

PRE-WINTER SONGS

TO MY MOTHER

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PART 2. (Either in or intended for the Heidegger play)

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Authors note: These poems written between 2002-2010 continue the seam of exploration in "Sketches for Existence". The concept of Being comes to the forefront as shown in that long poem. More and more there seems a discrepancy between the impersonal universe and our humanity which as I take it is the job of the poet to resolve. In that sense one is still mourning for Keats unless in Mandelstam's words: "And you, flying fish of chance,

And you, O water saying yes".
is reached.

The title is taken from a line of Rilke's.

(caveat—depending on my inclination at the time capitals are often omitted).

to an unknown country

harmonise the ratio

equate the rhyme

conjugate the metre

but that was another country

and joyless fate

who scoffs at all our science

tunes her blows

great pantheon of sound

eruption!

meet like the clash of steel

life ebbing and flowing

in the memory battle

unique world

dressing us across times life

who only in the bowels of christ

makes that promise

now neglected

goodbye (on hearing schuberts lebewohl)

farewell song of the bird

go to a darker shore

do not imprison me here

the chatter is so massive

my head bursts

everyone must have his say

but I am unlistening

farewell the sound of water

playing on fish and ducks

a garden of romance appears

in the fumbling mind

false wind from the south

plays on the cold lips

provoked they smile

on a blue tropical sea

rain instead batters on the skylight

one did not imagine

ending like this

pillow of dust

does some sleeping god
lie his head on our pillow of dust
ignorant uncaring of our plight
his beautiful locks swelling
on his breathing chest
while we like cockroaches
undergoe this ghastly
darwinian metamorphosis
like dorian grey
he grows more lovely
while we shrivel
under the burden
nature experiments
and all our efforts
are little avail
(a few extra years
in greater comfort
not dying so horribly)
can you not awake
and turn our dust to gold!

decision

no longer the long wait
or the hunt of oneself
in the labyrinth of childhood
guilt and punishment
creative source
for would-be genius
unnecessary for natural genius
are exiled by decision
what reward what life
so sweet its name
so natural its embrace

never never land

yes this is the country
as in beethoven seven
the theme park of england
has replaced an ancient world
where poverty had its rhythm
and the little yellow train
accompanied hill and farm
stopping for the cows
meandering through tall grass
obeying the spirit of place
of arrival and departure,
still while the sun shines
on the many many corners
unimpaired
we can enter the never never land
of quiet breathing on the hill
down the old quarry
among the weathered roots
hidden in tiny caves
or voluptuous undergrowth
the breeze from the naze
and the wild wet sea beyond.

maps

the hardest thing
goodbye to maps
the pink ones of course
finding a way down the yellow lane
or brown
avoiding the red,
the village, pub or church
still they mount up
not to be revisited
but poured over on the loo
in imagination
hammoon and plush
okeford fitzpaine, haslebury bryan
sixpenny handley
piddlethrethide
let not the dreaded blue come near them
not hatfield new town!
what have they done to england.

an allegorical life

purification through time

sex into holiness

but the limpid clouds

speak extinction

decaying flesh

our only illness

physical depression

louder than reason

we are still living

in this world

in self

o to live outside it

released from it

let someone else mend the pattern

and walking toward the summer bridge

from shadow into sunlight

we enter the pure world of nothing

tall grass waving in the hot sun

the heat of shimmering trees

far off where distant moving antelope

signify the dappled shade of beerbub

and the purple jacaranda

hide the memories and places

colonies of amputees

long since forgotten

[unlike the fallen dead unforgotten)

except for one chance

the god of JB

O the pure contradiction!

pushkin

the orb of day has died.....
and as the elite discuss
their favourite men
how superior one can feel
no celan or mishima
pushkin or mandelstam
snow waste of russia
empty palaces
and his tall black hat and coat
striding figuratively
down the broad avenues of st petersburg
slowly the noise of skating
awakes his reverie
before him and all around
horsemen are plunging into ice
the skaters go with them
into the frozen waters of the nevi
but they are silent unweeping
he falls with them
into the unbroken eternity
of fire and water
the milieu of reality
he has so carefully drawn

homage to pushkin

protean and simple

unassailable in his private values

publicly unvirtuous

his image grows

a language so modern

we kiss his hand

and in those far off days

of life and death

are we living ?

with all our rights and words

our feeble freedoms

we are bored as he was

look at our messengers

god help us

we turn to his great statue

his stone eternity

as he enters the room

fills it with his wit and laughter

he lives with us

reminding of precision

and the language of love

what clarity of thought!

look down on us from your imperial height

least of imperials

grant us your usage

in an age of perfidy

let a poet arise

whom we can say

when all else is an index

here is his age o pushkin

the age of

december sun

I look into the ken valley
as winter wheat is sprouting
last lorries ferry sugar beet
the mud and rain freeze
in the cold frost of morning
but the sky is as blue
my darling as your native land
our ducks circle
remembering your kindness
our hens run for freedom
together we greet the world
another christmas
the wreath on the door
the cards assembled
but we must leave our paradise
for a seasons snow
in our beloved rockies
farewell dear hall
and all your little ways
soon to come again
renewing my spirit
and blessing all our days

wild strawberries

one note lasting a lifetime
early uncertain steps
give way to faltering age
the same long avenue
whose trees and houses
mark ascent and descent
moments of freedom
self-purging
only interrupt the struggling mind
but now after so long
one grasps the perspective
known yes
but not felt
you see there is no intelligence
until the body itself
combines with mind
and gives you on that issue
an apotheosis

mimi

yes I see the snow on christmas eve
and hear the cough of death
which shines in your bright eyes
I see the love you own
and see it returned
do not release us from your grip
which transposes us
for you give us that which
we can no longer earn
passing from real love
to make-believe
we live unliving
yet you were part of life
unshadowed
all we have dissolves in you
till spring
and death
release us from your grip
bravo!
brav
br
.....

undisfigured

you were right to unclamp a mind
why do we not take the lifeboat
launched forever on those uncharted waters
who cannot give us up
divine rhythms run the world
and the avenue of ascent
through fields of flowers
where a river of corpses
seem golden lit on tiny barques
reflect the prayers
of multitudes below
the lovely path on scenting thyme
is mixed with burning sandalwood
alight from earths cemeteries
ascending with their memories
and still the loved ones float
like endless children
toward the empyrean of love
where the forces of a universe
lie explained and understood
in one equal eternity

To the Archipeligo of Hölderlin [in submission]

When we set out on this mystical journey
Who would think the whole state was accomplished by others
Then rereading the Greeks we are one with them
Their gods, their ideas, their personality, win us
And we make the voyage of the islands our own.

No need to rehearse ancient battles
Or the beautiful thinking and doing
We accord and our Being is drawn
On the canvas of their statues and temples
As it was in Michaelangelo's time.

Still we admire their justice and fate
Like children with infinite confidence,
Though hope is often extinguished
And the spirit may grind in the night
Somehow their courage enslaves us-- even the sun.

Let Ionia flower till time ends---as it must
Dear Gods and preserve their quality
By a miracle we have received,
This sign will draw us again
Though you are buried in sea and dust.

We peer to the edge of the universe
But the people cannot practise happiness
Even with the Father alone,
All is at Time's overweening mercy
And the fear of death.

Honour our spirit, god of each of us
Let not our contradictions confound us
But in that tension preserve your depths,
Then we too renew hope in the islands
And discover ourselves.

Coming home on a final journey the wide harbour
Seals us in its quiet embrace
Town and hills approach, somebody waves
The sun smiles above in his image
Ithaca gives you her long hoped-for blessing.

To the hoped-for god

Only one percent I believe in you
And that through Holderlins genius
why do we struggle and sweat in the night
As in a storm our ship seems naked
Searching for the shore our native land
There he must be holy and in freedom
His empire expands forever among gardens
where the minds of men dwell at noontide
And the sun our brother observes us and shines
But our eyes are fixed on the figure before us
His torso of youth emits nothing but love
And on my shoulder his powerful hand
Steadies my needful gaze and submits
My being to his godlike embrace.

quodlibet

native land
recount the passing years
growth of tree and bush
your kindly paths
in wonderment
can we repay the sunshine
on hosts of corn
the tiny multicoloured hills
and secret paths of unknown tread
is it a true journey?
how many tales of woe bind
the fantasy of her fields
in a rush of kisses
are we fed by her,
lying in her meadows gone
so many sayings

slowly and slowly we see
the gods are only hiding
in variation thirty
tender acceptance
of resurrection

no completion
but a more certain habit
of confidence
linking the notes like rainfall
inevitable
the colour of new life
a street song restated
an equal eternity

bach may be fach to some
but not even stars or nova
can dance it
when will happiness misery end
---- in thirty one
almond not bitter
what lies in nothing?
a king

To Keats

I have tried many times to encapsulate what I feel about Keats. His life, his letters, his poems are so unconsciously rich with the English idiom that he walks out of them like a friend, a friend to dream of. He is so near to being the perfect poet because all that he wrote seems to imply greater things to come. People who I admire like Peter Medawar have criticised his "beauty truth, truth beauty" etc but he was still very young and had already surpassed for his age everybody. In the end it is something in his personality which transcends life and death and invokes a sympathy which I find very difficult to define but is immensely profound. In his letters more than the poems he gives us that quality and his engagement with life fills us with his moving spirit.

"My hand is like a man of fifty"
Facing your being with no more revels
Astride your unicorn-your imagination
That erstwhile voice strikes across the years
In answer to our being.

Tough and strong but still it came like ice
Seeing you gives us no more fear
But still I miss the starry height
To join with Severn in your lonely fight
And be that allegory in a Roman waste.

And Brown and Dilke, George and Rice
Haydon, Taylor and Baily
How great their merit for your genius
Or signing off like Reynolds epitaph
"Friend of John Keats"

The English way in spite of modern harms
Survives, and they and you and us
"Must taste the sadness of her might"
Yet happy are we since you have gone
To follow that dear throng
"And be among her cloudy trophies hung"

To George Gordon, Lord Byron, this poem is affectionately dedicated.

My Lord Adieu! The frozen plains of earth
In "Darkness" prophesised have come and gone
Our woes are now inbred
The knowledge of them with a million genes
Is not a halfpenny for our understanding
Related as we are to some banana
Or the honourable chimpanzee- manyana.

In early years you talked of God
Your actions were more lost than found
And though you nearly were our King of Greece
Returning us to kingdoms ever ceased
Death by fever in the swamp of Missalonghi
Embraced by your motley retinue who fondly
Bared their heads to your full flight
O shooting star to fill old England's sight.
England whose imagination never could
Stretch to trinitities of sex in such abundance
Your instrument sexed you with such confidence
Beyond all fellows, now is put to rest
Yet even in the tomb they looked
And said it was the best.

Never fear My lord, your early entry into clay
Perpetuates the myth of your great play
And though we have a ripe old age
With folly and our money in our cage
Half-concealed fear and envy cannot see
Our lives so wax-like seen by yours
For we are wax while you are with your whores.

In that celestial pantheon of heroes gone
True, they reeked their motives on our lives alone
Now we live in endless number sewn
And politicians talk like croaking frogs
Determined to make us working cogs
Around the scene of this imbroglio
Even Shakespeare fails in folio
Which wit and freedom and our love
Would cause our Byron stirring from above
To join us in a rage of sense
Whose mastery would bring us to the tense
Of language fought and held aloft
And every stranger's heart would beat in unison,
But as it is our daily duty calls
For we like you are servants of our dogs
Until we come resplendent to our gods.

Rigoletto

Stare back at life's Medusa face, Jester
Stare and turn to stone yourself,
Remembering Danton's death or Lulu's fate
Can you sing a tune or curse
Only pitiless death
His ancient arm clasped around your neck
Is headless
That is his beauty
He comes in human form
May even talk to you
(Though tis you)
And whether it strikes short or long
Damn him and jest still
Singing the tune as we go down.

Time and Being

Souls are out of fashion
where DNA is nowhere to be found
But whose valid life in every vale
speaks rudely to us,
So contradiction rules the mind
creating many new realities
while life has its initial axiom
it springs into an infinite sea
where struggle makes the soul
knowing its mortality emerge,
an eternalisation,
but your pleasures cares submit
or your own weakness fly
leaving the field to deeper men
whose sanctuary is their self-return
and we can follow with a greater pen.

Finer, ~~more~~ unknowable (a line from Celan)

We know that mind and matter strongly separate
To a formal undecidable proposition
There is no yellow in the impulse
No note displays its chemistry
Her scent has no distinctive wave
Her lips no known vibration
And touch and pain only she endures the quality
Of sensations never seen in any text.

This is Being and Holderlin's god
Allowing each his path
Which not negated leads to joy
And makes us god-like with no concerns
For you or I but tasking that freedom
Of pure growth and objectivity
Is wonderful if you can bear it,
Till seeing you or me grow older
Or my dear mother loved by all
Now finer, more unknowable
"Can we meet once more on a day
Which holds the past in its arms?"

Brittle Bones

There was a young woman of Kent
Who smoked wherever she went
What with coffee and cokes
And drinks with the blokes
Her bones were already half-spent.

An Aunt, very close to her heart,
Was lying in state at St Bart
She picked up the phone and gave her a call
Remember that slip in the hall
Too late, she's about to depart.

The clinic will tell you your risk
Perhaps just a scan of the wrist
The heel, or the spine and the hip
Gives us a very good tip
Your cured, now raise your fist.

The moral of this tales for the fit
Get a scan as part of your kit
And whether its lifestyle or gym
Or drugs, better be upright
Than broken to bits, what a twit.

England blossoming again (after Hölderlin)

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England blossoming again fair Ionia
Out of Empire half-embrace a new god
The young have no fear they can forget
We too will soon give up regret,
Gone your quiet ways though still the lane
I stride is banked by cowslips,
Still the evening walk in fields beneath the immortal sky
And green so green the living world at dusk
Stretches its embrace on weakening steps.
I heard the cuckoo saw the deer
The bobbing rabbit and the cooing dove
The clatter of the startled pheasant
The pigeon shooting from the green.
O immortal ones now disbelieved
Look down, take pity, do not shun us,
High clouds obscure your lasting eyes
Your huge image fills the eternal ether
The evening hour is yours
God of shepherds
Better than the hot spring day
Followed by the killing frost
We feel your happiness your liberty
And in that grace of your faint hope apace
Soar upward to your warm embrace.

Hotel Gellert, Budapest

Snow falls on past heroes
Heavily the Danube flows
Hungary spreads her
Yes unbelievable tale,
Wide-eyed baroque streets
Cocooned in communism
Emerge like butterflies,
The pallor of Winter
Embalms the Citadel behind,
Ionic water retreats age
Beneath these marble halls,
King Stephens holy crown
Still smoulders in the eyes
Of wine happy students,
How much there is too learn
Behind these pale faces
Which give nothing away.

"See? - I can see nothing but you"

Grey March unforgiving
We wait for death's mercy
No hint of Spring appears
We hold hands
I call the vicar
He says a few prayers
Departs
Alone together
Everything depends on this moment
Then I see
This unbreakable bond
Like a chemical bond
Cannot be broken by death
To me
Nothing is clearer than that.

To Hölderlin

what tenderness in your lines
the gods are omnipresent
can we speak to you now, to them now,
can you be the conduit of our woes
intercede among the strings of the universe
transmit our thoughts as gifts
to the divine all seeing absence
plead our cause from this far off world
whose unseeing masses revolve
around your parks and old estates,
O Hölderlin what edge of world
do you now gaze from
where are those lips whose words
sung on german soil before
the horror of our modern time,
that germany who gave us you and Beethoven
the very world of all of us
do not neglect us now
who was so unneglectful in your life,
what right has death depriving us of your love
your word your note calls across the alps
and the land of your fathers still reaps and sows
in spite of the unnumbered corpses lying there,
thank god you were spared it
terrible it would be to see your gaze
across the wrecked and burning land of germany,
but now in peace and prosperity
where rhine and ister and your neckar
renew the life of new gods
questions of life and limb grow ever larger
and your steady hand can exculpate us
from the torment of our numbers
and our way of life
O Hölderlin can one end a poem better
than german poets try to.

Old Hall Farm

Straw house of lives still incubating
I clamber up the lane on all fours
You are there my beloved
Donne's tower, pylon necklaced
Urges me on- hedgerowed and aged,
What can be more valuable than this
To welcome the heart made fast
Radiating the colour of the gods,
Years of toil on flower and tree
The lawn flowing in sunshine,
Can I reach her so tall and quiet
Will the gate open to my frail hand
Will her gentle pressure last
Upon my wilting shoulders.

Always standing-eternal- on my knees
Secrete me in a thatch or beam
A bramble rope attached my arm
Seeing the world forever on its way,
Bed is a sleeping timber among wood beetles
Summer and Winter in my nook
Watching the people come and go
Silently so silently I gaze
There in the beam in the hall
In the large fissure I reside
Making my plans for eternity.

No grand appeal or flow of rhetoric
Will spoil a benighted age
Or Bradburnes native land
Celan put paid to that,
Yet Hölderlins aim is loved up and down a land
Practise happiness such as the gods have
And know what the gods mean,
How deeply must we look
As children die in Ossetia?
A question of layers
Quantum irrelevance in Dostoevesky?
The sun bursts through my timber hole
And personality is no more
Be the mountain while the mountain lasts
Be C and H and O,
In the parallel universe without time
For time is only ours
There nothingness
Nothingness
Becomes our King.

On those enchanted slopes

It comes nearer the light winging and darting
Like a dragon-fly our permeable hopes
Almost we have it in our grasp
Then set down its escaped,
Easier to be the poet manque'
Than seek the inexpressible.
But for us it will never let go
waiting, waiting for the illumination
The fireworks to which all will bow.
Yes this hunger is more needful than death
will one day be satisfied by genius,
Not science a natural reality
But the reality we make-
(As wine is to grapes)
And account for the inconsolable
Then it will be a truly great poem
A truly great reality.

summertime

standing on the green lawn
of nothingness
the garden of past and future
where a bridleway passes
there you see the endless feet
of that declivity
still moving still possessing
the ground the house
where they must cast
so many eyes in passing
unremembered
strangely the garden is their memory
the peasantry of suffolk
walking forever
down the avenue of time
into the unknown country
beyond our valley
remote and timeless
where villages sleep
and unlit fires wait
frozen by death
here you can sleep
among the ancient past
until the kiss of music
sweeps the land
reality broken by art
so be it

Celan first poem

Now there's no way out
the longing shadows swarm like bees
without togetherness
what blessed times were those
when all our coins of happiness were free,
but that black milk of which I spoke
rises in my throat before our master
death from Germany.
why did the young, the working class
look for that something
a god in tweeds!
o repulsive being
that any man of taste could see
(god bless the aristocracy)
mistake that smell for perfume?
trust your nose
not bleating intellect,
and now your leafless forest
full of hobgoblin memories
raise strange statues in your mind
until a sign from Holderlin
companion of our dreams
grant you peace and absolution,
we meet in a forest clearing
the poem of past and future
grows beside us
the secret word among the people grows
distilled by me O Germany
a language saved by secrets spread
a poetry as Mandelstam said
to keep them awake forever.

suicide

time is purely a construct of being
the horizon of human being
world enforcer delivers us from it
but here and there by a hand
we defy the world
exercising by will
an unforgettable contempt
here the chorus will chant
a sin
but you will know
who read me now
a human being can end time
its all in the poetry
defying the world system
it in turn hates you
why,why ,why?
because we have done it
accomplished it
all that remains is the world
the dead burying the dead
let them say he was unhinged
let them say
what they will not face
let them say.....

now alone with my mother
I feel what she felt
before the final shot
thinking of me then
I think of her now
united by the same emotion
the same fear
the cold water of the seine
makes me understand
imprints our souls together
defying reality

the death of children

here there is no other
no sharing no belief
no more the sun
in the summer garden
no heaven-made equal grief,
this is my last music
birdsong belongs to the dead
harmony sprach immoral
happiness white spite
give me war, famine, disease, flood
fire, earthquake
none will touch me
can give no help
feel revenge, hatred, lust
only these satisfy my violence
like an image of the reich
cursed by what might have been
my wound will never heal
save the no-one god
touches it with his spear.

Celan letter

My dear Heidegger,

Though we were planning our little tour down the Ister
In the footsteps of Holderlin, our divine,
You knew in your heart
I would be on another journey.

I have reached my absolute
New poems need new light

More questions, more claims!

An "act of betrayal" I hear them say,
It is the fulfilment of a promise
To those departed
Of course it was beyond an 18yr old then
But now.....given the prospect ahead.

The real reason you ask
I have lost confidence in my future
Why?
I hardly know myself
My meridian has faltered
The heart no longer a place made fast.

The messages will wash up onto many minds
I have signalled another way
Prefigured a new freedom
But when! where!

Hannah carries the king a little further
How fortunate you are,
May you be free of the past
And help the free society of tomorrow.

Let the automaton chatter
I will not turn to stone.

My dear Martin, poems as I said somewhere
Are often desperate conversations
And with another awkward bow
I cannot say god bless you

Paul Celan

Martin (in a monologue to the audience)

What depths will he go to and submit
Just as I so many times have thought
My life is over, finished
Yet with a will and tenacity I held
Something in me keeps aloft
From the world's failures,
Work is art it rises above self
And takes on a life of its own
With one as a priest to its demands
It goes on expanding after death
Even as one fails, the horizon
Continues to beckon.
So I hope with Celan
My philosophy seeks to show the immanence
Of Holderlin and Celan
A formal prose of poetry
The world of you and me
The whole minute intercourse
The interplay of life and love
Which setting best serves our cause,
Poor or rich it is achieved
This inner authority
From where you can direct a real life
Your life,
My view enables the care of the world
Every tree speaks this language
The botany of purpose through silence
Freeing your mind for human tasks
Rinsing the mind
And a clear ever more clear vision
Of your own progress
A feeling once attained
Not even illness or death can thwart.
Since you are already on the path
Of becoming finer
More unknowable
Moving with sovereignty
Into the unknown country
Where Being and Time disintegrate
Leaving open every imagination.
Choose that confidence escaping yourself
Let them do the praying
You are free.

From the Holderlin play.

Holderlin addressing Susette:

The poem will take you there O reader
a road of longing and loss
and thus restore them,
The fire of the gods appears
and on that burning path
faces behind the flickering flames
beg you see a meridian
where time's abuse is halted
and victory o sweet victory
is scented in Spring air,
O those first warm days
beside the Neckar swelling
with cold white water
arm in arm with school friends hurrying home
now vanished in the friends of revolution
the absurd is turning its wings
eternalising our mortality.
Thus the gods do bow to us
for death has given us the means
of true eternity
greater than the whole universe
more than self-preservation
awareness which leads to care
and carelove
only the lovely guillotine
keeps us on our toes
poetry will mend it
and keep us awake forever.