, hung with far corridors~~

C _____

D Such attics cleared of me! Such absences!

~~Such~~

E ~~The There~~ These many-plinthe and statue-crowded sky

And veracities

D ~~The~~ sea unsnarling its vivacities

E ~~Merely in image~~
~~Attain out there singular~~

'Vivacities' conveys liveliness whereas 'veracities' emphasises truth.

On page 114, the fourth page of drafting, Larkin reaches a partially complete fourth stanza in which he creates a vision of the 'These many-plinthed and statue-crowded seas {skies}' as 'the last guards ~~{[illegible]}~~ {guardians} of irrelevance' and 'The sea unsnarling its vivacities {veracities}' which leads him to the partially worked conclusion: '{Allows no treading on its}/ And both thereby attain ~~an~~ {their} innocence'. This is in keeping with Larkin's work on line 6 in which he reaches '{Where there are no eyes {ships} and no shallows}.' This is a pure epiphany which also reveals a yearning towards a place free from any taint. Interestingly, on this page Larkin does not use his seminal line of exclamation. He has altered 'lighted corridors' in the previous stanza to '{lit up} galleries.' This gives a full rhyme with 'seas' and a sight rhyme when he alters his word to 'skies.'

However, having evoked this lofty state of purity, he is dragged back into petty guilt and recriminations. On the sixth page of drafting, page 115, Larkin expresses a subjective sense of guilt:

~~Such attics cleared of me! Such absences!~~
~~Thinking of them, something in me~~

At this point he first introduces his Kafkaesque image of the courtroom in the attic:

Such attics cleared of me! Such absences!

~~is filling fills again the the case~~
~~But the courtroom [illegible], restarts~~

But here the courtroom fills, the case restarts,

Dingy coughing argument

This subverts the Symbolist theme of the attic as a place of imaginative escape. The legalistic imagery seizes the poet's imagination to such an extent that on page 116 (see C 6: 418) he creates a draft of 'Since the majority of me' and adds this stanza from 'Absences.' In the draft of 'Since the majority of me' Larkin uses the language of the court to assert the irrevocable and mutual breakdown of a relationship: 'Debating [illegible] {[illegible]} ends forthwith, ~~but~~ {and} we / Divide.' However, despite suggesting that an absolute break is possible, there is a sense of wretchedness and being dragged back into recriminations which offers a possible context for the feelings in the stanza from 'Absences':

I say,
And thereby we are freed, /, and can
Control and change unused
[illegible] our [illegible] lives
And as I say it, there revives
despondency
A faint intense [illegible]

I
us
me

Such attics cleared of me! such absences!

~~Begins again [illegible]~~

~~The courtroom air is stale~~

~~We cannot leave the courtroom where our case,~~ and the

~~Continually The stale~~

~~Is on perpetually and dingy coughing~~

This shows the ambiguity of Larkin's feeling as he both struggles to suggest that it is possible to make a clean break and suggests a sense of being trapped in the lines he crosses from the stanza beginning 'Such attics cleared of me! Such absences!' The positioning of a poem about his relationship with Ruth Bowman within the drafts of 'Absences' suggests that this was among Larkin's preoccupations in this imaginative deviation in the drafts. However, Larkin strikes out 'Since the majority of me' from its original place as part of 'Absences.'

He returns to the second stanza of 'Absences' on page 129, but seems unable to finalise his stanza. One of his reasons for abandoning this line of imagery was perhaps that it would overlap too much with 'Since the majority of me.' Larkin explores guilt and his desire to find an imaginative place that he cannot sully by his presence. He concludes:

And somewhere guilt. Thinking of any place

~~I~~

~~We cannot cheapen lessens the disgrace~~

He reaches concluding stanzas which could potentially have gone into his published poem. He depersonalizes this by removing the pronoun:

Such attics cleared of me! Such absences!

Such courtroom consolations for my case in a

Made up of stale
[illegible] All-dingy inaudibilities

With The thought
And somewhere guilt! [illegible] of any place
...

vague
Uncheapened by this / drawn out vague disgrace

The drafts of 'Absences' illustrate Larkin's ability to exclude material not only in the large gesture of reducing much drafting to a single isolated line, but also from his evocative description of the sea. Although it might appear a shame that images such as 'rough winds rub the gloss off water dunes' do not survive into the poem, Larkin shows a high level of aesthetic judgement in what he excluded. The manuscripts also demonstrate Larkin's ability to impose a complex rhyme scheme whilst working towards his final expression. In addition, they demonstrate that in the case of 'Absences' Larkin did not allow a personal preoccupation to force him

into producing a poem which repeated the private agonising of 'Since the majority of me.'

These two poems from 1950 demonstrate the complexity of Larkin's impulses towards the highly Romantic or Symbolist style and the scrupulous truthfulness of being 'less deceived.' 'Deceptions' has evoked extreme critical responses which are a reaction to the uncompromising final stanza to which Larkin returned by a reiterative process after a Romantic 'misdirection.' By contrast, in 'Absences,' Larkin rejects a sense of despair as a response to being trapped in an unsatisfactory relationship in favour of a Symbolist epiphany. This is in keeping with the theme of the desire for the transcendence of self which characterises later poems in Larkin's oeuvre such as 'Here' and 'High Windows'.

Although critical studies of Larkin's workbooks have already made a wider readership aware of what is in the drafts of specific poems, there are still new angles to be discovered, and subtleties which have not been properly grasped. The fact that Larkin introduces his second stanza of 'Absences' into a draft of 'Since the majority of me' has not, for instance, been noticed before. It is clear that the planned digitalisation and on-line dissemination of the Larkin workbooks will give new opportunities for such discoveries.

Chapter 8

Setting 'Unchangeably in Order': The Drafting of Philip Larkin's 'Love Songs in Age'

Introduction

'Love Songs in Age' is one of a number of poems which critics have identified as being inspired by Larkin's mother. His relationship with Eva Larkin was one of protectiveness and empathy, but also irritation. She relied on his support in the long period after the death of her husband. Naturally, this has led to an implicit identification of Eva Larkin with the widow in 'Love Songs in Age'. Indeed, Andrew Motion has imposed a somewhat literal interpretation on Larkin's inspiration for the poem as a memory of 'the songbooks Eva used to play on the piano in her youth (one had even been "coloured" by the infant Kitty)' (Motion 1994: 279). He continues: 'the lessons [about relationships] Larkin draws from his mother's experience are the same as those he derives from his own' (Motion 1994: 279). Unlike in the cases of 'Reference Back' and 'Mother, Summer, I', there is no internal evidence in 'Love Songs in Age' that Larkin was writing about his mother's experience. However as Motion explains, it was one of 'the small handful [of poems], including "Mother, Summer, I," Larkin wrote after a week in Weymouth with his mother, although he did not finish it for three and a half years

(Motion 1994: 230) and 'The conclusion of the poem, like the opening, had been prompted by a Christmas visit to his mother...' (Motion 1994: 279).

Andrew Motion does not consider the equally concrete 'biographical' fact that Larkin created two typescript versions of the poem that are distinct enough to present separate 'versions' of the work. This is a significant oversight as it was unusual for Larkin to create such very different typescript 'versions' which were the result of two historically distanced phases of drafting. He began the poem in 1953 but did not reach a publishable version until 1957.

It is arguable that the two versions of 'Love Songs in Age' are as critically interesting as the two famous versions of D.H. Lawrence's 'Piano.' However, unlike the misdirection in 'Deceptions' which has entered the critical consciousness through Tolley's monograph on Larkin's mode of composition, the 'versions' of 'Love Songs in Age' are not widely known to those who have not investigated Larkin's manuscripts for themselves.

The draft of 'Love Songs in Age' are substantial, covering twenty-seven pages in all in Workbooks 3 and 4 as well as the two typescript versions. There are fifteen pages, pages 26 to 40 in Workbook 3, and an 'unfinished' typescript, DPL 2/3/19 in the first phase and twelve pages, pages 128 to 139 in Workbook 4, and a typescript, DPL 2/3/5, for the second phase. In consequence these drafts are valuable for considering Larkin's compositional practice in detail. 'Love Songs in Age' is revealing because, although it is somewhat unusual in the persistence of its misdirection, it typifies many of Larkin's characteristics compositional techniques

and can be used to illustrate explicitly how the poet creates his subtle 'verbal device.'

Significantly, the poet sought actively to distance himself from the poem's subject matter. He claimed in his reading of *The Whitsun Weddings* for *Listen* that:

Every so often one writes a poem that has no basis in one's own experiences at all and I can't imagine what led me to write a poem about Victorian or Edwardian love songs and I can't even remember wanting to write it or completing it. (Larkin 1965)

However, the manuscript evidence reveals that Larkin took this poem through two substantial phases of drafting. In the first phase of drafting, which resulted in the first typescript, Larkin engages imaginatively with the woman's expectations. The songs propel her into the psychological landscape of her past where she patiently awaits love, which is personified as a romantic lover. When Larkin returns to remake the poem this complex sustained metaphor is replaced by the imagery of 'the unfailing sense of being young / Spread out like a Spring woken tree.' By purging the poem of explicitly erotic imagery Larkin creates the simple elegance of the poem he chose to publish. By comparing the two versions it is possible to speculate why Larkin abandoned the first typescript 'unfinished' at such an advanced stage in its development and how his remaking of the poem differs from the first attempt. A comparison of the versions might reveal why Larkin would

reject the first typescript and be able to complete the other to a publishable standard.

'Love Songs in Age' was not a poem that Larkin completed rapidly and for which he could perhaps forget the initial inspiration or its concluding point. It demanded a great investment of time and imagination. Therefore, his comment that 'I can't even remember wanting to write it or completing it' seems disingenuous. This raises the question of why Larkin would feel the need to assert his detachment from the poem's 'experience' and composition. Elaborating on Larkin's comment, James Booth speculates that in the drafting process Larkin gained greater objectivity:

The poet would seem to have little reason to suppress any personal motive... At some point in the poem's long development the personal inspiration was left behind and its subject became impersonal. (Booth 2005: 54)

Similarly, Larkin claimed that 'I sometimes think that the most successful poems are those in which subjects appear to float free from the preoccupations that chose them, and to exist in their own right, reassembled--one hopes-- in the eternity of imagination' (Larkin 2002: 79). One of Larkin's difficulties in drafting the poem is establishing enough objective distance towards the female experience he is describing. In the first phase of drafting, he creates a clichéd image of her expectations of romantic love. Between the two typescripts Larkin makes a

significant transition in style from a competent, but inferior poem whose language seems portentous, with dated mannerisms, to a timeless and universal evocation of the way in which the expectations of youth are unfulfilled.

The Typescripts: A Comparison of the Two Versions

The typescripts are the product of distinct phases of composition. In both phases, Larkin resorts to numbering stanzas in the manuscripts that have reached a point when he feels they are ready to include in his typescript. Larkin was usually able to pare away unwanted material before the poem reached a typescript phase. Yet in the case of 'Love Songs in Age,' Larkin pauses in his drafting process to type out the stanzas he has created so far. Possibly this suggests a desire to find a way of marshalling the poem. The first typescript is in almost publishable form. However, Larkin was extremely particular about what he chose for publication and this version has weaknesses of expression. Most significantly, Larkin is unable to reach a concluding statement.

The first typescript (C7: 419) comprises four stanzas, and shows substantial holograph corrections, especially to stanza three. In contrast to the first typescript, the second (C8: 420) is given the title 'Love Songs in Age,' and there are only two holograph corrections, though the poem does still differ slightly from the published version. Even the presentation of the two typescripts seems to reflect the more honed and less cluttered nature of the three-stanza version. Whereas the first, unfinished typescript has single line spacing, the second typescript, with its more natural metaphors, is double spaced. Clearly it is a final rather than a working text.

The opening six lines are the same in both typescript versions, with the only difference that Larkin has 'She'd' in the opening line of the first typescript rather than 'She'. Using the past tense rather than the present continuous suggests that the woman is coming to the end of her life. It was important to Larkin to create a stable opening. The versions then fork in the concluding couplet of the first stanza. As has already been seen in 'Deceptions,' this is often a point at which Larkin struggles, as will be discussed below.

The second typescript is noticeably more condensed than the first. The opening lines of the second stanza are similar in both versions, but Larkin has honed his expression. In the first typescript he has: '{*Their*} ~~The~~ tunes, of course: each frank submissive chord,/ Ushering plainly/ Word after sprawling hyphenated word/ To that arpeggio fingering at the close'. In the second this has become: 'Relearning how each frank submissive chord/ Had ushered in/ Word after sprawling hyphenated word'. Introducing 'Relearning' captures instantly the process of recalling something not used for a long time.

In the first typescript, Larkin creates the disjointed metaphor of the songs flying to the 'warehouse of her memory':

Flew to the warehouse of her memory

(Darker the basement grows)

And brought back heavy rooms, a broken set

Of lustre-jugs, French windows dribbling in the wet;

The second stanza, elaborates a metaphorical 'basement' which dims as she is transported into her past and its feelings. This suggests not only the heavy décor of a Victorian or Edwardian home but also sets a psychological mood of dereliction.

Stanza three focuses upon the way in which the woman is duped into passive expectation by the promises of the songs. Maintaining the sensory tone of this version, articulated in the concluding couplet of the first stanza, Larkin describes love as 'that cold, much-mentioned fume.' 'Cold' introduces a warning note of frigidity; 'fume' suggests noxiousness rather than simply a contraction of perfume. He uses the not wholly successful metaphor of sending and receiving letters:

But, above all, that cold much-mentioned fume
The songs called love,
Which innocence had forced her to assume
Was love, and would come later; would be ~~wrung~~ lit
With ~~From~~ news of casualty or sudden move,
~~From a subdued tongue, [illegible]~~ *Persuading her to sit*
~~From~~ ~~On~~ country evenings, hearing the wind rise,
Sending to long-due letters immediate replies,

That Larkin is uncomfortable with this stanza is demonstrated by the number of holograph changes he makes. Larkin's language is saturated with meaningless rhetoric and portentous lines such as 'Was love, and would come later; would be

~~wrung~~ lit/ With ~~From~~ news of casualty or sudden move.' However, Larkin does suppress '~~From a subdued tongue~~' in favour of the plainer '*Persuading her to sit.*'

By contrast, in stanza two of the second typescript Larkin uses the metaphor of a tree to describe the feeling evoked by the songs and the sense of anticipation of the time to come:

And the familiar sense of being young
Spread out like a Spring-laden tree, wherein
A hidden freshness sung,
A certainty of time laid up in store
As when she played them first...

This has a Romantic elegance, using natural imagery to convey the woman's feelings of burgeoning youth.

In the fourth stanza of the first typescript, Larkin embodies 'Love' as a romantic lover whose intervention will bring a conflagrating 'joy' and fulfill her 'farthest wishes':

Until, with footstep or undated note,
Hat thrown aside,
Love, bursting in, stoops to the naked throat.
Then all her grief flares up and vanishes,
Then from the glare of joy she cannot hide,

Watching her farthest wishes,
In brilliant bitter semblance of a gown
Woven for her sole shoulders, coming stiffly down.

The first series of drafts leading to the first 'unfinished' typescript employ a closer empathy with the woman's desires than that implied in the more processed second typescript, which almost matches the published poem. This significant 'misdirection' of the personification of love will be considered in more detail below. This stanza indicates the extent of her previous suffering as 'all her grief flares up and vanishes.' She is clothed in a 'gown,' which might suggest her wedding gown, but this is qualified as a 'bitter semblance of a gown.' Although it might be possible to read this version as ending on a more affirming note, there are indications such as 'cold-much mentioned fume' and 'brilliant bitter semblance' that indicate a particular stance towards love and a suggestion of disillusionment. Indeed, Larkin clearly indicates that the poem has been left '*Unfinished*'. It was his inability to create a satisfactory fifth stanza in the manuscripts that caused this typescript to stall.

In contrast to the emotional intensity of the woman's imagined reaction to the rectifying powers of love in the first typescript, in the second typescript love offers certainty and resolution. The use of 'bright incipience' aptly captures a sense of latent potential promised by 'The glare of that much- mentioned brilliance love.' By subtly reworking 'that cold much mentioned fume/ The songs called love,' found in the first typescript, Larkin continues the idea of optimistic expectation

from stanza two which is ultimately undermined. Larkin's psychologically complex concluding statement suggests that the woman would be forced to 'cry' if she acknowledged that this resolving love had not arrived:

The glare of that much-mentioned brilliance, love,

Broke out to show

Its bright incipience *reformed*
~~regrouped~~ above,

Still promising to solve, and satisfy,

And set unchangeably in order. So

To put them back, to cry,
Was hard, ~~to do~~ without / admitting how *lamely*?

It had not done so then, and could not now.

By the time of the final publication of the poem, Larkin resolves the awkwardness of '~~regrouped~~' or 'reformed' by leaping to a vaguer but more emotionally bold (if mixed) metaphor 'sailing above'. Larkin strengthens the sense of passive disappointment by reworking 'Was hard ~~to do~~ without admitting how' by crossing out '~~to do~~' and replacing it with 'lamely'. Although Larkin's question mark suggests that he is uncertain about it, 'lamely' survives into the published version.

The two typescripts are distinct enough to be regarded as separate poems. In the second, Larkin achieves greater emotional distances from the woman's feelings but without sacrificing a sensitive appreciation of her reaction to the songs. His constant reworking and elisions produce a more refined and profound effect. This

process of retyping is not typical of Larkin's drafting, but it does illustrate an important characteristic of Larkin's composition: a conflict between emotionalism and poetic control. The 'unfinished' typescript strives to engage with the causes of the woman's sense of dissatisfaction. It is overcrowded and cluttered like a Victorian parlour and employs the clichés of sentimental fiction and songs. The woman is disappointed because there is no grand romantic gesture, 'Love, bursting in, stoops to the naked throat.' The second version is far more controlled. The glut of detail is reduced to the image of 'familiar sense of being young / Spread out like a Spring-laden tree' and 'bright incipience' above. The organic nature of these images adds more poignancy to the sense of unfulfilled expectation at the end of the poem.

Creating a 'Verbal Device': The Growth of the Poem

If one were to characterise Philip Larkin's compositional techniques from an analysis of his drafts the key would be literary discipline. Whereas Dylan Thomas works in a profuse creative chaos, Philip Larkin asserts order at every stage of his writing process. Larkin allows himself to write in an exploratory fashion, but always maintains control over the progress of the poem. Discussing his poetry, Larkin explained:

a poem isn't only emotion. In my experience you've got the emotional side -- let's call it the fork side -- and you cross it with the knife side, the side that wants to sort it out, chop it up, arrange it

...You never write a poem out of emotion alone, just as you never
write a poem from the knife side...(Larkin 2002: 51)

There is an essential element of balance in bringing a poem to its final form. In order to control 'emotion' it is necessary to impose order. He is able ruthlessly to cut away extraneous material. Unlike Thomas, Larkin does not embrace an exhaustive play of variations rather his compositional strategy allows him to complete and compartmentalize sections as he builds up the poem. This strategy shapes his compositional practice. Consequently, by concentrating on the way in which Larkin establishes initial order and then marshals his exploratory writing it is possible to illustrate the essential elements of Larkin's struggle with 'emotion' and control.

This chapter will consider four of Larkin's characteristic technical processes as illustrated in the drafts of 'Love Songs in Age'.

i) The 'snatch': In many of his poems Larkin has a key phrase or phrases which remain consistent throughout his drafting, are intimately connected with the inception of the poem, and remain in the final version as its most evocative element.

ii) Perfecting the form of the first stanza before proceeding: Typically, Larkin brings the first stanza to something resembling its final form before undertaking the rest and imposes order by establishing a rhyme scheme. However, he frequently struggles with the final lines of his first stanza which form the essential

bridge to the stanzas which succeed it and at which point the poem can be taken in a number of potential directions.

iii) Misdirection or deviation: Not infrequently, particularly in poems with complex impulses behind them, Larkin will take a poem in directions of imagery of emotional tone which he eventually abandons entirely in the interests of a unified final impact.

iv) Aiming at the last line: Larkin has a strong sense that each poem has only one final form and he needs the poem's final lines to be confident of completing it. Sometimes the first line is there from the beginning. Always its formulation dominates the final phase of composition:

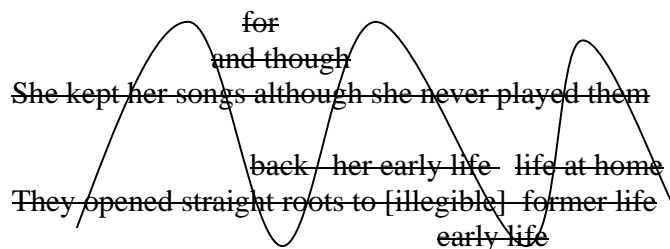
i) The 'Snatch'

The 'snatch' is a key phrase, persisting through drafts, which gives Larkin a starting point for his composition. This fragment can be either an image or a statement. It can be part of a half-formed idea on which Larkin will still spend a little time perfecting the rest of the detail of the lines where it appears.

Explaining his method, Larkin noted that: 'the idea for a poem and a bit of it, a snatch or a line -- it needn't be the opening line -- come simultaneously. In my experience one never sits down and says I will now write a poem about this or that, in the abstract' (Larkin 1983: 52). The initial spark of a poem, 'a snatch or line,' was always created mentally before anything was set down on paper. He begins with linguistic fragments or phrases which are the intimate basis of the poem. He cannot simply decide to write on a specific theme. Since poetry is a highly

condensed form, it is these nuggets which initiate the desire to write. Whereas, Thomas could stimulate his compositional practice artificially by finding a word around which to build up an initial phrase, with Larkin this is an organic process. Larkin's statement aptly describes the experience of starting a poem in which the element of reverie and mental phrase building are important before the work of setting the poem on paper.

In 'Love Songs in Age,' Larkin has the initial snatch 'She kept her songs,' on page 26 of Workbook 3, the first page of drafting, although there is some tentative work on her relationship to them. This is significant as Larkin struggles to convey different aspect of the woman's experience. He begins by asserting explicitly how the songs evoke the past:



for
and though
She kept her songs although she never played them
back her early life life at home
They opened straight roots to [illegible] former life
early life

Although they are 'never played', they connect the woman immediately to her past life. The tree imagery of 'straight roots' does not seem to be related to the breakthrough in the second phase of drafting where Larkin uses the image of the 'tree' to describe 'the unfailing sense of being young' the songs evoke. Rather, Larkin focuses upon the physical way the roots tie her to her past.

Larkin then uses 'She kept her songs' to explore how parts of the woman's life have been lost with her barely noticing and introduces the idea that the songs are only kept because 'They took so little room':

~~when the her- sold- sold~~
~~She kept her songs, though her / her piano went went~~
~~Sometime, she hardly noticed with the rest~~
~~They took so little room~~

The woman has lost her 'piano' and in a variant of the line Larkin notes '~~House~~ ~~sold~~.' Her identity is being eroded. This sympathetic view of women is also seen in 'Afternoons' where 'Their beauty has thickened./ Something is pushing them/ To the side of their own lives.'

Taking this idea into the opening line, Larkin explores the ages at which she bought and played these songs. Even at this point they are '~~Old songs~~', suggesting that they are already tainted with nostalgia:

~~space~~
~~She kept her songs, they took so little room:~~
~~Songs she had eighteen, nineteen, twenty~~
~~Old songs she bought at twenty, twenty one~~
~~And learnt at home~~

One of Larkin's characteristic compositional methods is to explore and build up detail which is later excluded or cut down. He considers the ages at which she

played the songs, (marriageable but still at home), but excludes this detail as irrelevant once he tightens his expression.

By page 27, the second page of drafting, Larkin has his 'snatch' embedded in his final version of the lines: 'She kept her songs, they took so little space: / The covers pleased her.' However, the break through of using the covers is made as early as the workings on the first page of drafting, page 26.

The way in which Larkin uses his 'snatch' demonstrates the various means by which he describes the woman. Part of the tentative process which takes place once Larkin begins to set the poem onto paper is to find the right detail. This is done in a concentrated way which does not demand an exhaustive exploration of variants. Larkin is striving to shut down the possible directions of the first stanza rather than to open them up. The manuscripts reveal the ideas which Larkin considers important. This is particularly revealing as with 'Love Songs in Age' he struggles to find the best approach to his theme of unfulfilled love.

ii) Perfecting the form of the first stanza before proceeding

When Larkin has a starting point he is able to apply discipline. He writes, as he put it: 'in notebooks in pencil, trying to complete each stanza before going on to the next. Then when the poem is finished I type it out, and sometimes make small alterations' (Larkin 1983: 70). This systematic approach ensured that Larkin always had a stable first stanza which also established a rhyme scheme. The opening stanza forms the essential foundation of his writing process.

The first six lines of stanza one in 'Love Songs in Age', once established, remained consistent through both phases of drafting. The whole development of the poem depends on the deceptive casualness of the opening with its description of the covers of the sheet music. On page 26, the first page of drafting, Larkin makes several attempts at comparing the covers to a 'familiar face' before deciding to focus instead, with a sure poetic instinct, on their state of repair:

~~By now it was the covers that she liked~~

~~And each was familiar like~~ as

~~An old name, an old face~~

~~Each cover as familiar as an old face~~ a

This cover bleached

On page 27, the second page of drafting, Larkin has already reached his final formulation of these lines with the telling repetition of 'One....' There are still some tentative workings, but he already has much of the stanza:

She kept her songs they took so little space:

The covers pleased her,

One bleached through lying in a sunny place

One marked with circles glasses made from a vase of water
~~Throughout an unidentified July~~ have made

And ~~coloured~~, painted, ~~coloured~~
And ~~painted~~ / by her daughter

Instead of extending the idea over two lines: 'One bleached through lying in a sunny place/ ~~Throughout an unidentified July~~' Larkin interlines the image of the covers marked by water. 'Throughout an unidentified July' was perhaps too vague, although a beautiful line in itself with the long 'i' chime in 'unidentified' and 'July.' Characteristically, Larkin vacillates between 'painted' and 'coloured' as the most apt description of the covers. The songs are disregarded domestic clutter to be 'bleached,' 'marked' 'mended' and 'coloured.' However, rediscovered unexpectedly they have emotive power and so evoke the past. Finally, Larkin writes this stanza below. He briefly considers using 'Their' covers rather than 'The' but rejects it:

She kept her songs, they took so little space:

~~Their~~

The covers pleased her,

One bleached through lying in a sunny place,

One marked with circles from a vase of water

One mended, when a tidy fit had seized her,

And coloured by her daughter-

In the first phase of 'Love Songs in Age', Larkin has already established his rhyme scheme for the first stanza: abacbcd. However, there is a subtle repetition. The chiming of 'her' with 'water' and 'daughter', with the unstressed 'feminine' final syllable, emphasises the feminine domestic sphere in which these songs are

preserved. In addition he has created iambic lines of five stresses, with a short two-foot second and sixth line. Larkin has brought the structure of his opening stanza to its final form. He remarked in 'A Conversation with Ian Hamilton':

I think one would have to be very sure of oneself to dispense with the help that metre and rhyme give and I doubt really if I could operate without them. I have occasionally, some of my favourite poems have not rhymed or had any metre, but it's rarely premeditated. (Larkin 2002: 21).

The opening of the first stanza remains consistent through both phases of drafting except for a variant of 'She'd' which appears in the first typescript as well as some drafts. On page 128 of Workbook 4, in the second phase of drafting, Larkin experiments with putting lines 3 to 6 in parenthesis. However, the essence of the stanza remains consistent. Larkin carefully crafts each individual block that he will use in building his poem. He needs a basic ground plan in order to begin his construction although he will at times make extensions or ornamentations.

Larkin frequently struggles with the final lines of his first stanza which form a bridge between this stanza and the rest of the poem. In the first phase of drafting 'Love Songs in Age,' Larkin explores a variety of ideas in couplets that end in 'past' and 'last,' taking his ideas in quite radically alternative directions. Establishing the final couplet in the second phase of drafting is vital to the progress of the new

phase of revision. He continues to make incremental changes to his lines throughout the drafts.

The lines he reaches in the first typescript are noticeably weaker than Larkin's usual standard. They convey the sensory way in which the songs evoke the woman's past: 'To ~~happen on them like this~~ at the last {them upon}/ Drifted her senses round until they faced the past.' During the second phase of drafting, Larkin makes the woman's status clearer by rhyming 'widowhood' and 'stood.' He makes incremental improvements to the expression of these lines in the process of writing out his first stanza.

In the first phase of 'Love Songs in Age,' Larkin explores a variety of ideas around his 'past' and 'last' couplet. His revisions show uncertainty and restlessness as he strives to find an appropriate bridge between his first stanza and the rest of the poem. On page 27, the second page of drafting of the first phase the concept of the songs attending her at the end of her life appears: 'They'd lain about ~~illegible~~ her life for so long past}/ She liked to have them with her at the last.' Then, on the bottom of page 27 the second page and on page 28, the third page, there is the more trivial suggestion of them catching her 'interest' or 'fancy' once more in versions such as 'Part of her life for so much of the past/ They reawoke {once more caught}her interest at the last.' The fourth page of drafting, page 29, is particularly revealing, as Larkin takes several directions in his exploration of the couplet. His first attempt suggests the songs' power to release the past. The woman's reaction is puzzlement. In an explicit marginal he comments '~~All lie/ All lie~~':

~~All lie To come unwarned upon them at the last~~
~~All lie Bemused her by releasing from the past.~~

He trivializes this in the next attempt by turning her reaction to amusement and nostalgia:

Happening on them unwarned
~~To come unwarned upon them~~ at the last
~~Amused her. How far back into the past~~

He then reaches the idea of her being taken physically back into the past: '~~Lifted her up, carried her into the past.~~' This in turns suggests that they turn her mind like a weather vane before he arrives at the idea of her 'senses' being blown to face the past. The idea of the power of memory is reminiscent of the end of 'Piano' and especially Lawrence's struggle to convey how he is compelled into his past. The lines are close to what Larkin will take into his first typescript:

Blew ~~back her mind to point~~ towards the past
~~They reached~~ all her senses round

Yet despite having reached something close to the stanza that will appear in the first typescript, on page 30, the fifth page of drafting, Larkin turns the past into an evocative and heady scent. This is heavily crossed out and clearly rejected:

~~To come
Coming unwarned upon them at the last~~

~~Got a lungful of unweakened past~~

~~| She deeply breathed the overpowering past |
| She breathed too deeply of the overpowering past | the unwearied past~~

Larkin then returns to and refines his description of the songs blowing her senses into the past. On pages 31 and 32, the sixth and seventh pages of drafting, he tries to hone his expression with no new ideas. On page 32, the seventh page, which is the first stanza Larkin earmarks for his typescript by a circled '1' he reaches: 'And so {Therefore} to happen on them ~~at~~ {near} {at} the last/ Blew all her sense round ~~to~~ {so that they} faced the past.'

The second phase of drafts appear in the Workbook 4. When Larkin returns to this stanza in the second phase of drafting he has settled upon explicitly stating the woman's marital status. In a process of honing, Larkin revises his couplet as he writes out his first stanza before drafting the second. He has the idea that she is 'looking for something else' in the wider sense and the significant enacted moment of pause between the stanzas where first stanza ends 'and stood.' His most significant decision is to whether or not to suggest that she is '{late}' in widowhood.' A brief survey of this couplet reveals subtle shifts. On page 128 of Workbook 4, he begins with:

~~when she came on~~
~~And coming on them late in widowhood~~

And
that
so / they ~~had stayed~~

~~far~~ late
And so ~~they~~ stayed, till ~~late~~ in widowhood,

found
She ~~found~~ them, looking for something else, and stood

There is the contrast between simply coming on them and the sense that they are there all the time waiting to be discovered. In the next act of revision, on page 129, Larkin tries adding details about the length of time she paused. As is the drafting of the first stanza where he tries and rejects various ages at which she played the songs, this is not kept:

There they still
~~there they~~ were; ~~while~~ and
~~So that she found them,~~ late in widowhood

~~In search of~~ ~~ten~~
Looking for something else and ~~for some minutes~~ stood

Larkin rejects the even more explicit '~~In search of something else~~' in favour of his original 'Looking for something else.' In the next two attempts, on pages 130 and 132, he reaches the idea of the songs 'wait[ing]' to be discovered, which survives into the published poem:

so they had waited

~~there they stayed~~ till
~~these~~ waited [Illegible] and [late] in widowhood

She found them, looking for something else, and stood

Despite creating a chiming of 'a' with 'waited' Larkin is unsure about keeping '[late]'. This final revision of the couplet is an example of Larkin perfecting how to formulate lines so that that they compactly express his ideas.

iii) Misdirection or Deviation

Larkin's manuscripts give an insight into the 'back story' of his poems that it would be impossible to gain through deconstructing the published poems. Despite an imaginative investment in exploring a particular image or direction, he is able to recognise that an image needs to be rejected to bring the poem to fruition. 'Love Songs in Age' is unusual because of the length of time this recognition of misdirection takes. However, in the second phase of drafting Larkin lets go of his original conception of the poem and eventually establishes control.

Larkin's first phase of drafting 'Love Songs in Age' generated several deviations and misdirections. Perhaps the most interesting of these were Larkin's attempts to personify love. This is intimately connected with the imaginative landscape which the songs evoke. It can be followed through to the first typescript. However, this left no trace in the second phase of drafting. A personification of love first appears on page 32, the seventh page of drafting in the first phase. In his

preliminary workings of this image, Larkin emphasises the disappointments of love. Love is a figure reminiscent of medieval romance, living among the trees:

And all around the dark and lampless ~~woods~~,^{trees}
 Where
~~Ruined~~ love, some said,
~~Lived~~ with his hundred years

On page 33, the eighth page of drafting, Larkin works intensively on the landscape and the personification of love which is evoked as the woman returns into her past:

And, all around the ~~[illegible]~~ and lampless trees<sup>cold
thick</sup>
 Where love, some said,^{it's}
 Lived with his hundred years. But ~~where she sees~~^{here}
 Only reunions and renunciations:

His first attempt explicitly stresses 'reunions and renunciations.' The woman is reunited with her past but experienced only 'renunciations.' Love is a mythical figure known only by hearsay and story.


Larkin then tries the strategy of personifying other facets of the woman's disappointment in a sodden landscape:

And, all the woods and lanes and stiles
and their dark walks
were touched
Here hands were [illegible]

He extends this to an image of the disappointments grieving in the wood:

unmade offers
unmet
[illegible] [illegible]
Around, lay
Behind, the woods where sacrifices [illegible]
Beyond, the woods where sacrifices [illegible]
Wringing their hands,
And walks
Long glades where years of leaf decayed untouched,
And some bird moaned, or some afternoon wind.
Upon love

It is a melancholy scene of desolation: 'where years of leaf decayed untouched,/And some bird moaned, or some afternoon wind.' Larkin writes a neat copy of these lines on the ninth page of drafting, page 34, selecting 'unmade offers' and adding the line 'A A landscape every singer understands.' It is evoked by the songs. Below, Larkin condenses this to:



And, round the house, the land she thought her songs
Described so well

~~Secretive woods~~

On page 35, the tenth page of drafting, Larkin makes a transition to a draft which is a hybrid between this image of love in the woods and what will become the opening of stanza three in the first typescript:

But, over all, that cold much-mentioned ~~light~~ ^{fume}
The songs called love,
~~Spilled round the woods where~~
~~Spilled round the trees at night~~
Rising from [illegible]
Which innocence then forced her to assume
which would come later and was crouched
Was love, [illegible], and
alder groves
At present sobbing in the ~~undergrowth~~
Or strayed where years of leaf decayed untouched

He alters 'undergrowth' to 'alder grove' with its pagan connotations. However, subsequently he abandons this mythologizing of love in favour of love as the romantic hero which is found in the first typescript. On pages 36 to 37 Larkin gradually refines this stanza until it reaches the state at which it is found in the first typescript. Instead of a wholly mythical figure, love becomes the romantic hero for

whom the woman patiently waits. On page 36, the eleventh page, Larkin has the essence of the opening of the stanza:

that
But, above all ~~the~~ cold much-mentioned fume
The songs called love,
Which innocence had forced her to assume

would be wrung
Was love, and would come later; [~~illegible~~]
From news of death or an enforced move;

Would speak a subdued tongue
From repenting

He explores ways of expressing how she waits: 'Setting a lamp nightly, watching a room' and already has the idea of writing letters, 'write punctual letters but get few replies.'

He extends this on page 37, the twelfth page of drafting to introduce the personification of love in stanza four. The first three lines of stanza three remain the same. Then, he experiments further with describing the expected news, 'From news of death or a [illegible]{causalities or hurried sudden} move,' and the letters where he tries '{gladly}' before 'long-due letters' and 'quick', 'faithful' and 'instant' for the 'replies.' He then makes two attempts at what will become stanza four. In the first of these, he creates the opening two lines: 'Until, ~~one day~~, by {with} footstep or scribbled {undated} note, / Hat thrown down.' He also has a passionate

kiss which resolves everything. In this version it is violent: 'Love ~~seizes~~ love by {on} the unguarded {throat}' and has a possible suggestion of vampirism.

Larkin explores the romantic notion of '~~the unpaid cabman waiting~~' and the sense of surprise '~~And everything is taken by surprise.~~' Then he reaches an assertion of resolution: 'And all is ~~over~~ {settled}, nothing left unpaid.' This is condensed into four lines in his next attempt:

Until, with footstep or undated note,
With hat thrown down,
bursts ~~enters~~ kisses the
Love ~~kisses love on the~~ unguarded throat,
Cancelling all, leaving
~~And all is cancelled,~~ nothing left unpaid,

On page 38, the thirteenth page of drafting Larkin hunts for an image to describe the results of Love's kiss. Firstly, he tries the metaphor of 'crushing up the past into a ball' and then of drowning it:

undated
Until, with footstep or ~~unguarded~~ note,
~~With hat thrown down~~, Hat thrown aside,
Love, bursting in. kisses the naked throat
~~And crushes~~
~~Crushing all up the past into a ball~~
~~Crushes the past up to~~
~~And hair and tears come flooding that the past~~

In floods of hair and tears the past can drown

Until, with footstep or undated note
Hat thrown aside

stoops to

Love, bursting in, kisses the naked throat,
Then ~~And~~ all her grief flares up and vanishes,

Then ~~And~~ from the glare of joy she cannot hide,

• • • •

~~Rising like birds, arpeggios of birds~~
~~Rising towards the close, rising without words.~~

Until, with footstep or undated note,
Hat thrown aside,
Love, bursting in, stoops to the naked throat.

Then all her grief flares up and vanishes

~~will not~~

Then from the glare of joy she cannot hide

Watching ~~and all~~ her farthest

~~Seeing~~ Seeing her farthest wishes

~~to the~~ semblance of a gown

In Brilliantly, bitterly, ~~woven in a gown~~

To On On sole

[illegible] her [illegible] shoulders stiffly coming down

Woven

Despite his investment in personifying love, in remaking the poem Larkin rejects this line of imagery in favour of the more impersonal 'bright incipience'. Indeed, 'Love Songs in Age' is an extreme example of Larkin's ruthless ability to exclude material. The second phase of drafting address radically the overstuffed imagery of the first phase of drafting which culminates in the unfinished typescript.

In "Writing Poems," Philip Larkin commented on choosing the subject matter of poems and his idea of 'the verbal device':

At first one tries to write poems about everything. Later on, one learns to distinguish somewhat, though one can still make enormously time-wasting mistakes. The fact is my working definition defines very little...and leaves the precise nature of the verbal pickling unexplained. (Larkin 1983: 83)

In the second phase of drafting Larkin imposes increasing restraint upon his imagery until it is pared down to 'the sense of being young' reawakening like a

burgeoning tree in response to the songs and love as a 'the bright incipience' whose potential is never brought to fruition. Larkin's process of regaining control can be seen in the second stanza.

By the bottom of the second page of drafting in Workbook 4, page 129, Larkin has reached the tree image for stanza two:

~~Until~~ rose
from ~~came~~ the sense of
And ~~with~~ them ~~what~~ being young

Like a frail complicated tree, where in
Some certain freshness sung

Similarly, at the bottom of page 130, the third page of drafting, Larkin has the essence of the idea of the potential that the future seems to promise in youth:

And felt once more the sense of being young
faint
Unfolding like a frail wide tree, wherein
So great A
in what
A confidence of so much still to come
A
That The confidence of having all to come
Making whatever

Through the rest of the drafting process he tightens his expression and experiments to find the most apposite description for the tree. There is a particularly active draft of the stanza on page 133, the sixth page of drafting:

At whose recall the sense of being young
 spring freshened laden woken
 a spring-freshened
 transfigured
Spread out like an unfaded tree, wherein

 pureness freshness
A hidden freshness sung,
 that all was
 [illegible] to come
A certainty that all was still to come in store

 and
But further off, and higher, rose once more
And but

Larkin considers adjectives for the tree which emphasize either its enduring nature, 'unfaded', its celestial transformation, 'transfigured' or variations on 'Spring', which suggests its fecundity. He also strives to establish a link to the next stanza.

Finally, by page 138, the eleventh page in these drafts, Larkin reaches a version in manuscript which is beginning to resemble the text that appears in the second typescript:

And the familiar sense of being young
 reawakened
Spread out again like a Spring
~~Again spread out like a reawoken tree~~, wherein
 (rewoken)

~~A certainty [illegible] An eloquence of all that lay in store~~
~~Certain Certain of all the decades still in store~~

A certainty of time laid up in store

As when she played them first. And, ~~as before~~
~~even more~~
even more

Larkin tightens the '~~Certain of all the decades still in store,~~' which explicitly mentions the time to come, first to '~~An eloquence of all that lay in store,~~' which implies an optimistic sense of things still to come, and finally to 'A certainty of time laid up in store.' He varies the line ending from 'even more' which links to the view of love which is described in the next stanza and 'as before' which suggests the re-emergence of an old belief.

By paring his ideas down to this tree image, Larkin is able to universalize the experience and express it in Romantic but uncluttered terms.

iv) Aiming at the final line

A sense of a poem's overall trajectory was vital for Larkin. He wrote 'I used to find that I was never sure I was going to finish a poem until I had thought of the last line. Of course, the last was sometimes the first you thought of! But usually the last line would come when I'd done about two-thirds of the poem, and then it was just a matter of closing the gap' (Larkin 1983: 58).

One of Larkin's reasons for initially leaving 'Love Songs in Age' unfinished in the first phase of composition is his inability to create a satisfactory fifth stanza

and particularly the statement at the end of the stanza. His final attempt on page 40 of Workbook 3 remains unresolved:

The street lamp breathes a pattern on the floor:

He fall
The songs fall/ in it.

~~Had it not~~
~~If it had come, that love? Would she want more~~
~~What power have they if she can wish no more?~~

He ends with an overtly melancholic image of the songs in a pool of light. He takes the final line in two potential directions. The first speculates upon what would have happened had the expected love arrived and the second asks whether the songs can still have emotive force if the woman no longer has desires. Neither of these directions proves satisfactory.

In the second phase of drafting, Larkin creates a condensed third stanza. He takes his final lines through a number of stages before the final manuscript version. These need to be seen in the context of the developing stanzas. His first attempt at the final lines appear on page 134 of Workbook 4:

The range of that old fashioned brilliance, love,
Now, just
~~Still now~~ as then,
to
Seeming to gather in a crown above

...

~~to [illegible] with its descent imminent, [illegible] rare
Her head alone, and promise a descent and promise a descent~~

At whose descent

When

She put them back, she saw too clearly how

This had been just as untrue then as now.

The expectation, depicted as 'a crown' is contrasted with the woman's clarity of vision that love has been unfulfilled. There is an assertion that this has always been 'untrue.' This was a significant enough breakthrough for Larkin to date the page '49.xi.56', although he crossed this out. He also notes down a subtly different final line which suggests love should have been fulfilled at some time: 'that it shd be untrue then, not now.'

In an attempt on page 136 which is far closer to the final version, but has not yet rejected the Messianic image of love descending on her, Larkin moves towards the subtlety of his final lines in which the woman might choose to acknowledge that the promises have been unfulfilled and thus 'cry':

The glare of that much-mentioned brilliance, love,

Now just as then

...

Seeming so ready to break out above

~~parted hair~~

Her bended head, to solve and satisfy

And set
~~In like~~ her life in gold for ever. When

 She put them back, if she had wished to cry,

~~at~~ to see so
 It would have been ~~by seeing~~ clearly how

 Untrue ~~this had all~~ been,
~~This had been all untrue~~ then just as now
~~all this all~~ had

On page 137, Larkin reaches his image of 'bright incipience.' He has 'eternally' or
 {ecstatically} in order.' He makes two attempts at the final lines:

....When

 She put them back, if she had wished to cry

~~at seeing~~
~~It would have been to see so clearly how~~
~~All this had been untrue, then just as now.~~

~~Untrue all these had been~~

 was because she saw so clearly how
 It ~~would have been~~

 had been
 All this ~~was just~~ as untrue then as now.

Again he seems to regard the stanza as finished, dating it '26.xii.56' and indicating
 in the new typescript that it is to be '3'. However, Larkin makes a further holograph
 attempt on page 138:

The glare of that much-mentioned brilliance, love,

Now just as then

Burst out in bright incipience above,

Still promising to solve and satisfy

And set unchangeably in order. When

if crossed her mind to cry
~~She put them back, if she had wished to cry~~

It would have been at seeing clearly how

thoughts had been
Such [~~illegible~~] as untrue then as now.

The wording of the final lines still varies from the published version.

In order to convey his emotional experience, Philip Larkin creates a finely balanced 'verbal device.' He retains a strong sense of direction despite being imaginatively gripped by certain images that he cannot bring to fruition. Although the manuscripts of all three poems treated in these two chapters contain significant material which is erased from the final version, they do not, as they might well do in the case of Thomas, indicate a radical shift in authorial stance or direction. Instead they highlight the polarities in Larkin's aesthetic which he constantly struggles to reconcile.

In 1950, Larkin was struggling away from the Romanticism which marked his earlier style towards his unique voice. In 'Deceptions' he expurgates the overtly Romantic, but in contrast in 'Absences' he abandons his impulse towards self castigation to embrace a moment of complex ambiguous transcendence. This

struggle for a style and tone is reflected in the drafts which interlock with 'Absences': 'Verlaine,' a literary homage to the Symbolist poet, and the demotic 'Since the Majority of Me.' The drafts of 'Love Songs in Age,' in which there are two clear phases, demonstrate the way in which Larkin was able to return to a poem which could easily have been left as an 'unfinished' typescript, to transform it by clarifying and universalizing his imagery.

As can be seen from all three sets of drafts, establishing a strong and highly wrought first stanza was essential to Larkin's progress. The essence of this stanza and usually much of its phrasing are stabilized at an early stage although, as in the case of 'Deceptions,' Larkin may continue to make incremental changes. 'Deceptions' and 'Love Songs in Age' demonstrate that it was often the final two lines of the first stanza that posed difficulties. These set the tone or make the bridge into subsequent stanzas. Once this stanza is established, Larkin is more likely to experiment and explore competing directions. However, he ultimately rejects any imagery which is cluttered or convoluted.

Larkin's method ensures he is able to keep a grip on the overall shape of the poem without resorting to innumerable attempts at writing it out as it develops. Unlike Thomas, Larkin changes words or line within the context of the emerging stanzas, rarely resorting to rhyme or word lists and not at all in these drafts. Unlike Lawrence, Larkin pays close attention to emerging sections rather than resorting to full scale re-visioning and the making of new versions. Instead Larkin's compositional practice reflects his sense of each poem he writes moving towards its final form. On occasions, as with 'Deceptions' and 'Love Songs in Age' he may

reach a contingent version which is separate enough from the final version to be regarded by some as a separate poem, but these versions are in the private sphere of the poet's workings and would not be published by Larkin as competing revisions of the same work.

Chapter 9

Ships of Death: A Comparative Study

This chapter will compare the compositional practices of D.H. Lawrence, Dylan Thomas and Philip Larkin in poems that share a familiar and traditional symbol: the ship of death. At the outset major differences of sensibility are apparent. While both Lawrence in 'The Ship of Death' and Thomas in 'Poem on his Birthday' acknowledge their fear of death, they accept the necessity of braving the voyage. Larkin's 'Next, Please', in contrast, passively and hopelessly acknowledges that 'a black-/ Sailed unfamiliar' is 'seeking us' (Larkin *CP*: 52, ll.21-22). Lawrence and Thomas have at least a rhetorical hope of something beyond death, but Larkin's vision is bleaker, as he does not. A second difference is that the poems by Lawrence and Thomas present an essentially earnest quest; that by Larkin is more in the nature of a reflective genre-piece with a strong humorous element in the tradition of 'graveyard wit.' Another difference, which places the poets in quite a different alignment, is that whereas Lawrence and Larkin are both intimately concerned with personal death Thomas takes a more abstract approach, and seems worried about death in a nuclear war. Both Lawrence's and Larkin's poems are essentially self-elegiac: Thomas's is not.

D.H. Lawrence: 'The Ship of Death'

Typically, Lawrence treated the first draft of his poem not as a single stable text but subjected it to radical re-visioning when it was redrafted in a new context and a new notebook. D.H. Lawrence produced three versions of 'The Ship of Death' (two extant versions in his two final notebooks and a typescript that was extant at the time that *Last Poems* was edited, but which has since been lost) (Sagar 1987:181). There are major changes in the focus of the versions. The first version of the poem is a voyage narrative, which draws on ancient mythologies. It contrasts the enraged dead who are 'only ousted from life' and therefore must await 'the ancient boatman with the common barge' and the poet speaker who sets about preparing himself to sail his ship of death into oblivion:

But for myself, but for my soul, dear soul
let me build a little ship with oars and food
...

And put it in the hands of the trembling soul.
So that when the hour comes, and the last door closes behind him
he shall slip down the shore invisible
between the half-visible hordes

In the second version, Lawrence changes the emphasis to a bold rhetorical assertion that:

We are dying, we are dying, we are all dying
and nothing will stay the death-flood rising within us
and soon it will rise on the world, on the outside world.

He insists on the necessity of equipping an 'ark' against this rising 'flood':

Oh build your ship of death, your little ark
and furnish it with food, with little cakes, and wine
for the dark flight down oblivion.

A constant element in Lawrence's poem is the sense of preparing for a voyage, the implication being that there is a final destination, even if an obscure one.

In the first version, Lawrence creates a rather laboured allegory of this journey in which the soul gradually sheds its consciousness:

Over the sea, over the farthest sea
On the longest journey
Past the jutting rocks of shadow
Past the lurking, octopus arms of agonised memory
Past the strange whirlpools of remembered greed
Through the dead weed of a life-time's frailty,

In the second version, this is more deftly handled as a journey into utter darkness:

There is no port, there is nowhere to go
only the deepening blackness darkening still
blackier upon the soundless, ungurgling flood
darkness at one with darkness, up and down
and sideways utterly dark, so there is no direction any more.

In the first version, Lawrence reaches the tentative hope that once the soul has shed its consciousness and taken its journey there may be some form of re-birth:

Oh lovely
~~So the~~ last, last lapse, into pure oblivion
at the end of the longest journey
peace, complete peace-!
~~Is it procreation of new forthgoing souls?~~
But can it be that also it is procreation?

His conclusion in the second version is less tentative, with a strained and elaborate assertion of resurrection. In section X, he expresses the belief that the soul will receive a new form:

The flood subsides, and the body, like a worn sea-shell
emerges strange and lovely.
And the little ship wings home, faltering and lapsing

on the pink flood,
and the frail soul steps out, into her house again
filling the heart with peace.

He imposes control on his second version by dividing it into ten sections. Gail Porter Mandell notes that 'Neither of the two versions of "The Ship of Death" betrays extensive revision in the notebook,' but argues for 'prodigious rewriting' between the two versions. She insists that 'Even a cursory comparison of these drafts discloses that Lawrence tightened organization by dividing the poem into related sections and by shortening it considerably' (Mandell 1984: 144). However, the way in which Lawrence divided the poem would have enabled him to concentrate on each section one at a time, so the hypothesis of intermediate manuscript drafts is not inevitable.

The first version is loosely structured and the opening stanzas move rapidly between ideas. In the second version he imposes greater order and form upon his challenging subject matter. Characteristically, Lawrence does not abandon the material he edits from the first version, but uses it to create a sequence of separate poems, which follow the second version: 'Difficult Death'; 'The Houseless Dead'; 'Beware the Unhappy Dead!'; ~~'This Happy Soul After All Saints Day'~~ and 'The Song of Death.' Lawrence moves lines directly from his first version into the poems in this sequence. This shows Lawrence's characteristic notion that the poem is not a fixed entity in itself, but a developing site of creativity, constantly changing. His collections often work by repetition and exploration of a trope, in

this case 'the ship of death,' in separate, but related short poems. Indeed, the typescript of 'The Ship of Death' can be seen as such a short poem, focusing entirely on the building and the sailing of the ship.

Lawrence's structuring process can be illustrated by concentrating on the opening two sections of the second version. Lawrence opens both the first version (entitled 'Ship of Death') and second version (entitled 'The Ship of Death') with the image of 'falling fruit', symbolizing that the body must die in order to allow the re-birth of the soul. Sandra Gilbert comments: 'When the apple falls, the seed, the germinal new self destroys the ripe fruit...' (Gilbert 1972: 308). In the first version, the poet speaker sings of the 'long journey to oblivion':

I sing of autumn & the falling fruit
and the long
~~the apples &~~ journey to oblivion
The apples falling like great drops of dew
to bruise themselves an exit from themselves

When Lawrence comes to rewrite his opening in section I of the second version, he rejects the subjective voice in favour of a large prophetic statement which creates a sense of portentousness: 'Now it is autumn and the falling fruit.' He also adds a third stanza which stresses the need to be prepared for the loss of self identity in order to be released:

And it is time to go, to bid farewell
to one's own self, and find an exit
from the fallen self.

Lawrence begins section II of version two with what was the third stanza of version one. A new section is used to introduce the concept of preparing the ship. There is less of a leap between ideas as Lawrence has indicated the need to 'bid farewell' in the previous stanza. In the first version, Lawrence moves straight from the apples to the imperative to 'Build ...your ship of death':

Have you built your ship of death, oh have you?
Build then your ship of death, for you will need it!

This is then followed in stanzas four and five of version one by an allusion to *Hamlet*, ('When he himself his own quietus make/ With a bare bodkin?' Act III), which becomes the basis for section III in the second version. However, in the second version Lawrence broadens the emphasis, elaborating in stanzas five and six on the closeness of death. He returns to the image of 'the apples':

The grim frost is at hand, when the apples will fall
thick, almost thunderous, on the hardened earth.

And death is on the air like a smell of ashes!

Ah! can't you smell it?

Holly Laird has pointed out that: "'The Ship of Death' is... a poem of poems. Its ten sections tend to join into pairs, so that the poem develops symphonically in four or five movements' (Laird 1988: 232).

The seventh stanza of the second version, which is the final stanza of section II, demonstrates the way in which Lawrence frequently make a radical change in direction without substantial re-writing. Lawrence rejects the image of 'the houseless soul' '~~driven down to the endless sea/ washing upon the shore,~~' reminiscent of the first version, with its 'grey beaches,' in favour of 'the {frightened} soul' '{shrinking, wincing from the cold / that blows upon it through the orifices}.' He dwells on the idea of a bruise letting in death:

in bruised frightened
And ~~out of the broken~~ body, the ~~houseless~~ soul

shrinking, wincing from the cold
Finds itself ~~driven down to the endless sea,~~

that blows upon it through the orifices
~~waiting upon the shore~~

Lawrence's second version of 'The Ship of Death' has a lyrical, stateliness which the first poem does not achieve. Section IV, which expands upon the idea of finding 'quietus' in section III, has a simple beauty, but one which is spontaneous rather than the result of extensive drafting at word or line level:

O let us talk of quiet that we know,
that we know, the deep and lovely quiet
of a strong heart at peace!

How can we this, our own quietus make!

Lawrence also produced a typescript version of 'The Ship of Death' which focuses solely on the building and sailing of the ship. This is the quietest of the three versions:

Oh build your ship of death, be building it now
With dim, calm thoughts and quiet hands
Putting its timbers together in the dusk,

Rigging its mast with the silent, invisible sail
That will spread in death to the breeze of the cosmos, that will waft
The little ship with its soul to the wonder-goal.

In 'Which "Ship of Death"?' Keith Sagar criticises Warren Roberts and Vivian de Sola Pinto, the editors of D.H. Lawrence's *Complete Poems* for following the editors of *Last Poems* and placing the typescript in the appendix. He argues for the precedence of the typescript as Lawrence's final version and insists that 'If we can

dismiss the familiar version of "The Ship of Death" from our minds, this version will surely be seen to have all the characteristics of a finished poem-- in fact one of the most finished in the volume, with an unusual degree of formal control, coherence and conciseness' (Sagar 1987: 181-182). He perceives the development of 'The Ship of Death' as a gradual paring down. He describes the first version as 'a sprawling, freewheeling meditation on death, in which the building and sailing of the ship of death does not assume central importance until the second half' (Sagar 1987: 183) and that in the second version 'The voyage has been much expanded as a resurrection myth, but there is still a great deal of extraneous material' (Sagar 1987: 183). However, Christopher Pollnitz, who is editing the late notebooks for *The Cambridge Complete Poems and Variorum* argues for inclusive rather than a reductive editing:

Lawrence's practice of not keeping the revised texts of poems that he dispatched for periodical publication but of reverting to notebook versions when preparing a volume for publication, indicates that, prior to volume publication, he was little concerned to make revision a cumulative or sequential process, one autograph draft being as good a starting- point as another. (Pollnitz 2000: 507)

The existence of a typescript, which may have been prepared for periodical publication, does not necessarily provide a reliable guide to which 'The Ship of

Death' Lawrence would have included in a collection. In the case of a writer like Lawrence, it is, perhaps, unnecessary to try to establish 'final' intentions.

In the sequence of poems that follows the second version of 'The Ship of Death,' Lawrence uses the material excluded from the first version in a more didactic manner. In 'All Souls Day,' 'The Houseless Dead!' and 'Beware the Unhappy Dead!' he turns to the theme of souls who cannot make the journey into death. He expands the concept of trying to help them by making it imperative that the living help them build a ship of death. Lawrence sets these poems on feast days which reflect his subject. 'The Houseless Dead' contains passages directly drawn from the material excluded from 'Ship of Death.' For example, in 'Ship of Death,' Lawrence writes:

Pity the gaunt ~~angry~~ dead that cannot die
into the distance with receding oars
but must roam like outcast dogs on the margins of life,
and think of them, and with a soul's deep sigh
waft nearer to them the bark of delivery

In 'The Houseless Dead' this becomes:

The poor gaunt dead that cannot die
into the distance with receding oars
but must roam like outcast dogs on the margins of life!

Oh think of them with the soul's deep sigh

make provision for them, so helping them to build
the bark of deliverance from the dilemma
of non-existence to far oblivion.

Similarly, in 'After All Saints Day,' Lawrence draws material directly from the first version of 'Ship of Death.' He rejects the title '~~The Happy Soul~~' in favour 'After All Saints Day.' In 'Ship of Death' Lawrence describes the soul rowing away in 'his little ship':

Wrapped in the dark red mantle of the body's memories
the little, slender soul sits swiftly down, and takes the oars
and draws away, away, away towards the dark depths
fathomless deep-ahead, far, far from the grey shores
that fringe with shadow all this world's existence.

In 'After All Saints Day,' Lawrence emphasises the role of the living in speeding the soul on 'his' journey:

Wrapped in the dark-red mantle of warm memories
the little, slender soul sits swiftly down, and takes the oars
and draws away, away, away towards dark depths

wafting with
~~feeling~~ the warm love from still-living hearts

breathing on
~~filling~~ his small frail sail, and helping him on
to the fathomless deep ahead, far, far, from the grey shores
of marginal existence.

This transforms this part of Lawrence's voyage narrative into an independent poem.

There are two versions of 'Song of Death.' The first appears immediately after the first version of 'The Ship of Death' and the second is the sixth poem in the sequence that follows the second version. Lawrence's idea for creating a sequence of poems turning on the image of the ship of death may have been suggested by creating the first version of 'Song of Death.' In the first version of 'Song of Death' Lawrence considers 'what the soul carries with him, and what he leaves behind.' This is an important theme of the first version of 'The Ship of Death' where the soul must first shed its identity:

Sing the song of death, oh sing it!
For without the song of death, the song of life
becomes pointless and silly.

Sing then the song of death, and the longest journey
and what the soul carries with him, and what he leaves behind
and how he finds the darkness that enfolds him into utter peace
at last, at last, beyond innumerable seas.

It is possible to speculate that Lawrence excluded the image of singing from the first version of 'The Ship of Death' because he had written 'Song of Death.' When Lawrence came to rewrite the poem, he drew on material excluded from the first version. The opening of both versions of 'Song of Death' is the same. The second stanza expands the first version by adding material from the first version of 'The Ship of Death':

Sing then the song of death, and the longest journey
and what the soul takes with him, and what he leaves behind,
and how he enters fold after fold of deepening darkness
for the cosmos even in death is like a dark whorled shell
whose whorls fold round to the core of soundless silence and pivotal
oblivion
where the soul comes at last, and has utter peace.

In 'Ship of Death' Lawrence had written:

Neither straight nor crooked, neither here nor there

but shadows folded on deeper shadows
and deeper, to a core of sheer oblivion
like the convolutions of shadow-shell
or deeper, like the folding and involving of a womb

There is a sense of being taken into 'oblivion'. The second version of 'Song of Death' ends:

Sing then the core of dark and absolute
oblivion where the soul at last is lost
in utter peace.
Sing the song of death, O sing it!

Keith Sagar points out that it 'seems to contradict "The Ship of Death" by its suggestion that the goal of "the longest journey" is not some dawn of resurrection on the far side of oblivion, but oblivion itself', a radical difference (Sagar 1987: 183). This poem forms a bridge between the end of the poems about preparing for death and building a ship of death and a sequence of later poems which explore the peace of 'sheer oblivion' and include: 'The End, the Beginning' and 'Sleep.' Lawrence needs scope to explore an issue that is of pressing concern as he faces death.

Dylan Thomas: 'Poem on his Birthday' and 'Prologue'

Both Thomas's 'Poem on his Birthday' and 'Prologue' use the image of a ship to describe the poet speaker's defiant voyage towards death. 'Prologue' also, like Lawrence's second, widely admired version of 'The Ship of Death', draws explicitly on the imagery of 'flood' and the building of an 'ark.' However whereas Lawrence stresses the need to equip an 'ark' against the pervasive 'flood' of death, in the final version of 'Prologue' Dylan Thomas builds 'my bellowing ark / To the best of my love' (Thomas *CP*: 2, ll.44-45) implicitly in defiance of a 'flood' of nuclear war (ll.46-49). The final version of 'Poem on his Birthday' stresses that even as the poet protagonist voyages into death, he still celebrates the world: 'That the closer I move/ To death, one man through his sundered hulks/ The louder the sun blooms / And the tusked, ramshackling sea exalts' (ll.91-94). John Ackerman has commented:

Dylan Thomas's description of the one world of man and nature on their voyage to death in 'Poem on his Birthday' contrasts with the dark journey to oblivion, autumnal and bleak, of D.H. Lawrence's 'The Ship of Death'. (Ackerman 1994: 135)

'Prologue' and 'Poem on his Birthday' are late poems. Indeed, 'Prologue' was the last poem that Thomas completed. Therefore, it is tempting to read the voyage as the poet's preparation for his own death in a way similar to readings of Lawrence's

The flood shall be covered with arks
dove-aloud

This confirms that Thomas's act of gathering creatures into his ark was an image of his attempt to preserve the things he valued most.

In the final version of 'Prologue,' Thomas characterizes his poet speaker as Noah, calling the animals to his ark:

O kingdom of neighbours, finned
Felled and quilled, flash to my patch
Work ark and the moonshine
Drinking Noah of the bay, (ll.82-85)

On one of the worksheets Thomas calls his ark 'This ship of souls':

And I, I Noah turn
And pray, the moonshine
Drinker in the lurching bay,
Down on my knees,
Hearing the far buoys bells
O ~~come~~ my creature joys
Come at poor peace
To the singing, sailed zoo.
There is no time to lose. Enter, then,

This ship of souls

In a version of this stanza at the bottom of the page, Thomas adds a specific national dimension to his task of preservation:

...

Come, my creature kind joys

Come at poor peace

To my ark with the singing prow

And enter, then,

Under the stars of Wales.

My world shall be kept alive.

Thomas published two distinct versions of 'Poem on his Birthday'. The first comprises nine stanzas of nine lines and was published in *World Review* in October 1951. The second was extended to twelve stanzas with much reworking of the end of the poem. This was published in *In Country Sleep and Other Poems*, *Atlantic Monthly* and *Collected Poems* (Fosberg 1975:18). Little critical attention has been paid to the differences between these two versions as most critics concentrate on the poem published in *Collected Poems*. The Houghton Library at Harvard University holds a large number of drafts with an early version of stanza one and workings of stanza two dated 1950. The HRHRC, University of Texas has extensive workings, including a notebook dated in Caitlin Thomas's hand '1st June

1949', and in Thomas's hand 'October 1951'. There is manuscript evidence that Thomas noted his changes to the first version onto a copy of the printed text to create his second published version.

It was only in the later version that Thomas introduced his ship imagery. T.H. Jones has commented:

Because Thomas died so soon after the publication of this poem it is all too easy to see in its last lines...an echo of D.H. Lawrence's "The Ship of Death" (particularly since we know that he admired Lawrence's poems), and so, by extrapolation, to read the poem as Thomas's anticipation of his own more or less immediate death. (Jones 1963: 104)

However, Jones points out that:

In his last birthday poem, expressions like "the closer I move / To death" and "As I sail out to die"... imply no more than, that as a man grows older, the closer he is to death. Once we recognise and admit this, we can see that the poem is fundamentally one more of Thomas's exultant, celebratory pieces. (Jones 1963: 104)

It is certainly true that Thomas's poem wholly lacks the self-elegiac inwardness of Lawrence's poem, replacing it with euphoric self-assertion.

Derek Stanford has been critical of the poem's structure especially in relation to the famous, second version of Lawrence's 'The Ship of Death':

More elaborately composed than D.H. Lawrence's ['The Ship of Death'], Thomas's piece has not the same clarity of thought and strong simple rhetoric. More interesting as a work of art, and sincere without doubt as a human statement, "Poem on His Birthday" has not the same unity of testament which makes Lawrence's poem so convincing. It says too many things to say one thing powerfully (Stanford 1964: 138).

Thomas produced a number of prose glosses for the poem that reveal his themes and structure. There is a particularly revealing gloss now at the University of Delaware. The first part of this prose plan is broken up into sentence-long sections that correspond to stanzas one and two. These are 'He celebrates, & spurns, his 35th birthday in a ~~room~~ {house}, high among trees, overlooking the sea' and 'Birds & fishes move under and around him on their dying ways, & he, a craftsman in words, toils towards his wounds which are waiting in ambush for him.' There are specific linguistic echoes in the phrasing. There is then a more sustained paragraph that relates to stanzas three and four:

He sings in the direction of his pain. Birds fly after the hawks that will kill them. Fishes swim towards the otters which will eat them.

He sees herons walking in their shrouds, which is the water they fish in; & he, who is progressing, afraid, to his own fiery end in the cloud of an atomic explosion, knows that, out at sea, sea-animals ~~are~~ who attack & eat other seanimals, are tasting the flesh of their own death.

Thomas is preoccupied by the idea that this is 'At half his bible span' or 'half of his 3 score and ten years gone'. Thomas writes this before each section of the plan. This resonates in the choice of thirty-five years, but is not used specifically in the developed poem. Thomas draws a line mid-sentence, after 'Now exactly half his 3 score & ten years gone,' which suggests he is moving on from the themes of the first section to the central protagonist's reaction to the certainty of death and his intention to continue 'praising the radiant earth':

he looks back at his times: his loves, his hates, all he has seen, & sees the logical progress of death in everything he has been & done. His death lurks for him & for all, in the next lunatic war, and, still singing, still praising the radiant earth, still loving, though remotely, the animal creation also gladly pursuing their inevitable & grievous ends, he goes towards his. Why shd he praise God, & the beauty of the world, as he moves to horrible death? He does not like the deep zero dark, and the nearer he gets to it, the louder he sings, the higher the salmon leap, the shriller the birds Carole.

Even though it was written at an intermediate point during the poem's composition, this gloss is valuable in giving the poet's overall view of the poem.

It is worth comparing the two versions of 'Poem on his Birthday'. Some of the changes are technical and others alter the authorial stance of the poem. In the second line, Thomas changes 'By eely river and switchback sea' to 'By full tilt river and switchback sea'. 'Eely' suggests writhing movement whereas 'full tilt' compliments the idea of speed suggested by 'switchback sea'. This sense of speed is in keeping with the sense of everything moving towards its death. It also rhymes with 'stilts' in 'In my house on stilts high among beaks' in line 4. In line 18, Thomas extends the religious imagery he uses to describe the 'herons' from 'Herons, on one leg, bless' to 'Herons, steeple stemmed, bless.'

In lines 23 to 25, which, as we have seen, occupied much of his attention in the first phase of drafting, we see Thomas experimenting with characteristic verbal inventiveness. In the first published version, he has:

Through the lull of the drowned
Lanes to the pastures of otters. He
In his winged, making house

In the second published version this becomes:

Through wynds and shells of drowned
Ship town to pastures of otters. He
In his slant, racking house

The first draws on countryside imagery, 'Lanes,' for 'the pastures of otters' whereas the second on the 'Ship town.' He alters the description of the poet speaker's house from one that emphasizes its animalistic qualities: 'winged' and its purpose as a 'making house' for poetry to 'slant, racking house,' which stresses its pitched angle.

Thomas makes significant changes to stanza four, lines 28 to 36, which demonstrate his ongoing attention to the early parts of the poem at a word, line and stanza level. Even after publication Thomas's meticulous sense of craftsmanship means that he continues to make changes. In the first version he has:

The livelong river's robe
Of minnows rippling, around their prayer;
And far at sea he knows,
Who slaves afraid to his fiery end
In a spiraling cloud
Dolphins dive in their turnturtle dust
And the streaking seals pounce
To kill and it's their own blood runs,
Sleek and good in the mouth

In the second, published version this becomes:

The livelong river's robe
Of minnows wreathing around their prayer;
And far at sea he knows,
Who slaves to his crouched, eternal end
Under a serpent cloud,
Dolphins dive, in their turnturtle dust
The rippled seal streak down
To kill and their own tide daubing blood
Slides good in the sleek mouth

Whereas 'Who slaves afraid to his fiery end / In a spiraling cloud' has explicitly nuclear connotations, 'Who slaves to his crouched, eternal end / Under a serpent cloud' carries more the suggestion of the punishment of original sin. Thomas enriches the patterns of sound between 'And the streaking seals pounce/To kill and it is their own blood runs,/ Sleek and good in the mouth' and 'The rippled seals streak down/To kill and their tide daubing blood / Slides good in the sleek mouth.'

Thomas makes other subtle changes. For example, he alters 'Sea's silence, cypress angelus knells' to 'Waves silence, wept white angelus knells' (ll.38), and 'On seasnailed rocks where his loves lie wrecked' to 'On skull and scar where his loves lie wrecked' (ll.41). '[S]car' creates an internal rhyme with 'star' in line 42. While 'seasnailed rocks' evocatively suggests both shape and the creatures that live

on them, 'skull and scar' evoke damage to the body. It is this image of 'loves' lying 'wrecked' that may have suggested the later ship imagery when the poem was redrafted.

The most radical reworking is to stanza nine. Whereas in the first published version he returns to the themes of the opening stanza, mourning and celebrating his birthday and deathday, in the second he introduces the image of 'the voyage to ruin,' which he sustains in the new stanzas that are added to the poem. He also shifts from the third to the first person pronoun, making it into the poet speaker's journey into death. The change to the description of souls in heaven from 'windflowers in the wood' to 'horses in the foam' indicates that he is comparing the voyage to heaven to a sea voyage. In the first published version Thomas has:

Who in the light of good
And gulling heaven where souls grow wild
As windflowers in the wood:
Oh, may this birthday man by the shrined
And aloof heron's vows
Mourn until the night pelts down and then
Count his blessings aloud
May he make, in his thirty-fifth death
His last sweet will and shroud (ll.73-81)

This contrasts with the second version where he writes:

Who in the light of old
And air shaped Heaven where souls grow wild
As horses in the foam
Oh, let me midlife mourn by the shrined
And druid herons' vows
The voyage to ruin I must run
Dawn ships clouted aground
Yet though I cry with tumbledown tongue
Count my blessings aloud. (ll.73-81)

In the three stanzas that Thomas adds to the second version he describes this voyage to heaven. In stanza ten he is 'man a spirit in love / Tangling through this spun slime / To his nimbus bell cool kingdom come' (ll.83-85). In stanza eleven, the poet speaker compares himself to a battered ship. His reaction is to continue to value the beauty of the earth even as he moves towards death:

That the closer I move
To death, one man through his sundered hulks,
The louder the sun blooms
And the tusked, ramshackling sea exults;
And every wave of the way
And gale I tackle, the whole world then

With more triumphant faith
Than ever was since the world was said
Spins this morning of praise, (ll.91-99)

The prose gloss throws light on this reaction and acknowledges that ' He does not like the deep zero dark, and the nearer he gets to it, the louder he sings, the higher the salmon leap, the shriller the birds Carole.'

Thomas's technique was to produce a number of intermediate versions in the process of writing. He seems to have treated his published poem as a contingent version, returning to improve it at a word and line level in the early stanzas and to expand the ending. Indeed, there is a copy of 'Poem on his Birthday' in which Thomas has written his changes on a printed copy of the first published version. Mainly, in this later phase, however, Thomas moved between loose sheets and a notebook of rough drafts. Thomas's own metaphor of stubborn craftsmanship is very appropriate. Though superficially similar to Lawrence's in its fluidity, Thomas's drafting technique is, on examination, more a matter of mechanisms and deliberately willed verbal experiment, in contrast with the organic emotional casting and recasting of Lawrence's method.

Philip Larkin: 'Next, Please'

In 'Next, Please', Larkin's approach to the central image of the ship is quite different from that of either of the other poets. Both Lawrence and Thomas call on the mythic, biblical associations of ship with death, calling in a general, unspecific way

on images familiar in medieval and Romantic literature. Larkin also calls on these resonances, but he focuses them very precisely by implying, without mentioning, the commonplace, proverbial notion of one's ship 'coming in'. The ship stands for the stroke of good fortune which we all feel is our due: 'I'm waiting for my ship to come in.' This lowbrow, at first sight unpoetic image, feeds into the larger psychologically conceived theme of expectation and wishful thinking. The ship also gathers not just the high-culture associations of myth, but also the low-culture associations of Hollywood 'B' movies about swashbuckling heroes. This mixture of commonplace proverb and stereotype on the one hand, and larger reflective abstraction and highbrow literary reference on the other, is typically 'Larkinesque.'

The poem contrasts two types of ship. Whereas, the ship of good fortune which has been eagerly awaited will disappoint as 'it never anchors; it's / No sooner present than it turns to past,' we are being pursued by 'a black-/ Sailed unfamiliar' (Larkin *CP*: 52, ll. 21-22). James Booth concludes that: 'At the end of the poem a literary, "highbrow" metaphor of the "ship of death" (or medieval "ship of fools") trumps the folk-image of the ship of wealth and success' (Booth 2005: 180).

Larkin drafted 'Next, Please' between page 121 and 128 of Workbook 2. His drafting process is different from that of the other two poets as all the drafts are contained in the sequential pages of his workbooks. He published the poem in the privately produced *XX Poems* (1951) and in *The Less Deceived* (1955).

As we have seen in previous chapters, Larkin usually establishes his first lines early and keeps to them throughout. 'Next, Please' is unusual in this respect in that its opening lines came only with some difficulty. Although the concept of

anticipating the future was present from the start, he seems to have lacked the essential 'snatch' which would make it possible for him to compose the fully-worded opening. In addition, Larkin struggled to limit the images. Although the comparison with an approaching ship of good fortune is present on page 121, the first page of drafting, Larkin also uses other similes. On pages 121 and 122, the first and second pages of drafting, these include 'an aproned figure' with 'beer' and 'White cairns of expectancy.' On page 124, the fourth page of drafting, Larkin seems to have been on the verge of creating a poem entitled 'Tenth Day' which concentrated on the kind of days to which people look forward. However, by page 125, the fifth page of drafting he abandoned this in favour of an opening closer to that of the published poem, although he has not fully rejected listing the days. In many ways the drafting of 'Next, Please' is oddly recursive as Larkin tries to reintroduce his 'aproned figure' on this page. It is not until page 126, the sixth page of drafting, that Larkin reaches lines close to the final opening stanza and establishes the image of the 'sparkling armada of promises' that opens stanza two. However, once Larkin has his opening, the final formulation of the poem and the description of the second ship comes rapidly on page 127, the seventh page of drafting. This poem also offers a clear example of Larkin reaching his ending in mid-flow. He abandons stanza four half way through in order to note down stanza six. On page 128, the eighth page of drafting, Larkin refines the poem and completes the fourth and adds a fifth stanza. However, he does not write out stanza six again. This suggests that he is satisfied with the concluding stanza, although it varies in wording from the published version.

On page 121, the first page of drafting, Larkin begins by comparing the slow approach of 'the looked- for future' to a Hardy-esque benign ' {aproned figure}' who is 'Still two fields away' and is 'Bringing ~~haymakers~~ {the jugs} of beer' before he moves on to the more familiar and expected image of 'a ship.' He makes three attempts at comparing the future to a ship 'Followed with binoculars'. Between each of the three versions, he refines his expression. The metaphors of the first attempt are oddly mixed : 'From a {Till the a} far floating pip / ~~Becomes~~ {Sails like a flagged house}/ Up the road.' However, by the third attempt, he has introduced the elements of the 'rope' and 'mermaid' (clearly precursors of stanzas three and four of the final poem):

else as
 Or ~~again like~~ a ship
 Followed with binoculars
 Grows slowly up
 Till it sails straight at us
 Flag, mermaid and rope -

Having reached the image of the ship on page 121, the first page of drafting, Larkin does not explore it further on page 122, the second. Instead, he compares 'Little cairns of expectancy' which are 'such slow travellers' to 'an aproned figure.' 'Little cairns of expectancy' suggests static indicators of what might be promised by climbing to future attainment. They certainly do not travel, however slowly. They are perhaps less effective as an image than the approaching ship.

On page 123, the third page of drafting, Larkin explores the idea of looking forward to particular 'days'. By the third attempt at drafting on this page he reaches:

Days we anticipate
 Shine in the natural future
 And we need only wait
 their
 a
 For the story-book happiness
 Through wet weeks and fine weeks
 grow lucently lucently
~~Lucently~~ They are really coming nearer

Larkin has established a rhyme scheme for his stanza: ababacc and a central idea of looking forward to particular days, which he dismisses as containing 'story-book happiness.' On page 124, in the second of three attempts, he specifies days to which people are likely to look forward. These include :

 -night
 Fireworks night for the child
 Fair day
 [Illegible] for the lover-
 we are instantly
 And [illegible] everything is reconciled
 sad, slavish
 To the slavery and mess
 Of the other nine days.
 O bundle them aside!

Typically, Larkin includes himself in 'we.' This is seen also in poems such as 'Whatever Happened?' and 'Days' and will become an important feature in the final phase of the drafting of 'Next, Please.' His diction lacks the colloquial elegance of the final poem: 'O bundle them aside!' seems rhetorical even used ironically.

His third attempt on this page explicitly reintroduces the image of the ship:

Days we anticipate
Shine in the natural future,
And if we can but wait
~~Drop~~ anchor in our lives

By page 125, the fifth page of drafting, Larkin is struggling towards something recognizable as his opening stanza, although he has not reached his final rhyme scheme: 'Eyes, always too eager for the future,/ Soon form a habit of expectancy.' However, in the second attempt on the page, he has not yet abandoned the image of his 'aproned figure': 'Picking the name-day out, the festival / That toils towards us like an aproned figure.' However, in the third attempt he refines this:

Eyes, always too eager for the future,
bad
Pick up a habits of expectancy
Some festival is always toiling nearer:
"Till then," they say.

In the next stanza, he has not moved away from the idea of listing festivals:

till Wales, till the next party
~~dance~~
 week the [illegible], the birthdays
 Till the cricket [illegible]; [illegible]

Dad

Till The next post, till anything happens to Uncle –

~~So the Sad slavish interims are only temporary~~

And this sad slavish interim you'll see
 Or so it [illegible] intermediacy

On page 126, the sixth page Larkin reaches something far closer to his opening stanza and creates the evocative image of 'the tiny, clear/ Sparkling armada of promises' (which is the basis of lines 5 and 6 in the finished poem). By the middle of the page, he has reached something close to his final opening:

Always too eager for the future, we

~~Watch it scan continually~~
 [illegible]

Have picked bad
 Pick [illegible] up bad habits of expectancy

approaching
 [illegible]

For Something is always approaching: every day

~~"Till then" we say,~~

In addition, Larkin has formulated the opening lines for stanza two.

~~Spending long afternoons watching the tiny
Sparkling armada of promises~~

Watching through afternoons the tiny clear
Sparkling armada of promises draw near

It is on page 127, the seventh page of drafting, that Larkin makes his major breakthrough. He has the description of both ships and many of the lines of the final poem. The opening two stanzas are in their final form:

Always too eager for the future, we
Pick up bad habits of expectancy.
For something is always approaching: every day
"Till then"- we say,
Watching from a bluff the
[illegible] the [illegible] watching
[illegible] Tiny, clear
Sparkling armada of promises draw near.
they are
How slow [illegible] ! And how much time they waste,
Refusing to make
Not making haste!

Larkin abandons stanza four part way through drafting to note down stanza six, the concluding stanza:

~~[illegible]
 with golden [illegible] tits
 Flagged, and the figurehead gilded to her tits
 The figurehead
 Looking our way
 Yearning our way they never drop anchor; it's
 at its back
 an
 Only one ship repays us, towing an
 Towing A huge and towing
 [illegible] birdless silence /: black
 For for cargo
 As to the sails and for the sails: a wake.
 Where no waves breed and break.~~

10.1.51

Larkin seems to have made further changes between the version of stanza six in manuscript and the printed poem. The concluding stanza in the final published is:

Only one ship is seeking us, a black-
 Sailed unfamiliar, towing at her back
 A huge and birdless silence. In her wake
 No waters breed or break. (ll.21-24)

Flagged, and the figurehead with golden tits

No sooner present than it turns to past.

each one will heave to ~~will~~ unload
the it's heaving and
[Illegible] We think it will heave to and start unloading

For waiting so devoutly and so long:

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final poem, Larkin draws on the romantic image of a ship of death seen in his early poems such as 'The North Ship: Legend':

But the third [ship] went wide and far
Into an unforgiving sea
Under a fire-spilling star,
And it was rigged for a long journey (Larkin *CP*: 302, ll.21-24).

However, as a mature poet he faces the prospect of this ship unblinkingly. Janice Rossen has commented that: 'In "Next, Please" he insists we put aside transitory, ill-found hopes, and see "the black- / Sailed unfamiliar" approaching' (Rossen 1989: 142) and 'Larkin seems to be attempting to face death without flinching by being conscious of its inexorable approach. On occasions, this gives his work a tone of morbid self-congratulations; it is an incontrovertibly accurate prophecy, and for Larkin personally it was a much-dreaded and deeply contemplated one' (Rossen 1989: 142).

The purpose of this thesis has been to offer a comparison of three approaches to drafting poetry rather than to attempt to extract the secrets of poetic composition from a study of one poet's methods. Juxtaposing the composition of poems by each of the poets reveals the differences in approach. Understanding the drafting process of these particular poems highlights characteristics that have been shown in the case studies. D.H. Lawrence imposes order on his drafting process without

the need for numerous drafts outside the manuscript notebooks. In the case of 'The Ship of Death' this allows him to use the material not used in the first version for a related sequence of poems. Dylan Thomas extends his work in keeping with an increasing sense of the essential role of the poet speaker of moving defiantly towards his death. The ship of death imagery is not integral to the early attempts at what will become 'Prologue' or the first phase of 'Poem on His Birthday.' The drafts of 'Next, Please' show Larkin, characteristically, working to polish and perfect a central image full of nuances, consolidating and rethinking as he moves progressively through each version. Characteristically also, the published poem shows nothing of this struggle.

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The Lawrence manuscripts treated in this thesis are located in the Lawrence Manuscript Collection at The Hallward Library, The University of Nottingham and The D.H. Lawrence Collection 1903-1970 in the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre (HRHRC), The University of Texas at Austin.

'Sorrow'

Hallward Library, The University of Nottingham

LaL2/3, f77v

LaL 2/75, f8v

LaL10/70, f44v

LaL13/10/31, p.73 in proofs of *Amores*; 1916

'The Inheritance'

Hallward Library, The University of Nottingham

LaL9/76 ff27-28

LaL10/64 ff50v,

LaL13/10/33 pp.76-78 in page of *Amores*; 1916

'The Virgin Mother'

Hallward Library, The University of Nottingham

(as 'My Love, My Mother') LaL9/62, ff39v-40r

LaL10/62, ff52r, 51v

LaL13/10/28, pp.63-65 in proofs of *Amores*; 1916

'Piano'

Hallward Library, The University of Nottingham

LaL2/13, ff70v-71r

LaL10/24, f21r

LaL10/53, ff58r,57v

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D.H.Lawrence Collection 1903-1970, Series I.Works, 13:1

'The Ship of Death'

HRHRC,

Series I. Works, 9:3-4

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The Dylan Thomas manuscripts used in this thesis are found in the Poetry Collection of the University Libraries, Capen Hall, State University of New York (SUNY), Buffalo, the Houghton Library, Harvard University and the British Library. The Dylan Thomas Collection at Buffalo has the call number, PCMS-028 but individual items have not yet been catalogued. However, the poems have been catalogued by the Library of Congress.

'Ballad of the Long-Legged Bait'
The Poetry Collection, SUNY Buffalo
NYBR85-A3679

'On no work of words'
The Poetry Collection, SUNY Buffalo
NYBR85-A3357

'Prologue'
Houghton Library, Harvard University
Dylan Thomas Collection. Series 1.MS Eng 943: Compositions 54M-125 (2)

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Add.52903, pp.1-3

'Poem on his Birthday'
Houghton Library, Harvard University
Dylan Thomas Collection. Series 1.MS Eng 943: Compositions 54M-125 (4)

HRHRC,
Dylan Thomas Collection. Series I. Works, ca 1920s-1954. 4.7, 26.2

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The Philip Larkin manuscripts used in this thesis are found in the Larkin Archive, The Brynmor Jones Library, The University of Hull and The British Library.

'Deceptions'

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Add 52619, p.94v-96v

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DPL1/2/24, pp.100

'Absences'

The Brynmor Jones Library, The University of Hull

DPL1/2/28, pp.109

DPL1/2/30, pp.111-115

DPL1/3/34, p.129

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The Brynmor Jones Library, The University of Hull

DPL1/3/6 pp.26-40 (miscatalogued as part of drafts of 'Heaviness of skies that sag with clouds')

DPL1/4/33 pp.128-139

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'Next, Please'

The Brynmor Jones Library, The University of Hull

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Appendix A: D.H. Lawrence

A1 'The Inheritance': Draft.

LaL9/76 ff27-28

The Inheritance

Since you did depart

Out of my reach, my darling,

Not the hidden,

I see each shadow start

With recognition, my darling;

~~And~~ I am wonder-ridden.

Dazed I am still with farewell,

Yet I scarcely feel your loss,

You left me a gift

Of tongues, ^{so} ~~and~~ the shadows tell

He ^{thing} ~~of~~ the world's sight bore

He their drift.

You have cast me a cloven fire,

Pain-let, that waves in the draught

Of the breathing heat,

Set ^{right} the mournful figure

Of folk ^{of folk} ~~its~~ brands awaft

Like candle-glyphs.

Each ^{from} ~~part~~ along the streets

Passes like a ghost along,

A flame like me;

The star over the house-tops greets

Me every eve with a long

Song faintly.

And all day long the town
The sound of a loud dark fletcher
Roars like a beast in a cave
Overhead, and I answer 'Yes'.

But I wounded them
The colts foals raise

And like to drown,

Their little gold stars, and quicker to

While the days rush like after waves

My heart than the sun to caves

To its lair.

To augment their blaze.

And all I can do, my love
So I am not lonely, nor sad

Since, long past his ashmole
Although bereaved of you,

It is harsh and to see the days

Of you, my love,
Halt through the night like thunder

And I found a great thing, the dead

Flung to me ^{that} ~~the~~ with wonder

As I ^{was} ~~was~~ through

Warm with hunger

The vision, there move

Not'd usefulness beneath

Like mine, my love

And shadows of business, and wealth

Of the arms of love

Like yours, my love.

The Piano

Some where beneath that piano's superb sleek black
Must hide my mother's piano, little and brown, with
the back

^{stood close to}
Told ~~was~~ ^{against} the wall, and the front's faded silk, both torn,
And the keys with little hollows, that my mother's fingers
had worn.

Gently, in the shadows, a woman is singing to me
Quietly, through the years I have crept back to see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the
shaking stringing strings
Pressing the little pointed feet of the mother who smiles
as she sings

The full throated woman has chosen a winning, long
song

And surely the heart that is in her must belong
To the old Sunday evenings, when darkness wandered
outside

And suppers gleamed on our worn lips, as we watched
mother's fingers glide

Or ~~is~~ ^{is} this, my sister, at home in the old parlour
Singing love's first surprised gladness, alone in
the gloom.

She will start when she sees me, and blushing,
spread out her hands

To cover my mouth's railery, till I'm bound in
her shame's ^{heart-spun} plaiting bands.

A woman is singing me a wild Hungarian
air

And her arms, and her brow, and the whole
of her soul is bare

And the great black piano is clamouring as my
mother's never could clamour
my mother's ~~longer~~ ^{longer} tunes are
And the ~~tunes of the past~~ ^{tunes of the past} is devoured of this music's
ravaging glamour.

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Palimpsest of Twilight.

- Fisher

The night-stock oozes scent,
And a moon-blue north goes flitting by;
All that the weary day has meant
Sinks ~~from~~ ^{into} the night-wastes like a lie.

The children have forsaken their play,
 & singly
 One stays motionless in a veil of light.
 Immense, the lightning has smothered
 shadows and softness, smoothing away
 these
 The boundaries between solid condition
 What is and what is not.
 The fatherhood of man right.

Let a place that I find has finger and
 to my hand
 of them, and my hand has strength,
 I know,
 my strength is that.

The first was up in the west and they spent
the afternoon paddled and fished and landed
in daylight.

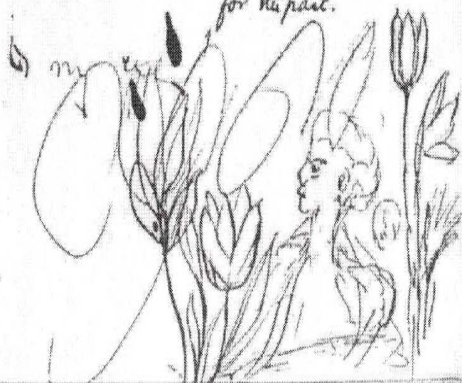
The Piano.

Fading light, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me
 looking down, ~~throbbing~~ throbs in back vistas
 looking slipping over, backward down, slopes of years,
 to see

A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of
the shaking strings
And pressing the small, pointed feet of the
mother, who smiles as she sings.

In spite of myself, a ^{melancholy} ~~sad~~, ~~unintelligent~~ Song,
Pours
Back me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
To the old Sunday evenings at home, writing, outside
The children, ~~singing~~ hymns in the parlour, ~~back~~
^{for one}
The piano to guide.

^{So} And now it is vain for the singer to burst
 into clamour
 with the great black fians appassionato. The
 poignant, gleaming
 of old, best days is upon me, my manhood
 is ^{lost} ^{gone}
 for much reminiscence
 away in remembrance, I weep like a child
 for the past.



Appendix B : Dylan Thomas

B 1. 'Prologue' : Doggerel version.

Dylan Thomas Collection. Series 1.MS Eng 943: Compositions 54M- 125

(2)

At home sweet Christ at last,

Wet Wales and the nightjars,

Memory at half mast

In the barlights of the stars,

Home with bilingual fishes,

King owls on the singsong hill,

Six months' poems and dishes

Caked in the cracked sink still,

This raw hacked chunk of pea

Green poppycock and bare

Across the doggerel sea

With lurching hands of shore.

And, once read, let it sink

Back in the dolphin drink.

The gilted gulls gabs,

The pub doors hollowwide, in

Hyms spewed and glut, at eye and ear

Wark Wark in the pawed apron tide,

Wark Wark by the Bar Wark Wark,

B2. 'Prologue' : Transitional Version.

Dylan Thomas Collection. Series 1. MS Eng 943: Compositions 54M-125 (2)

Form

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>So at home at last This hollow high day Now in slow wat' wat'ers In my jangling house On a ring of rocks I find this death good, There's nothing I care For the jangling soul And nothing I do All my <u>same</u> time still Though a great mouth haunts From the world beyond These lumpish words' <u>graves</u> Over the decaying ^{stony} farms soothed</p> | <p>Cattle dark zoo Of scarecrow & mole, Pigeon, preacher & hare! Halo in <u>Milk</u> the wood, Old red flannel fox, Tom Tit and Bai mouse! Ahoy, the <u>rose</u> sails On the psalming bay With the sun at half mast.</p> |
|--|---|

To wales in my arms.
Hoo, in castle caves,
Here I call fond,
You King singing out,
And ho on the hill

B 3. 'Prologue': Transitional Version.

Dylan Thomas Collection. Series 1. MS Eng 943: Compositions 54M-125 (2)

| | | |
|---|--|--------|
| At poor peace I lie | There's nothing I care | 1/2 |
| This day winding down | outrageous | |
| Now in sprayed high spring | For any beginning shoal | |
| In my sea shaken house | Further than a curlew's call | |
| On a breakneck of rocks | From my bay in the small dusk | |
| | And nothing I do | tribes |
| | But talk with my own words small still | |
| (Tangled with chirrup and shrub, Though a little seabest houts | | |
| Spring flute seaweed and leaf | From the <u>surge</u> beyond | |
| At a wood's dancing foot) | Over the wound asleep | |
| By cocklebed sands | Scrag Sheep white forlorn farms | |
| With their cross fishwife gulls | | |
| Pipers starfish and sails | To wales in my arms. | |
| Out there yonder men | <u>Hoo</u> , in castle keep, | |
| Lonely as trees who walk | Here I call fond, | |
| Up the At the sunset nets | You king surging oaks | |
| And shells that speak seven seas, And ho on the known hill | | |
| Eternal waters away | O little dark zoo, | |
| From ^{the cities} your city of nine | ward city _____ | |
| Days' nights whose towers will burn | ^{down} of scarecrow & mole, | |
| In the religious ^{blood} wind | Pigeon, preacher, & here. | |
| Like stalks of tall dry straw; | | |

B 4. 'Prologue': Worksheet.

Dylan Thomas Collection. Series 1. MS Eng 943: Compositions 54M-125 (2)

In a stant crabbed hand
On these leaves

22
To J. M. & M.

There's nothing I care

arrogance & bombast,
ignorance,
showing - off

Laugharne, June 1952.

These words are my only ark.
These words will drown, down, down,
To where on the cold sea bed
~~These~~ words lie in wait
Finer & faster

voice

There's nothing I care
For the any leaping shoal
Further than a curlens' call
~~For the~~ ~~from this~~ ~~fastness~~ ~~appears~~

ark
haven
fastness
<To

For the
At poor place I write
~~These~~ ~~the~~ ~~prologue~~
These prologue words

Further than a
male than a
stones' throw

912

These ~~words~~ certain raising 644
To you I don't know 594

extruding words
out rider
ball in the

To your ears & eyes,
Dear ~~words~~ I do not know,
~~the same~~
for a minute
who held
A break, the same soul

These words

B 5. 'Prologue': Final Phase.

Dylan Thomas Collection. Series 1. MS Eng 943: Compositions 54M-125 (2)

Prologue

A This day winding down
 B Now at God - spreaded sunner's end
 C In the torrent swimmer sun,
 D In my weathshaken house
 E On a breakneck of rocks,
 F Tangled with churning and shrub,
 G Spring, flute, crabapple and groth
 H At a wood's dancing foot,
 I By seaweed, starfish sands
 J With hair fishwife gulls,
 K Pipes, cockles, and soils,
 L Out there, yonder, men
 M Tackled with clouds, who bow
 N To the sunset nets,
 O Geese nearly in heaven, boys
 P Stabbing, and harons, and shells
 Q That speak seven seas,
 R Eternal waters away
 S From the cities of nine
 T Day's night whose towers all burn
 U In the religious wind
 V Like stalks of tall, dry straw,
 W For poor peace I sing
 X To ye, strangers, (though song
 Y Is a burning and cracked act,
 Z The fine of birds in
 Aa The world's turning wood, ~~sun, sea, sounds~~.
 Ba For my sawing ~~making~~ ~~beginning~~
 Cc For my bucket of weas, ~~and~~ ~~my lack of grass,~~ ~~my and groove of ill~~ ~~my turn Penfany & choir~~ ~~of rays & shames~~ ~~That will suffer & be~~ ~~Beyond man's eyes, I~~ ~~Salt & sea-spined~~
 Dd ~~to mosses and mite-hits~~
 Ee ~~my bare yamfaring and chair~~
 Ff ~~of red rags that will~~
 Gg ~~scatter and die dumb, without grace,~~
 Hh ~~with my blood and breath~~
 Ii Out of these weathshaken leaves
 Lh That will fly and fall
 Mh Like leaves of trees & as soon
 Nh Crumble & undie
 Oh Into the dogday night.
 Ph Seaward the salmon, sucked sun slips,
 Qh And the mute swans drub blue
 Rh My dabbed boy's dusk, as I hack
 Sh This' rumpus of shapes
 Th For you to know
 Uh How I, a spinning man,
 Vh Glory also this' star, bird -
 Wh Reared, seaborne, man born, blood blast.
 Xh Hark, I trumpet the place,
 Yh From fish to jumping hill! Look!

Z° I build my bellowing ark
 A° To the beat of my love
 B° As the flood begins
 C° (Out of the fountainhead
 D° Of fear, rage red, manalive)
 E° Mitten and mountainous to stream
 F° Over the wound asleep
 G° Sleep white cresting farms
 H° To wales in my arms.
 I° Hoo, hoo, in castle keep,
 J° You king singing owls, who moonbeam
 K° The flickering runs and dive
 L° Their dingle furred deer dead!
 M° Hullo on plumed bryars,
 N° O my ruffled ring dove
 O° In the hooting, nearly dark,
 P° Coo-rooing her wood's praise
 Q° With waleh and reverent rook,
 R° Who moans her blue notes for rest
 S° Down to the carlaw hard!
 T° Ho, hulla-ballooing clan
 U° A gasp, with woe
 V° In your beaks, on the gabbing capes!
 W° Heigh, on the horseback height, jack
 X° Whisking hare! who
 Y° Hears, here, this fox light, my flood ship's
 Z° Clangour as I how and smile
 A° (Thawed, huge words for my
 B° Hubbub and yiddle, this turn
 C° On a puggball,
 D° But animals thick as thieves
 E° On Gad's rough tumbled grounds,
 (Hail to his beasthood!
 Who is he? I cannot think of him
 Who fatters & gills
 This waled from fine to five,
 And am faultless still,
 Though the sun moves across his jaw,
 And the sea, and death),
 Grave diggers, skin
 Traders, doublebacked
 Battering starling?
 Buck, lops, writh, wing,
 Caterwaul & bird-rear
 Into my river ginned.
 Strum as the death waters churn,
 This spinning Noah, moonshine

B 6. 'Prologue': Final Phase.
Add. 52903, p. 2-3

PROLOGUE

This day winding down now
At God speeded summers end
In the torrent salmon sun,
In my seashaken house
On a breakneck of rocks
Tangled with chirrup and fruit, ~~and a bit~~
Froth, flute, ~~brushwood and branch~~ ^{fin and quill}
At a wood's dancing hoof,
By scummed, starfish sands
With their fishwife cross
Gulls, pipers, cockles and sails,
Out there, ~~birds, and~~ ^{men} crow black, ~~at a lone~~
~~packed~~ ^{packed} with clouds, who kneel
To the sunset nets,
Geese nearly in heaven, boys
Stabbing, and herons, and shells
That speak seven seas,
Eternal waters away
From the citres of nine
Days' night whose towers will catch
In the religious wind
Like stalks of tall, dry straw,
At poor peace I sing
To you, strangers, (though song
Is a burning and crested act,
The fire of birds in
The world's turning wood,
For my sawn, splay sounds),
Out of these seathumbed leaves
That will fly and fall
Like leaves of trees and as soon
Crumble and undie
Into the dogged night.
Seaward the salmon, sucked sun slips,
And the dumb swans drub blue
My dabbled bay's dusk, as I hack
Their rumpus of shapes
For you to know
How I, a spinning man,
Glory also this star, bird
Roared, sea born, man torn, blood blest.
Hark: I trumpet the place,
From fish to jumping hill! Look:
I build my bellowing ark
To the heat of my love
As the flood begins,
Out of the fountain head
Of fear, rage red, manalive,
Molten and mountainous to stream
Over the wound asleep
Sheep white hollow farms

To wales in my arms.
 Hoo, there, in castle keep,
 You king singsong owls, who moonbeam
 The glickering runs and dive
 The dingle gurred dear dead!
 Huloo, on plumed bryns,
 O my ruggled ring dove
 In the hooking, nearly dark
 With welsh and reverent rook,
 Coo rooing the woods' praise,
 Who moons her blue notes from her nest
 Down to the curlew herd!
 Ho, hulla-balloing clan
 Agape, with woe
 On your beaks, on the gabbing capes!
 Heigh, on horseback hill, jack
 Whisking hare! who
 Hears, there, this fox light, my flood ships
 Clangour as a howl and ~~smite~~ smite
 (~~Hoo, on wales~~ for my ~~clash~~
 Hubbub and giddle, this tune
 On a tongued pugball)
 But animals thick as thieves
 On God's rough tumbling grounds
 (Hail to his beasthood!)
 Beasts who sleep ~~strong~~ and thin,
 Hist, in hogback woods! The haystacked
 Hollow farms in a ~~throng~~ throng
 Of waters cluck and cling,
 And barnroofs cockcrow war!
 O kingdom of neighbours, ginned
 Felled and quilled, glash to my patch
 Work ark and the moonshine
 Drinking Noah of the bay,
 With pelt and scale, and gleece:
 Only the drowned deep bells
 Of sheep and churches noise
 Poor peace as the sun sets
 And dark floods ~~every~~ ~~field~~ And dark shoals
 We shall ride out, and then, every holy field.
 Under the stars of wales,
 Cry, Multitudes of arks! Across
 The ~~dark~~ ~~dark~~ good ~~lands~~
 Manned with their loves they'll move,
 Animal islands, haunch to haunch, Like wooden islands,
 Huloo, my prowed dove with a flute! hill to hill.
 Ahoy, old, sea legged fox,
 Tom tit and Dai mouse!
 My ark sung in the sun
 At God speeded summer's end
 And the flood flowers now.

The water lidded lands,

clash

A ~~spate~~ ~~of~~ ~~animals~~ ~~goes~~
 Hubbub & giddle, smothered
 On a tongued pugball

Dylan Thomas Collection. Series 1. MS Eng 943: Compositions 54M-125 (4)

189
2-60

~~hunting~~
 Rantorn
 parks
 streets
 walk
 road
 walk
 dance
 Sunda

The lines of the long
Hills to the pathless
of cities

x

Under and round him go
Flounders, gulls, on their cold, dying trails,
Doing what they are told,
Curtains aloof in the congered waves
Work at their ways to death,
And the rhymist in the long tongued room,
Who tolls his birthday bell,
Tolls towards the ^{ambush} ~~quest~~ of his wounds.
Herons, on one leg, bless.

In the thistle-down fall
He sings towards anguish; ^{small birds.} surges glide
Through the ~~eyes~~ ^{eyes} of the drowned
Towns to the island of others. He
pastures

In his winged, racking house
And the keen coils of his trade perceives
Herons walk in their shroud,

The living rivers' robe
Of mown wreathing around their prayer;
And far at sea he knows,
Who slaves afraid to his deathless end
In a spiralling cloud,
Delighting dive in their turtle dust,
The rippled seals streak down
To kill and their own tide dawning bloom
Slides' good in the sleek mouth.

Through the ~~lands~~^{fields} of the drowned
Sea flows to pastures of alters. He

deers

Dylan Thomas Collection. Series 1. MS Eng 943: Compositions 54M-125 (4)

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B 9. 'Poem on his Birthday': Worksheet 2.

Dylan Thomas Collection. Series 1. MS Eng 943: Compositions 54M-125 (4)

2 Through the lull of weed cowed
Lanes to the pastures

not in page ~~Down the lane in a night~~

In the huddledown fall,
He sings towards anguish; finches fly
In the claw tracks of hawks
On a seizing sky; small fishes glide
Through the lull of the drowned
Lanes — to pastures of otters. He
In his

bound
cows
crown
round
south
ground

Through the lull of long drowned
Orchards to pastures of otters. He
In his winged, weaving house

Through the ~~lull~~ lull of long drowned

| | | | |
|----------------------|---------|----------|------|
| Aires | Seals | | Page |
| Barroughs | Lap | / | 143 |
| Harbours | Arks | Lanterns | 900 |
| Dwellings | Dens | Porches | 382 |
| Quarters | Cells | Gullies | |
| Arbours | Courts. | Tunnels | |
| Lair | Wynds. | | |
| Buildings | Lanes | | |
| Buildings | Wharves | | 728 |
| Tenements | Quays | LANES | 181 |
| Alleys | Docks | WEEDS | 344 |
| Galleries | Roads | HERBS | 371 |
| Cellars | Halls | SHRUBS | |
| Bowers | Vaults | | |
| | Farms | | |

Appendix C: Philip Larkin

C 1. 'Deceptions': Early draft.

Add 52619, p 94v

Now it's so long ago
Where they go
Where can they be found,
~~Even for such a distance from me~~
Even so distant I can taste the grief,
Bitter and ~~sharp~~ with stalks, he ~~made~~ you gulp:
The heartless patterns of ^{sun}, the brisk, brief
Jungle ~~patterns~~ of wheels along ~~the~~ street outside.
All London ~~was~~ striding quickly the other way
And the ~~light~~ ^{needy} and unanswerable and wide
~~And the ^{needy} and unanswerable and wide~~
Even so distant I can taste the grief,
Bitter and ~~sharp~~ with stalks, he ~~made~~ you gulp:
The ~~sun~~ ^{occasional print}, the brisk brief
Worry of wheels along the street outside -
All London walking quickly the other way;
And light unanswerable and ~~high~~ ^{tail} and wide.
With nowhere to secrets the scar, no ~~shame~~ ^{shame}
~~You were to that, for, as I have lost you.~~
To hide your own against, ~~no~~ ^{thoughts like open} ~~drawn~~
~~Yours were to that, for, as I have lost you.~~
For yours to hide ~~against~~ ^{by}. No concealment shrives:
Your mind lies open like a drawer of knives.

Across the shun of years I would not dare
Console you if I could. What can ^{console,} ~~console,~~
Except that you, lying ^{lying} ~~weeping~~ there,

~~I do not clearly remember being a child:~~
~~It was all so dull,~~
~~So squalid, so frightened, so deceitful.~~

I do not clearly remember being a child,
It was all so dull:

Even so distant, I can taste the grief,
Bitter and sharp with stalks, he made you gulp.
The sun's occasional print, the brisk brief
Worry of wheels along the street outside
Where ^{madam by day} ~~King~~ London ^{shows} ~~looks~~ the other way.
And light, unanswerable and tall and wide,
Forbids the scar to heal, and drives
Shame ~~from the~~ ^{out of} shadows. All the unhurried day
Your mind lies open like a drawer of knives.

Slurs, years, ^{have buried} ~~if~~ you: I would not dare
Console you if I could. What can be said,
Except that suffering scalds deceit, and where
Illusions scatter, pain is most emphatic?
~~And you would hardly~~
~~I do not think you care~~
That you were ^{less deceived} ~~so much~~ stretched on that bed,
Than he was, stumbling up the ^{fractious} ~~stair~~ stair
~~And trusting~~ ^{to burst with} fulfilment's desolate attic:

20/2/50

The widest prairies have electric fences,
For though ^{old} cattle know they must not stray
Young steers are always ^{scenting} pure water.
~~Much water there~~ ^{mysterious} ~~water~~
here but ~~attracted~~ ^{on that side} Beyond the wires.

Leads them to blunder up against the wires,
Whose muscle-dredding agony gives no quarter.

Young stars become old cattle from that day;
Electric ~~wire~~ ~~stated~~ ~~around~~ their widest senses
~~The wire has been broken at its point.~~
limits to

~~Before breakfast 4/10/52~~

Slurs, years, have buried you: I would not dare
console you if I could. What can be said,
Except that suffering ~~is~~ ^{atrophies}, and is exact, but where
Desire ~~for~~ ^{takes over,} takes over,
~~For~~ ^{headings from erratic?}
— ~~For~~ you would hardly care

That you were less deceived, doped on that bed,
Than he was, stumbling up the breathless stair
To burst into perfumed doorless attic.



Tower suddenly, spray-haired. Contrariwise,

~~Under the influence of the wind and the water~~ ^{ships} Where there are no ~~and~~ ^{no shallows}

~~into the water~~ nobody, blow away.

~~Alfred~~ ~~Macmillan~~ Macmillan

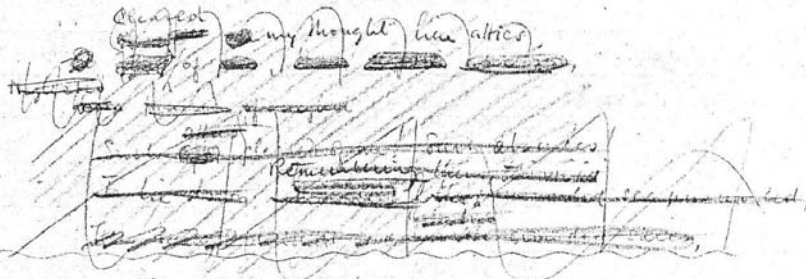
[illegible]

and both thereby attain ^{their} ~~an~~ innocence.

Rain patters on a sea that lills and sighs.
Fast-running floors, collapsing into hollows,
Tower suddenly, spray-haired. Contravene,

A wave ^{drops} like a wall: another follows,
wilting and scrambling, tirelessly at play
where there are no ships and no shallows.

Above the sea, the yet more shoreless ^{day}
+ Riddled by wind, ^{trails} lit-up calluses:
Three left- ^{drift} giant sitting, about away.



~~Such ^{attics} cleared of me! such absences!~~
~~Thinking of them, something in me~~

28/11/50

Such attics cleared of me! such absences!
But the courtroom ^{is filling up again} ~~fills again~~ ^{the case} ~~restarts~~
But here the courtroom fills, the case restarts,
Dingy coughing, argument

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10/2/12

Since the majority of me
Rejects the majority of you,
Debating ~~the debate~~ ends forth with, ~~and~~ we
Divide. And knowing what to do

disinfect new blocks
we ~~have~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~past~~ ~~few~~ ~~days~~
with ~~great~~ ~~trouble~~ ~~and~~ ~~expense~~ ~~we~~ ~~did~~ ~~share~~
each ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~blocks~~ ~~with~~ ~~everything~~ ~~that~~ ~~was~~ ~~not~~ ~~shared~~

You would not know my foreign ways,
I should not know the clothes you wear.

And ~~that~~ we are free, and can
control and change ^{unused} ~~our~~ ~~lives~~ lives,
~~and we are free~~ ~~to do as we please~~ ~~to do as we please~~ ~~to do as we please~~
our long mistake began.
And so I say it, there survives

A faint intense ^{despondency} ~~desponding~~

Such affairs cleared of me! such absences!

we cannot leave this courtroom ~~and~~ ^{the} case,
Continually the state ~~and~~ ^{and} being coughing

C 7. 'Love Songs in Age': Typescript 1.
DPL 2/3/19

15(9)
DPL 2/3/19

She'd kept her songs, they took so little space:
The covers pleased her,
One bleached from lying in a sunny place,
One marked in circles by a vase of water,
One mended, when a tidy fit had seized her,
And coloured, by her daughter -
~~to happen on them like this~~ at the last
Drifted her senses round until they faced the past.
Then
The tunes, of course: each frank submissive chord,
Ushering plainly
Word after sprawling hyphenated word
To that arpeggio~~d~~ fingering at the close,
Flew to the warehouse of her memory
(Darker the basement grows)
And brought back heavy rooms, a broken set
Of lustre-jugs, french windows dribbling in the wet;

But, above all, that cold much-mentioned fume
The songs called love,
Which innocence had forced her to assume
Was love, and would come later; would be ~~there~~ *lit* *Persuading her*
~~From news of casualty or sudden move,~~
~~From a subdued tongue, *and said she turned to sit*~~
~~Of country evenings, hearing the wind rise,~~
Sending to long-due letters immediate replies,

Until, with footstep or undated note,
Hat thrown aside,
Love, bursting in, stoops to the naked throat.
Then all her grief flares up and vanishes,
Then from the glare of joy she cannot hide,
Watching her farthest wishes
In brilliant bitter semblance of a gown
Woven for her sole shoulders, coming stiffly down.

(unprinted)

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OPL 2/3/5

LOVE SONGS IN AGE

She kept her songs, they took so little space,
The covers pleased her: to serve
One bleached from lying in a sunny place,
One marked in circles by a vase of water,
One mended, when a tidy fit had seized her,
And coloured, by her daughter -
So there they waited, till in widowhood
She found them, looking for something else, and stood

Relearning how each frank submissive chord
Had ushered in
Word after sprawling hyphenated word,
And the familiar sense of being young
Spread out like a Spring-laden tree, wherein
A hidden freshness sung,
A certainty of time laid up in store
As when she played them first. But, even more,

The glare of that much-mentioned brilliance, love,
Broke out, to show
Its bright incipience ^{renewed} ~~regrouped~~ above,
Still promising to solve, and satisfy,
And set unchangeably in order. So
To put them back, to cry,
Was hard, ~~to do~~ without admitting how ^{lonely?}
It had not done so then, and could not now.