Poem analysis

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1 Refugee Blues

A poem about 2 German Jews during the Holocaust. Its hard to understand 6 millions. But what about two?

Say this city has ten million souls,
Some are living in mansions, some are living in holes:
Yet there’s no place for us, my dear, yet there’s no place for us.

Once we had a country and we thought it fair,
Look in the atlas and you’ll find it there:
We cannot go there now, my dear, we cannot go there now.

In the village churchyard there grows an old yew,
Every spring it blossoms anew:
Old passports can’t do that, my dear, old passports can’t do that.

The consul banged the table and said,
"If you’ve got no passport you’re officially dead”:
But we are still alive, my dear, but we are still alive.

Went to a committee; they offered me a chair;
Asked me politely to return next year:
But where shall we go to-day, my dear, but where shall we go to-day?
Came to a public meeting; the speaker got up and said;
"If we let them in, they will steal our daily bread":
He was talking of you and me, my dear, he was talking of you and me.

Thought I heard the thunder rumbling in the sky;
It was Hitler over Europe, saying, "They must die":
O we were in his mind, my dear, O we were in his mind.

Saw a poodle in a jacket fastened with a pin,
Saw a door opened and a cat let in:
But they weren’t German Jews, my dear, but they weren’t German Jews.

Went down the harbor and stood upon the quay,
Saw the fish swimming as if they were free:
Only ten feet away, my dear, only ten feet away.

Walked through a wood, saw the birds in the trees;
They had no politicians and sang at their ease:
They weren’t the human race, my dear, they weren’t the human race.

Dreamed I saw a building with a thousand floors,
A thousand windows and a thousand doors:
Not one of them was ours, my dear, not one of them was ours.

Stood on a great plain in the falling snow;
Ten thousand soldiers marched to and fro:
Looking for you and me, my dear, looking for you and me.

If this make you feel bad, then just make your feelings 3 millions worse.
2 Oh Captain, my Captain

In the following poem by Whitman (yes the bridge you know so well used to be a poet) we have plenty of metaphors. His hero Lincoln is compared to a captain of a ship, and the ship is the USA. The trip is the war. Here is the poem explained:

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done;
The ship has weathered every rack, the prize we sought is won;
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring:

Remark: Dear Lincoln the war ended. The USA (ship) prevailed the war. The prize, namely, the unification was achieved. The port (end of war) is near, the bells of happiness are ringing, and the people are happy (exulting). But the ship (the USA) is not happy. It is in fact: Grim and daring. They are very sad but they have resolve. But why are they sad?
But O heart! heart! heart!

O the bleeding drops of red,

Where on the deck my Captain lies,

Fallen cold and dead.

Remark: The heart of Whitman bleeds with red drops because Lincoln was assassinated shortly after the war. The captain is dead and can not participate in the celebration. Lincoln is fallen cold (his body turned cold) and dead. Was murdered by John Wilkins Booth.

O Captain! My Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up for you the flag is flung for you the bugle trills;
For you bouquets and ribbon’s wreaths for you the shores crowding;
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;

Remark: Lincoln, could you rise and hear the celebrating bells? Rise up and see the flags who are held high due to the victory? The bouquets (of flowers) and
the ribbons are for you in display. They shout for you, the multitude, and wait for you in expectation?.

This arm beneath your head;
It is some dream that on the deck,
You’ve fallen cold and dead.

Remark: Walt Whitman says that he puts his arm trying to lift Lincoln’s head. But like in a nightmare the Captain is cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still;
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will;
The ship is anchored safe and sound, its voyage closed and done;
From fearful trip, the victor ship, comes in with object won;

Remark: Lincoln cant answer. Pale lips. Does not move. Does not feel my arm. Has no pulse. Has no will. The USA safely arrived to the reunification. The scary war (fearful trip) ended and the anti slave forces won against those who wanted to keep slavery alive.

The poet calls Lincoln ”My father”, an emotional word. While the ship, the USA is on the port (the war ended)
Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells!

But I, with mournful tread,

Walk the deck my captain lies,

Fallen cold and dead.

Remark: Both bells of happiness and the infinite sorrow of our dead father.
3 The dangerous lives of the alter boys: Did he who made the lamb made thee?

3.1 A film with a poem

There is a Poem is called Tiger Tiger (at least in contemporary English. It used to be called Tyget Tyger.) I did not know this poem. Of course.

But then I saw a film called The Dangerous Lives of Altar Boys. In a strict catholic school, Tim and Francis rebel. Francis is a born artist and engages in comics. Thus, like many artists, Francis is also very shy and sensitive. Tim is the one who rebels without limits. Its the 70’s and its the south and its a rural area, namely one of the most conservative places in the USA. The school is highly oppressive. They suffer a lot and try to smoke and drink alcohol to lesser the pain.

3.2 The enemy

The one who makes them the most angry is nun Assumpta. Does she assume to much?

She is quite terrible (the script writer even gave her only one leg as a punishment, and she drags the other artificial leg). The faith of the school is blind. Assumpta reminds you of the nurse in One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest. Among other things she confiscate a book by the poet William Blake. The book is called Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience. In this book Francis and Tim found some consort, and now its gone. As you shall see, its easy to understand why did the nun call the book dangerous and subversive.

Francis and Tim pull pranks. Francis rebels by making comics that he so called ”highly inappropriate”. They call the comics by the blasphemous name: The Atomic Trinity. The heroes of the atomic trinity are Brakken, which means ”a sweet creature”, The Muscle, Captain Asskicker, and Major Screw; The names are silly and vulgar, but of course, I do not see the big deal. They choose the nun, Assumpta as the evil character in the comics. They call her by the easy to understand name Sister Nunzilla. Francis draws the nun in what the school would surely say ”inappropriate way”. She is drawn sexy, with many sexual insinuation.
3.3 Love

Francis loves Margie. But Francis is shy. As Francis cant act, his friend Tim sends her a love note in the name of Francis. Francis and Margie become boyfriend and girlfriends.

At one time Margie tells Francis that her brother Donny, RAPEd her. As suited to a school of only pure at heart like a Catholic school, Donny attends the school as well.

As usual, passive Francis does not do anything about that. He makes the mistake of telling this nasty secret to Tim. Francis did not expect Tim will use it.

In one scene in the gym, Donny tortures Tim for no reason. He throws very fast basketballs at him. Hurting Tim. Tim suffers and suffers, until he cant help it. He tells Donny: ”At least I did not rape my sister”. Donny is furious. He finds a way to revenge. Donny steals the comics as a retribution. He gives them to the nun.

3.4 Busted

The Atomic Trinity: the violent, ”blasphemous and inappropriate” (well, if the say so be it) comics is given to nun Assumpta. She says: I dont know how to get to you.

To understand them, she has to understand the doubts that the kid have, because of the discrepancy between the real world and the divine teaching they get. This she can not do. She cant doubt god. Tim and Francis are suspended. They are probably going to get expelled.

3.5 A prank

The boys (and again its mainly Tim, the rebel) plan an insane prank against the nun who only young children can dare plan. There is a zoo near the school. Tim and Francis plan to scare the Assumpta to death. They will steal a tiger that they saw when they visited the zoo, sedate him badly, and bring him to Asumpta’s room. A crazy dangerous insane plan.

Tim enters a tigers gate after he shot and sedated the tiger. Tim starts to carry the sleeping tiger. But plans are often riddled with unexpected turns. The boys did not know that there are two tigers in there (a thing that seems very recent as when they visited the zoo, there clearly was only one tiger there) The tiger who is an amazing killing machine, effortlessly kills Tim. The most alive character in the film is now dead.
3.6 Honoring Tim

After that there is a ceremony. For the first time in the film, the school does something decent. They let Francis quote a poem of his choice. Francis quotes from the book the nun confiscated. A painful song. A song that is in its entirety a bunch of questions. It’s by William Blake. The dangerous poet according to the nun.

3.7 The poem and what it means

I will explain what the poem means * in my opinion *. But more than that, I will try to explain what it means to Francis. Again, in my opinion.

Tiger Tiger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

Remark: The tiger, is an extremely cruel animal. This is not a theory. The tiger killed Tim. He killed time without the slightest effort.

He is burning bright, namely, he is like s fire: kills anything that it touches. He leaves in the wilderness (forest) and in the night, so its victim cant see it. A dangerous beast.

What kind of god (immortal) could frame (create) a creature so evil and dangerous that kills with no reason? What kind of god creates a tiger?

This question was asked so many times. God, why do you allow so much evil in this world?

The last line does not rhyme. To draw our attention to the end of the creation of evil. The tiger, a perfect killing machine. With an amazingly symmetry perfect body.

In what distant deeps or skies.
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare seize the fire?
Remark: Fire is evil in this song. The tiger is fire. After the tiger is born, who do you expect to control it? Where do you put it: In what distance deeps or skies. burnt the fire of thine eyes? Can you put it in a safe distance. In the sky above maybe? Deep inside earth maybe? Can you control evil after creating it? Rhetorical questions whose answer is no. The tiger will be with us. He will leave in our world. And will be a constant danger to humans.

Therefore the song asks: ”What the hand, dare seize the fire?” Is there a flying creature who dare comes near the tiger. Who has the guts to get close to the tiger (to evil in general)?. Who dares face evil?

And what shoulder, what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat, What dread hand?
What dread feet?

Remark: The poet compares the god to an artist. In frustration he asks:
And what shoulder, what art, Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
God: How could you let the heart of an evil like the tiger start beating? Namely, how could you twist the sinews of thy heart?

And after you created the monster, did you look in horror on the dread hand and the dread feet? These amazing hand and feet who are so deadly?

What the hammer?
what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil?
what dread grasp,
Dare its deadly terrors clasp!

Remark: Now, he is comparing god to a blacksmith. People who know Blake know that this is a very frequent comparison for Blake. Those who know the film The seventh seal may remember that a blacksmith is among those who death
took to the last run over the mountains, toward their final rest.

Furnace is heat. A blacksmith often deals with fire to melt metal. But here the poet asks: was god crazy when he created the tiger? In what furnace was thy brain? Having fever means being sick. Blacke dares ask god: were you ill and confuse when you created the tiger? This is blasphemy. But maybe a fair question.

From Wikipedia: An anvil is a basic tool, a block with a hard surface on which another object is struck. What tool dares be used in the creation of the tiger asks Blake? Even the non human tools do not want to participate in the creation of the Tiger.

When the stars threw down their spears
And watered heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Remark: The last verses can not be understood without knowing the work of Blake. Blake wrote a lot on a hugely long, and hugely boring in my opinion poem by Milton, called Paradise Lost. In this poem, Satan once lived in heaven. He was the most powerful and beautiful angel in heaven. There was no hell, yet.

But Paradise lost describes a mutiny by Satan and some other angels. Jesus took on them alone, and won the war in just 3 days. The rebels tried to shot spears to kill Jesus and failed.

After that god punishes Satan and the other rebel angels. In a very cruel way. God creates hell. A place for its habitants to be forever burning. Fire again.

Stars is a metaphor for the rebelling angels. The spears were used in the 3 days war.

Now Satan and the other rebel angels, must leave heaven and must go to hell. The angels start crying. They think the revenge is way too cruel. Before they are expelled, their tears fill heaven. Like the song says: ”watered heaven with their tears”. God: Is hell not a too harsh punishment?

And what about what happened to Tim. Is the tiger not an excessive punishment?
Did Tim really sin? And if so you think death is the right answer?

Then Blacke asks good if he enjoyed what he did He asks god:

Are you glad to see your win? Or like the song says ”Did he smile his work to see?” Did you feel superior and better than the created? That you always win? Are you glad to see how you are so powerful and all the rest are so small compared to you? Did you enjoy their demise? Did you take some sick pleasure in their pain?

The song is very angry and certainly blasphemy if looks through the lens of the Catholic religion. But Blake like Francis was very angry.

The main question:

Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Do you not think its a bit hippocratic? You created the Lamb, Jesus, and he preaches love. But then Tim (maybe) sins and then all the love Jesus preaches to is forgotten? What about the line ”Love the sinner hate the sin?”

Blacke wrote on the Catholic faith. Its the most extreme religion. The church can never be wrong. The church predated every existence. The pope is the voice of god. And he is never wrong.

”The Lamb” is also a poem by William Blake about innocence. In this song we see an innocent child talking to a lamb. The lamb is also a symbol for Jesus. And while the tiger is evil, the lamb is innocence.

Blake asks: How could you have created Jesus that preaches so much about love but then you create the tiger? The same god that creates Jesus his son, creates the tiger? Is this not hypocrisy?

3.8 Question I would think Francis would ask

You talk about mercy but create evil? You talk about mercy but have no compassion for the girl raped by here brother? You have no compassion for Tim? They told us you are good, in the Catholic school.

But the existence of this cruel school, and in your name, makes a mockery of the idea of a good god. They mistreat us here. In your name. Are you fine with that?

And you never care. You let the tiger kill Tim. You created the tiger. For that reason, is
it not as if you you killed Tim yourself, directly? Seeing all this (Francis would say) I can only conclude that you are by no means a good god that loves us. You are a cruel, full of himself, god.

3.9 Francis on love

All of this was caused because of love. Do you have anything against love? If I would not have loved Margie, then she would not have told me that she was raped by her brother. Thus, if I did not love Margie, Time would have been alive. What is wrong with you? You have something against love?. Are you insane?

Why did you pull such a cruel vengeance against the rebel angels? Nothing anybody does calls for such a terrible punishment. You are very worried that nobody will dare cross you. But what about compassion?

You are simply an evil god who does not care.

3.10 The end of the poem

Tiger Tiger burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye, Dare
to frame thy fearful symmetry?

Remark: The repetition tells us no question was answered. God keeps silent. All the above are questions remain with no answer and especially one eternal question: God, why do you keep silent with so much evilness in the world? And not only that. With all the cruelty around, you say nothing. You keep quiet. What a cruel way of behaving!.

Well, god is not the only creator. The film ends with Francis inventing a new character for his comic series. The character is “Tim, Skeleton Boy”. Skeleton because this is all what remains of Tim. And from this comics, at the end. Tims character seems to exit the comics and Tim returns to life.
4 Beware the Gorilla

A song: By Georges Brassens

There is no one in history whom I love more. One of my adopted fathers and among them the most dear to me.

Beware the gorilla

Peeping through the cast-iron gate
Many a girl of the neighborhood
Examined a powerful ape
Without hope, 'twill be understood.
Brazenly with no shame each maid
Even looked at a certain spot
Which, because of my mother orders
To say it out loud I cannot.

Beware the gorilla!

All at once, the prison, well-closed,
Where the glorious animal dwelled
Opened; don't know why (I suppose
They didn't lock the door so well).
And, eschewing mendacity
"Today's the day I'll it lose!"
The ape referred to his chastity,
You'll divine, if you're not parvenus.

Beware the Gorilla!

The zoo master, irresolute
Cried in distress, invoked Gods name
"I'm afraid as the big brute
Has never even known a dame."
As soon as all the female crew
Learned the innocence of the ape
Far from tempting the ingenue
Run away and to far have escaped

Beware the Gorilla!

The very same gals that, hereto
Wolfed him down whole with their glance
Fled, proving they had not a clue
How great can be such a romance.
Fatal error, we should insist
For a gorilla’s ziggurat
Can better a man’s in the lists.
Many a girl will tell you that.

Beware the Gorilla!

Everyone run as hell
From the reach of the ape in heat
Save a certain wrinkled old belle
And a young judge dressed for his seat.
Seeing all retire from the field
The quadrumane chartered his shag
By the aping gowns that revealed
The magistrate and the old hag.

Beware the Gorilla!

"Bah, whispered the hundred-year-old,
This will not constitute my demise
Cause if its intent is to touch me
It will be just a pleasant surprise
His honor considered calmly:
"To believe I am a she-monk
He’d have to be quite balmy’...
An idea the facts will debunk.

Beware the Gorilla!

Now suppose one of your genera
Like this poor beast were compelled to
Violate a judge or a grandma,
Which would he choose here to do?
If a likewise election,
One of these days should be mine,
It is, I’m sure, the direction
Of the dame I’ll take every time.

Beware the Gorilla!

But, sadly, if the big primate
In the game of love’s worth his toll.
It seems he’s indiscriminate
Both in his taste and with his soul.
Now, instead of choosing the gal’s robe
As would anyone else but he,
He seized the judge by the earlobe
And dragged him into the trees

Beware the Gorilla!

The rest would be more than jolly.
Alas, it is not here for me
To tell and believe me I’m sorry
I'm sure it would give you much glee.
For the judge, at the Moment of Truth
Called "Mama!", shed many tears, and cried
Like the man this day he had earlier
sent to the Chair to be fried!

Beware the Gorilla!

Remark: what do I care?

In the USA the States(s) kill people and call it the rule of law.

I will imitate MLK that we love and say I have a dream. I agree that my dream is less
inspirational. Its a revenge against murderers.

I am not for killing anyone. But say that a Jury and a Judge killed a person, thinking
they are god. My dream is that they will be raped by a Gorilla. Just a dream.

Many of the executed are innocent, but in fact they are guilty in the eyes of the USA.
They are poor and black and live say in Texas. Even if this person killed was guilty, my
wish for the judge and jury is the same. After all it does not kill you.

A controlling body (like a state) is evil by definition (because power corrupts).

The power of states should be reduced to the absolutely minimum.

I will make the holy people that worship death and Satan and are for Capital Punishment
the following offer: If a prisoner is convicted it is because his guilt is beyond any reasonable
doubt, right?

So lets have a rule: as the judge and jury are so sure so lacking in doubts, and godlike
let me humbly propose that if later after the execution it turns out that the prisoner was
innocent, the state has to kill both the judge and the jury (as they are now no doubt,
murderers). I want to see a judge and jury that will have no doubt at all under this new
rule. How many of them will feel godlike?

5 A song on the evil Vietnam war: ”The Flesh Failure”

Comments on the last song: The Flesh Failure” (Let the sunshine in”) from the movie hair.
This is mostly the story of a young men from the deep south, named Claude that visits
New York for a few days. A casual meeting with a bunch of hippies has a fatal affect on his
life. He opens his mind. Finds out LSD. Finds freedom. Falls in love with a royalty girl.
The hippies ask him why would he enlist to the war. Berger their leader is very angry that
Claude still wants to enlist after spending several days with them. They were not able to
Change Claude (he tells the hippies ”I am enlisting for you. Namely for the USA citizens).

At the end in a freak occurrence, Berger replaces Claude in the training camp, so that
Claude could meet the girl that he loves. Terrible timing. At this time the platoon is called
to go to the plains. They are deployed to Vietnam. Claude does not go to Vietnam after
all. Berger (that has no clue on how to fight) goes to Vietnam instead.

Before the chorus in the song below, we see that Berger died in Vietnam at the age of
20. All the others are looking at his grave.

5.1 ”The Flesh Failures/Let The Sunshine In”

We starve; look,
At one another, short of breath
Walking proudly in our winter coats”
Smelling smells from laboratories

Remark: The song stars with the soldiers. They feel starved, they feel afraid
(short of breath). The ”Walking proudly in our winter coats” line is ironic. They
even smell like machine. If you see the movie, they walk together like machines.
The way the soldiers walks in three columns and many rows, like machines, into
the plain, makes this scene almost impossible to bare

Facing a dying nation”

Remark:

Who is the dying nation? Well its not Vietnam. Its the USA. And the death
is because of the lies. Its a moral death.

Of moving paper fantasy
Listening for the new told lies
With supreme visions of lonely tunes”
Remark: I asked many (including critics) what does ”Moving paper fantasy” means. Nobody told me an answer I agreed with. I think I am right in claiming that ”Moving paper fantasy” are cartoons. And indeed, cartoons appear in the rest of the song as well.

The way the leaders talked to the Americans then is like to children; Black and white reasonings and explanations of the level of cartoons. Treating the public like people are stupid or childish. They were not either of these things. They just did not give a fuck. Those who went to the war were mostly colored people, and poor people. Their supreme” vision of lonely tunes” combines loneliness and cartoons. The loneliness part was: all the world is about to become communist (the domino theory). After the war we saw that the domino theory was completely bogus. But at the time those who sold the war said: We are all alone. We must stop Vietnam from becoming communist.

Somewhere inside something there is a rush
Of greatness, who knows what stands in front of
Our lives
I fashion my future on films in space

Remark: The ones justifying the war do not simply talk. They shout. And they do not give specifics; Facts and details. This is why the song says: Somewhere. Inside Something. Details may show the true colors of the war.

Who knows
what stands in front of Our lives?

The line ”Who knows what stands in front of our lives?” is the intimidation. We are in danger. Now everybody should shut up. No critic here you traitors! Now its not a time for descent! The homeland is in danger! The war mongers did what ever good fascist leader would have done.

I fashion my future on films in space.

The world is complex. But as it happens before a war, the citizens were given a black or white reasoning. We are the absolute good. The Soviets are the
absolute evil. The war is absolutely needed.

They fashioned the future on cheap science fiction films from the fifties (films in space) about the pure humans versus the totally evil aliens. The North Vietnam people were described as non-human. This is a must in a war. People will find it hard to fight if they think of the enemy as humans.

The north Vietnam people are not human! They are like those evil aliens in one of the cheap stupid science fiction film of the fifties. Not human and purely evil.

Silence tells me secretly Everything; Everything....”

It is always a good thumb rule: those who speak quietly, and with reason are more likely to be correct. Silence does not mean you are not right...

Across the Atlantic sea
And I’m a genius genius,
I believe in God
And I believe that God Believes in
Claude That’s me, that’s me... that’s me...

Remark: There is another song ’Manchester England England” that was sang before, in a happy way but now is sang in a heavy dramatic way. The hippy Berger meats Claude, a fellow from the south, that have never seen a hippy before in his life.

Berger compares Claude to someone who came from England. A total outsider. The hippy experience is totally new to Claude. And he falls in love with a rich girl named Sheila Franklin. She is also something he never saw: a rich royal girl, that below the surface wants to become a hippy.

Berger Sheila and the rest of the gang come to visit Claude after he enlists in Nevada. But as you can expect, they dont allow them in.

Sheila flirts with some Sergeant and steals his uniform. Berger cuts his hair and wears the uniform so that he could enter the base to extract Claude. A last meeting with Sheila before he goes to war.

Berger replaces Claude and intends to stand for him when he is gone. So that
Claude will not get in trouble.

But at the precise moment Berger replaces Claude, the unit is called to go to Vietnam.

Berger does not know what to do. Whatever he says, is answered by terrible yelling. Berger gives up, and walks with all the other soldiers into the huge plane that will take them to Vietnam. Claude that is too late to return sees the plain in the air and shouts with horror Berger!!!

Climbing the plain Berger says Claude: thats me, thats me. Like saying the hippy and the soldiers are one. Same destiny. They should have united against the common enemy: Their government. Not fight among themselves. They were one.

Symbolically, Claude is replaced by Berger. And becomes him as the song ‘Manchester England England’ suggested.

The rest is silence...the rest is silence...

Remark: Once the war starts there is nothing to say... The muses keep quiet. The above line recalls the ”May rest in silence” line said in at a funerals. Indeed Berger dies in Vietnam. This is the story of one person. Thats true. But we knew him so well...

This line is taken from the Hamlet tragedy from the fifth act. Hamlet is well suited here: a story of madness uncontrolled ambitions and especially, various deaths... In the ”war cabaret” ”What a lovely war” there is a breath-taking scene at the end. A small child asks her grandmother: ”What did dady do in the war?” Instead of answering, they show her. They start walking around a few graves. The answer is simply: what daddy did in the war was ”dying”. We see three ladies and a small child walking by the few graves, probably one of her father.

But then the camera takes a few steps back. We see that the number of graves is simply uncountable. Its amazing how many graves there are there. Thousands and thousands of graves in the same graveyard...

”We starve; look; at one another, short of breath walking proudly in our winter coats Wearing smells from laboratories Facing a dying nation Of moving paper fantasy Listening for the new told lies With supreme visions of lonely tunes”
Remark: a repetition

Singing our space songs
on a spider web sitar
Life is around you and in you Answer
for Timothy Leary, Dearie”

Remark: The army ideology is based life on the cheap science fiction of humanity versus aliens, that were popular in the fifties. This is now contrasted here by the hippy ”ideology”. To be fair, to me its not a real ideology.

These lines recall the strong influence of the Indian philosophy (and Asian philosophy in general) on the hippy movement. The Asian philosophy such as Nirvana and Buddhism in general (among others) were the thing that made the hippy ”profound”. In my opinion they were anything but profound. But when you want something (the hippy wanted something. Not to enlist to the army) you need something profound to explain it, as silly as it may be. Then the movement is not just a bunch of people trying to have fun (a complete fair characterization of the hippy that cared about nothing but hedonistic life) and make them a so called movement (there are no movements. And in particular the hippies were not a movement. Because they did not move. It was completely phoney. Today these hippy are a bunch of Bourgeoisie. Staying exactly in the place society wants them). Music played a large part in the revolution. The music of the Beatles in particular (Harrison more than the rest) was influenced by Indian music at that time.

In one of their concerts the Beetles invited a Indian sitar (an Indian music instrument) player named Ravi Shankar to perform with them (see the sitar in the above lines).

Two more things refer to the spiritual nature of the hippy movement. The title (the failure of the Flesh...) and the line: life is around you. A (totally empty in my opinion) claim about souls that are all around us.

One more main thing of the revolution (besides music and eastern philosophy) was the ideology driven use of drugs. This is already criminal. Using drugs is self mutilation. The people in this so called movement were not particularly bright.

The lines above recall the (now forgotten?) Timothy Leary ”guru”. In his
time (mainly the sixteens) he was a famous person. He was a scientist (had a position in Harvard) and a psychiatrist, but a very controversial one. In the sixteens he was known as the LSD guru. He recommended the systematic use of psychedelic drugs (like LSD) in order to reach higher mode of conscience. Many of the hippies followed him. He was fired from Harvard after giving LSD to undergraduate students(!) and few years later he was sent to prison and escaped(!) (later he was arrested again.) All his life he experimented with drugs that act on the brain. A truly unconventional fellow. A true rebel. While this Asian philosophies seem silly to me, at least Leary was true to himself till death, unlike almost all the hippies.

This is not to say that other ideas of the hippies are not held dear in my heart. Free love is better than expensive hate.

Now, the song continues while the gang looks at the grave of Berger that dies at the age of twenty in Vietnam.

"Let the sunshine Let the sunshine in The sunshine in..."

Remark: Sunshine here means love, understanding and the other similar ideas. Or in other words, the last lines close a circle with the fist song (Aquarius) of "Hair": "Harmony and understanding Sympathy and trust abounding No more falsehoods or derision Golden living dreams of visions Mystic crystal revelation And the minds true liberation Aquarius! Aquarius!" **

In astrology, the age of Aquarius means among other things that we will be individuals and not machines (and we are machines now, in my opinion. To be human you need to be free. But I do not know one person, that is really free). This time will be rebellious too. In fact a revolution for the better is expected at this time. This bullshit is what it is. But if this convinces people to love instead of hate, choose your poison. After seeing the grave of Berger the film cuts to a large anti-war protest outside the White House in Washington, DC. All singing: "let the sunshine in".

It may be that this movement had one achievement. It may be that due to this movement, the Vietnam war ended sooner.

I deeply love this Film. Guy.
6  The story of John Hope

From the minute that John Hope was born
He was sad and afraid and alone
His mother the day of his birth
Returned her poor soul to the earth

His father at the end of his rope
Was unable to look at John Hope.
He was sad and he always complain
So he left not to be seen again.

At the foster home the place that he lived.
They could not get in touch with the kid
John Hope said yes or no and no more
Even this only if asked before.

What a pity since John hope will never
Find the sweet Strawberry field forever
He was trying to find, get a hold
Where is god? Where is my lord?

They decided its time to find out
If John hope may be dim, or is smart
The results were an amazing surprise
Since John hope is remarkably wise

John hope suddenly had many suitors
That request him to work on computers
Every task John hope perfectly did
And they said: how amazing the kid!

But as usual John hope never said
Any words to coworkers he had.
And its tragic and sad and its hell
Never speaking or looking at girls.

So when John Hope has reached Twenty five
He decided to take his own life.
Whats the point in the life over here
When its only the devil that’s near?

Many people came to pay respect
From the place of computers he worked
And many came from his foster years
Payed respect with their eyes full of tears.

And in the funeral
For 15 minutes.
John Hope was not alone.

7 Chess A poem by Hanoch Levin

Describes the soldiers as pawns in a war initiated by the king. A king that does not care even if all the pawns will be gone. As long as his own family is fine.

Where is my child that left
My child where has he gone
A pawn thats black is striking a white pawn

Will not return my dad
My father wont be back.
A pawn thats white destroys a pawn thats black

Sadness in the rooms,
And silence in the greens
The king is playing with the queen.
My child will never wake
Completely in the dark
A pawn thats white destroys a pawn that black

My father that is gone
Will never see the light
A pawn thats black destroys a pawn that white.

Sadness in the rooms,
And silence in the greens
The king is playing with the queen.

My child once in my lap
Inside a frozen sack
A pawn thats white destroys pawn thats black

My father warm at heart
Is now a frozen sight
A pawn that black destroys a pawn that white.

Sadness in the rooms,
And silence in the greens
The king is playing with the queen.

To where my child have left
My child where did he go
Both black pawn and the white pawn falling low

Sadness in the rooms,
And silence in the greens
On empty board remain just king and queen.
8 Why should the bird care?

The tree is tall, the tree is green
The sea is wild, the sea is deep
If the sea is deep, what does the tree care
What does the sea care if the tree is green

The tree is tall, the tree is green
Pretty is the bird, she will fly far
If the bird flies, what does he care of the tree
What does the bird care if the tree is green

The sea is wild, the sea is deep
Pretty is the bird, he will fly far
If the bird flies, what does he care of the sea
What does the bird care if the sea is deep

A man sings songs because the tree is green
A man sings songs because the sea is deep
If the bird flies, he will no longer sing songs
What does the bird care if he sings or keeps silent

A bitter poems. It was included in a book collection of anti war sketches and songs by Hanoch Levin.
Hanoch Levin’s was very smart. The sad truth that he did not have any influence on Israel was not lost on him. He felt worse and worse.
At the end he decided to write a song about giving up. He says: one of the reasons to write poems (or songs), is the beauty in the world. And every verse describes pretty things.
A salty sea, a green, hence beautiful, tree.
But this poem is included in an anti war book.
And the book changed nothing.
Nobody listens to Levin’s poems.
People will continue to not care, to die
like flies, and to be cruel.
For me, says Levin, writing poems just because
of beauty is meaningless. I want to change the
So why is my work important at all?
In fact, my work is completely unimportant.
Note that the bird is special.
Unlike the tree and the sea the bird is alive.
And the bird is the only one that the poem
claims to be beautiful. Such a claim is not made
about the tree or sea.
So in the last verse he says:

A man sings songs because the tree is green
A man sings songs because the sea is deep
If the bird flies, he will no longer sing songs
What does the bird care if he sings or keeps silent

Namely: The poet write songs due to beauty.
But for Levin himself, beauty is not
a reason when people are dying left
and right around him.
The bird (that represent the living,
namely, humanity) does not care
So why should the poet write more poems?
What is the point, more generally, in making art?
Hanoch Levin is dead for many years already. But nothing changed. THE BIRD STILL DOES NOT CARE.

9 Because I could not stop for death

A strange poem by Emily Dickinson. I had to put one of hers.... Everybody that knows this poem, seems to admire it (maybe except me?).

First stanza:
Because I could not stop for Death,  
He kindly stopped for me;  
The carriage held but just ourselves  
And Immortality

Analysis
Emily Dickinson believed in the after life.

She presents death as a good thing. At start perhaps as a male suitor that stopped his carriage for her. We should always remember that there is nothing good about death. Poems like: Do not go gently into the good night. Fight Fight against the dying of the light were not written for no reason.

She speaks on immortality namely on an after life. The carriage is the vessel that takes her to her to death. She speaks of death as something she welcomes.

The silent films The Phantom Carriage by the Swedish director Victor Sjstrm, shows a carriage that collects the death. Its a magical carriage with a lot of special effects. It can enter water and do many magical things. The influence of this poem seems evident.

Her treatment of death as a person may have influenced the great masterpiece by Bergman, The seventh seal (even though I have no way of knowing if Bergman read the poem).

Second stanza
We slowly drove, he knew no haste,  
And I had put away  
My labor, and my leisure too,
For his civility

Analysis: Death drives slow. She willingly puts her labor and her rest hours, in the civility of death (death is civil? really?). I know about her personal life. She saw many people that she loved, die. Including a beloved cousin. She may have gotten used to. Dickinson lived near a cemetery. she saw so many people die that perhaps it no longer scared her.

There was a time that she believed in paradise. She and her family were religious and church goers. And Jesus was revived. So maybe death is not the final word as the song goes in The life of Brian.

Third Stanza

We passed the school, where children strove
At recess, in the ring;
We passed the fields of gazing grain,
We passed the setting sun

Analysis: gazing means looking. And grain means crop. Again death seems very generous up to now. He lets her see for the last time the children in school and their recess that starts with a loud ring. He lets her remember a long time since her childhood when she saw how wheat grows. And he lets her see for the last time, the sun going down.

Forth Stanza:

Or rather, he passed us;
The dews grew quivering and chill,
For only gossamer my gown,
My tippet only tulle

Analysis Tippe is a cloth article. Tulle means netting. She is talking in the end about some cloth that she netted.

All of a sudden she leaves her sweet description of death. Death has passed us namely he came and we could not resist. He took us against our will. The line The dews grew quivering and chill means that she was cold. Because she was wearing only a gown, she herself net. After the sunset, (from the previous stanza) the cold arrived.
Fifth stanza.

We paused before a house that seemed
A swelling of the ground;
The roof was scarcely visible,
The cornice but a mound

Analysis: As far as I understand cornice means something that attaches itself to the walls and roof. And not a pleasant thing to see or smell. She has arrived to her final resting place. Her new house. The house looks like a disease to her. The house it almost completely in the ground, and you can hardly see the roof.

Molding a is that thing attached to the walls of a room, oer is just below the ceiling. A rather unpleasent thing. It partially means decoration, but a very bad one. A mound is a heap of dirt or sand etc. Maybe the cornice was supposed to be a decoration, but it is a very ugly one.

Stanza 6:

Since then it is centuries, and yet each
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised the horses heads
Were toward eternity

Analysis: She says that it felt like centuries (probably speaking on her life). But now feels her life was shorter than a day. Maybe she is complaining here that life was too short.

She says that she surmised the horses head. This is the horse that was pulling the carriage. To surmise is is to feel something is good or true, while evidence shows otherwise. She is speaking on how death lured her. And in fact tricked her badly. And to a bad consequence.

Death was seemingly pleasant at start but now she will live her in eternal darkness (Were toward eternity).

Summary: Welcoming death is bad. Even if she later opens her eyes. This is a poem that is strongly influenced by faith. Such poems, risk being absurd and infantile. On the other hand, so many people love this poem. Maybe they are religious as well. How sweet is the delusion in religion.