

**WORD
SKETCHES**

The Awakening Voice

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INDEX

Page	Sketch
2	The Awakening Voice
3	Autumn 1991
4	Captains
5	Burglar
6	The Old Man
7	It was you...
8	Negative
9	Second Hand
10	Pit
11	Her hands are at ...
12	Dylan Thomas .. Notes from a T.V program
13	My Father
14	Autumn/Newlyn/Trelawney 1971
15	Following Newlyn
16	James Dean
17	I do not know of death..
18	The Star Child
19	...And to the men my sympathy
20	In that other kingdom
21	I have said your name tonight..
22	Marilyn
23	"Tadzio"
24	Your head is bowed.
25	Antrim Strand
26	A Small Crucifixion
27	Auferstehen
28	Song
29	England my England

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.

ENGLAND MY ENGLAND

Em

F#m

B7

We' ve been living here in Germany, I suppose that we' re alright
The foods not bad, the money' s good, You can drink all night
But even though you' re pretty well off, you' ve always got some pain
When you' re looking forward to the time when you can go home again
CH:

G#m

F#m

G#m

England, my England, where have you been
I' ve missed your valleys and the fields of green
England, my England, with your rivers blue
Wish I was coming back, home to be with you

We' ve been in a lot of places, sometimes we' ve had to fight
But nothing ever seems the same, England just feels right
We' ve had golden beaches, snowy hills and oriental dawns
But they don' t come anywhere near tea on an English lawn

Ch:

It' s not just the rocky cliffs, the open windy moors,
It' s the times we had, the things w knew, the friends who lived next door,
It' s an open fire at Xmas time, the pub on a Saturday night
And the feeling of being home, all warm and wrapped up tight

Ch:

Maybe soon I' ll take a plane or hitch a lorry ride
Or even take a ferry boat on a morning tide
From a land of ice or a land of sun where I' ve been too long
And walk the streets and feel the air of the place where I belong

Ch:

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