

**WORD  
SKETCHES**

*The Awakening Voice*

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August 1992/January 1993/February 1994*

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## The Awakening Voice

Here in the silent room,  
moving wood walls, quiet and alone  
sits the voice, quietly breathing,  
waiting for the awakening voice.  
He read many things,  
passed all the words though his eyes  
and waited for the returning echo,  
waiting for the moment when word became flesh,  
and flesh became pulsing blood and body.  
It was not unusual for him to sit, days after days,  
nothing moving, body purring, ears pounding,  
It was not unusual for him to stop breathing  
waiting for another breath  
to join his in a silent meeting.

## Autumn 1991

The cat has finished chasing my finger  
and has now decide to eat the plants.  
Sunshine crawls through the smoke  
and reaches the place where I'm sitting.  
Somewhere outside the apples fall  
from the Autumn cold trees.

Here is still, still.

I'm looking at the book and decided that  
although the words are there  
they don't join up.

Fractures appear,  
spin webs on the glass door  
Summer spiders looking for a winter hole.

The stone from the walls  
is slowly releasing the summer heat  
No steam, just a slow easy release.

The cat has decided to eat my sock.

The first autumn storm hit yesterday  
shaking the fences  
and looking for its first ingress into the roof  
where it will turn and howl  
the whole winter through.

Autumn - Sun on the mornings dew  
no heat  
just light

and me remembering - so far back.

I don't write that often - maybe once every ten years  
Once talked through guitar strings  
but is now empty of notes  
hands and fingers empty of notes.

## Captains

I have not remembered those  
pitched forward from their youth  
breach born into manhood  
diving down through black skies

I should perhaps have been one of those  
carelessly thrown through the wind  
into the nets of darkness.

And all my sad heroes  
now drowned and broken-backed  
upon their own reefs  
lie and smile from their gentle graves.

And all my sad captains  
rise and fall, held in rocks  
between the sea and beach  
never reaching  
never leaving  
drifting though the leaves of the sea  
into the arms of tomorrow.

In this season of wintering down  
you, like all nature, have turned your back  
and crept away into the fading season.  
But I`ve seen you rise in the morning  
fresh and cold, ice-mist on a winter` s lake  
and smelt your body on my hands  
and lips, wrapped around your body,  
have kissed your eyes awake.

And now, into this black night  
go light and soft  
into the milky moon,  
strong like some star  
away in the pillow of space  
strung like ice on a spider` s web  
in this black night.

## Burglar

I caught a burglar last night  
somewhere between sleep and end-time  
And found her lying there  
beside me when dawn broke  
clutching a piece of my heart.  
But I could not prosecute  
for I had left it open  
hoping to tempt  
an intruder  
into this empty room.

## The Old Man

The old shed we pulled down years ago,  
Windworn and crumbled after the yearly round of sun and rain.  
Here we found his tools.  
Hammers, chisels, braces and bits  
long and short saws  
and the heavy axe which I had tried to lift  
when a child.  
Each handle smooth and shiny  
grain worn by years of work,  
years of touch and grip.

He had made me a cricket bat with these tools.  
Cut the wood with the axe,  
shaped and carved the handle and the huge blade;  
A beast of a thing that I could hardly lift.  
No springs, no linseed finish  
but a crude blunt blade  
which stung my fingers when the ball was struck.  
He showed me how to hold it,  
his short stubby hands, coarse like sandpaper  
gripped around my hands, child-soft,  
to help me lift this club he' d made for me.

His hands, pure and strong,  
hands that worked wood, knew wood, loved wood.

Every Sunday, after the punctual departure of the wife to church  
he' d sit at the piano in the front room  
(No-one went into the front room except at Christmas)  
and banged and thumped out all the tunes he knew.  
Couldn' t read a note of music but the tunes would thunder out  
up into my room next door.  
And he' d stop just before church ending  
and putting on his cycle clips  
would leave for his Sunday hour at the pub

(Well he always said it was to get the papers.)

He' d arrive back exactly at the same time  
and sometimes I' d go to meet him  
and he' d put me high up on his saddle  
and wheel me up the road  
and me like a king riding high and nervous  
with my granddad looking around to see who could  
see.

A wild soft man he was, gentle and wicked  
with a loving tongue.

It was you..

It was you who slept in this bed  
beside me.

Waking up at the same time  
and wrapping your arms  
around me  
warming me with your eyes  
and your body.

You who I made coffee for  
and then made love for  
and to.

When I entered you  
and watched your eyes  
watching mine  
And I slowly  
crept into your wetness  
and gave you mine.

It was you who matched  
movement with movement  
breath with breath  
laugh with laugh  
slowly moving against each other  
shouting and crying  
laughing and dying  
in each other' s arms.

It was you  
now gone  
and left  
this space  
beside me  
empty  
and wanting

## Negative

I never had many photographs of her  
when we were together.

I seem to have collected too many  
now that we have become a negative response.

## Second Hand

I woke up this morning  
with the bed light still on  
and put my hand into the space  
next to me where you used to sleep  
and felt it cold and empty  
realising that I' m now part of your  
second hand loves.

And lady, where were you last night ?  
You with the key to my room  
and now leaving me with thoughts  
of you - so clear -  
yet tagged and priced  
as second hand love.

PIT

Together the same faces,  
moored in silence  
between iron and stone hills.  
Hands unmoved and covered  
wool weaved and wasted  
down through the coal-black shacks.

We are not moved by repetition  
except for the times when the wheel slips  
and flesh, torn and buried  
assumes identity  
and moves to share the private grief.

Her Hands are at...

Her hands are at my body again.  
They were there two days ago  
and I still feel them against my skin.  
The touch remains after miles of travelling.  
Her hands are at my body again  
touching and holding,  
pressing and tempting me  
to claim them for my own.

That is not to say I do not feel my hands on her.  
It is all too well remembered  
in the whorls of my fingers  
and in the worlds of my mind.

Dylan Thomas - Notes from a T.V programme

There must have been magic  
When this man stepped on stage  
full of words and pictures,  
vomit and fools.

Windy green down between the trees  
Here my hero and maker  
swept up with notso gentle hands  
and greedy gossip.

And all my body is burnt up with words  
from my mother' s womb  
and father' s ears.

You are my ghost  
and am nothing.  
You fuse against an empty stone.

I wanted to be in my own country  
but have not found it yet.

I only write in lines  
because I am a fraud to myself  
and my words protect  
what becomes and is me.

Read me when I' m dead  
for I have lived your sorrows and my end...

I have been there..  
I know what your eyes deceive of you.

I know what eats your heart  
and stops your words.

Do not hinder my dying  
for the life is not worth hanging on to..

I have writ what I have writ

Where have you gone ??

just the subtle breasts I used to kiss  
and the groin I used to lick  
and I believed in.

Believe me - do not hinder my dying.

## My Father

My father, before my slow slip into life  
played the piano.  
My mother tells me he played it well  
Almost to the point  
Where the notes became his music,  
The fine, grainy hands  
Like an orchestra,  
Touching and drawing the sullen keys  
To music that soared and echoed  
Miles above his head.  
Before my choking, bloody birth  
The swollen dirt-grained hands  
Turned a radio,  
Conducted symphonies of war,  
The ranged orchestrated guns  
That soar and echo still above our heads.

Autumn/Newlyn/Trelawney 1971

To be sure.

To be knowing and watchful

In this sea shroud country

Is to acknowledge

The hours, strung vaguely between moonday waters  
and mollusc skies,

Sea birds

soaring sheets of movement

over crusty waters and harbour cocklepaths,

Fishermen dripping prophesies

Sealing the length of the legend

Against the broken cliffs,

Villages aimlessly hurled

and pinioned by pearl and granite

over the nagging sea,

Dying graveyards,

Saffron in salt stained mouths

and sullen boats.

To be sure

To believe

demands nothing but watching.

Following Newlyn

It' s not a question of losing  
But acknowledging what was there.  
In believing in what was  
And loving what one had.  
One never loses what one loves.  
One just forgets,  
And the time  
And the movement  
Replaces the memories.  
The hour of the loving  
Is what one forgets.  
The loving is never forgotten.

James Dean

James Dean died a monument

The broken car

and the broken youth

Almost

And the image died

Almost.

I do not know of death..

I do not know of death,  
Yet in a mirror  
Must slowly watch the lines  
of my hands,  
Must slowly watch the lines  
of my face  
grow  
like roots  
around my skin.  
Watch them grow  
around my frame  
and crush and taste  
old fears  
used blood  
and bruised flesh.

## The Star Child

The craggy cave had always been there.  
I remember as a child  
despising the sea surge  
Cutting off my world of dank and dark,  
So much so that I cursed it to show my hate.  
Now, as I cling helplessly to my past  
I see this cave  
as a womb of sinking warm evenings  
Where I would curl up  
and lick the salt from the rock  
Where I read lovers histories  
scrawled on the deepest dark,  
Where I would time my escape from my memory.  
Where now I wish to be  
Instead of this vaulting, echoing cave of stars.

*"It seemed that out of the battle I escaped  
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped  
Through granites which titanic wars had groined.."  
Strange Meeting - Wilfred Owen.*

...And to the men my sympathy  
In token, pillow in the broiling dark,  
And rest, only rest propped in angry ruin.  
Across the city smear the hoary  
bells, ministers to the barbarous clerk  
who stabbed the pen; his armoury  
a lonely pen, Where now the eye  
forgets him. To him impart  
my sympathy. To those that lie  
Bone and buried close under the icy sky  
tunnelled and torn wasted scarlet  
in final friendship, I  
give my sympathy. Where wound mystery,  
Lay down the pen and lay your heart  
open, bleeding through mine and lie  
down, lie down, the song cry  
broken open, metal hacked,  
that leads to the entrance to the private sigh.

In that other kingdom..

In that other kingdom  
There lies, between the creed  
and the crucifixion,  
between the hours of clay  
and bone  
No death.  
No nagging awkward presence  
Of the omnipresent hunchback.  
No death wasting the slow years of being.  
For in that other kingdom  
The hero becomes the man  
and the man etches his epitaph  
within the crumbling galaxies.

Within that second before breath  
Within that second before sleep  
That other kingdom is touched  
and torn away.

I have said your name

I have said your name tonight  
In my private voice  
and drawn my hand in the cold space  
beside me,  
Dipped a hand in the morning pool  
and let it slip back  
Not spun with water-web  
But dry.

I have said your name tonight  
Remembering nothing but breathing  
and you, a mile of sleep away.  
I have said your name tonight  
To guard my nakedness  
From desolate waking dreams  
and the furry night walking blackness.

Marilyn

And if the fallen idol were a temporary affair

Reviewed on page five of the reviews

I could understand

The candles burning soft and bright.

But now alone, falling slowly into legend

you sprawl naked below yesterdays results

swept up with the crumbs and forgotten litter

of a half digested dinner.

*"Tadzio"*

In beauty - Aschenbach

In death - Pan

between sea and sun.

Beauty loved death

and the music died

drowned in the sand

the sea and the ghosting youth -

and was refused..

Your head is bowed..

Your head is bowed  
Eyes searching,  
Lost in space  
between me and the memories,  
crying the lost time silently inside.

At this moment, you are lost  
to me  
Lost in old hands  
and older faces.

In this, I cannot deny you  
for within your silent eyes  
that shout with sadness  
is built that which makes you  
is that which makes me hold a hand out to you  
making me one with you.

Our worlds, touching as though  
bubble against bubble  
are similar  
are ours.

We lack the words  
but know the signs  
that lead and guide  
each other to ourselves.

## Antrim Strand

A diary page opened.

Irish banks and rivers running  
down to Mourne.

A long beach, dog walking  
and home for salt salmon  
"a la french".

We had stepped the giant stones  
close by the hint of Bushmills  
running down to Portrush.  
found fresh killed beef  
slowly dissolving, running pink in the mouth.

I wanted his ghost to rub on me  
but all I felt was the morning wind from the sea.  
I had searched for a new land.  
I was too far from the old  
and had never reached the new.

I kicked shells and watched the dogs  
spring between tide and land  
I opened my coat to the wet warmth of the morning surf  
and searched for an anchor in your arms.

I wanted hands in loam and granite  
but did not travel south to my past  
even though I thought I heard my grandmother' s voice  
scratching at my memory.  
I stayed and stuffed the fatted calf  
into my gaping maul.

A diary opened,

Memories of sea salmon and beef  
and an Ireland I touched but never met

A Small Crucifixion

Each small day a small crucifixion  
Each new light, street lamp passing  
lighting my way to the cross.

This is a shadow that can' t live in these shadows  
and is afraid of the light.

Each day a tiredness,  
a movement between this and that  
a memory standing before me  
each day a small crucifixion.

## **Auferstehen**

*Der Meister ist schon wieder unruhig.*

When I first arrived, you took me in,  
accepting the stranger,  
you wanted my language when I wanted yours.  
I met you mid-way, despite my own fears  
for here, in this new land, you taught your children your past  
each question answered in reflections of hope.  
I learned from you, though I was still trapped on my own island.  
Tried to build bridges,  
but they collapsed because of their fragile foundation,  
Leaving me alone again  
except for the unspoken presence of your past.

*Heute ist Der Meister unruhig und zeigt die Zukunft  
mit seinen knochigen Fingern.*

When I first came, I walked your streets,  
I peered into your houses and cafes, corners and paths,  
Tried to learn from you, with you,  
Knew that if I made a mistake you would correct me  
and we would joke at both our misunderstandings.

Now, the Meister is rising, and I'm afraid of asking,  
afraid of looking into your eyes, afraid of using my language  
and your language, except in the company of friends.

Here, in the first days of Christmas, the trees are bearing their first lights.  
You are preparing the days for peace and goodwill.  
There are no lights in this house.  
I will not light this house tonight  
for fear of the light attracting strangers.

The drums are pounding to the east  
and Der Meister has awoken from his sleep.  
I will stay in the shadows, not speaking,  
for fear of him hearing my voice,  
for fear of him seeing the colour of my skin,  
for fear of him coming to my island.

## SONG

I' m lying beside you, watching your face,  
With you miles of sleep away  
And I need your touch and the sound of your voice  
To help me through ' till day, through ' till day.

The sound of your breath and the beat of your heart  
Fills up the room with noise  
And your hair lies spread across the bed  
Where we shiver, asleep and awake, asleep and awake.  
Should I wake you up, should I kiss your lips,  
And disturb the breath in your mouth  
Would you open your eyes or should I let you lie  
Wrapped in the sound of your own heartbeat  
Wrapped in the sound of your own heartbeat  
' Round my bed.

It' s only that I' m afraid of the empty space  
Yawning wider at every breath  
For I need your voice and the smile of your eyes  
In a night that tastes like death, this night tastes just like death.  
Oh in this furry night, with its silent ghosts  
Stalking ' round my head.  
I can' t stifle the cries, and the thoughts behind eyes  
Like shadows across the bed.  
And now we' re alone, asleep and awake  
And I' m frightened to shatter the space  
Just lying alone with the yawning fears  
And we' re slowly losing our face  
Slowly losing our place.



*This group of word sketches is a collection of things that I've written over the years from 1972 through to the present day.*

*To those people that have previously read some of the poems I hope that bringing them together under one cover has not taken away any magic that the reader may have already felt and that some of the previously unpublished sketches found here will bring some new pictures to the reader.*

*Steve - August 1992/January 1993/February 1994*