Poetry Series

peter rodenby - poems -

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peter rodenby(8th january 1951)

These poems mean a great deal to me. They span the greatest period of my life and when I read

them they stir memories and feelings that represent all that I have been. I have always considered

them the best part of me. In some respects that's a little disturbing because if they are rubbish

and people find them so, then I must except that my life has been a failure.

Some were written

when I was a teenager, some as a lover, some as married man, some as a sa retired

person beginning a new life, with a new partner in an old cottage in the country where I am

trying to become a writer. Some just for the experience, some were called "The Waiting Years"

Initially because those poems span a period from when I started the pursuit of knowledge – I

began studying for a degree with the Open University. I hoped it would bring me academic and

professional acceptance and an improvement in career prospects, more money and a better way

of life. I believed hard work, sustained study long term commitment (something I found

impossible to achieve in early life) would ultimately lead to the golden path and the prize.

Sometime ago I discovered I was wrong, it has cost a great deal more and I'm still waiting.

These poems and short meanderings are moments away from studying and work.

I now realize that I have been waiting all my life.

What have I been waiting for?

You the reader must work that out for your selves. I give you the poems you are the final judge.

Peter Rodenby

St Johns Chapel

A Man Alone In The Rain

Rustic rug,
the multitude
from a once green canopy
fallen foliage rustling corpses
a bronze battalion brushed into piles,
casualties of the changing seasons.
Wind challenges the work of the road sweeper
resurrecting their corpses
a sort of brief immortality.
A labour of lost endeavour
A man alone with a broom in the rain
working with the elements
while the leaves are washed
and the side walk becomes slippery with their skin.

Approaching Evil

"For evil to survive good men need do nothing"

I was only a child only eight years old. I had walked with my mother to the shop where she worked. Then I started the mile to school On my own. It was just an ordinary day. looking forward to playing football in the school yard with my friends. On my way down a back alley a man approached me "Can you show we where there is a toilet?" I knew this was not right. He tried to grab my arm. "Come on show me, you know you can" I avoided his grasp and ran away frightened.

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I went to school
never telling about the incident.
I was frightened and embarrassed
I did not talk because I was ashamed
That evil predator had convinced me
In that brief contact
That I had done something wrong.
In my naive innocence I did not consider
Other possible victims, consequences of my silence.
I should have spoken out,
He may have been caught
I may have prevented other approaches.
But I was only a child.

Cawfields Quarry

Call of lone curlew
turn down beak
outspread wings
resting on air.
High above outcrop
Whinsill
north facing escarpment
scar of rock
atop the Wall.
A testimony to tenacity
building of forgotten men
frontier of a lost empire.
Flooded quarry water
dark cold hollow on solitary moors.

Change

Rose petals
tinged with decay
struggling
in the final threads
Of their splendoured existence,
contort themselves,
but
at last
resigned
flutter agonisingly away
on the revolutionary winds of autumn.

Cold Thoughts On A Winter Night

White isolation of snow

Remoteness

of winter

Icy night

calls me to account.

Realising

I have squandered

months,

years,

alone,

friendless.

Please

give me

your companionship

perhaps love!

or just sun.

Now I need the warmth.

Days Of Glory Have Not Gone

recall a golden sun, blue sky, broad breaths, heaven, careless clouds, sand dunes wild grass head high where we walked. Tassel stalks, topped seeds, frail feelings, in short trouser pockets, locked in a laugh. Sandy beach, playground for families, bouncing ball. Discarded ankle socks Splintered shells Drumming waves, white wash foam, sea spread sandwich Sundays. My mother sits sail skirted prepares sandy tea. My father, sleeping, lying back in golden rest, white handkerchief, four corners tied, make-shift sun hat, days of glory are not gone.

Eyes Don'T Tell Lies In The Dark

Eyes don't tell lies in the dark
Faces smile, lovingly close,
no need for conversation,
seeking each others lips.
our fingers chase,
meet ghostly in air.
Fire is extinguished,
music has stopped playing,
we are alone, without speaking,
but eyes, don't tell lies in the dark.

Insecure

I met my first wife in the time I was going through I now recognise was my first episode of depression. I was eighteen years old just returned from Europe after and extended holiday. It was suppose to be my escape from mundane life I had no intention of returning when I set of for Haarlem, things rarely turn out the way you plan.

My councillor has told me
I am a type of person who looks on the world
as a half empty glass
rather than a half full one.
I attempt impossible tasks
only to fail
fulfilling my jaundiced view
a self perpetuated cycle of depression
following me
unfailing in its company since that time.

My experience then of life
has always been one of under achieving.
always wanting to do better
expecting more from a situation than is realistic
always unfailingly having to accept
second best
or in many cases
no place in the running at all.
This has meant of cause
I have not been an easy person to live with.

I would say that I have been, continue to be an insecure individual.

Prone to bleak moments, despair long days of dark depression.

The surprising aspect of my personality, I have been able to present a perfectly normal persona

most of the time to my family and work colleagues.

Inside My Crystal Rainbow

Inside my Rainbow

My crystal rainbow Each particle perfect and identical In sympathy and place Each colored fragment Apart of the whole. My sanctuary rainbow A place of warmth comfort and ease Embracing empathic peace A refuge and a fortress for the fallen And the scared. My musical rainbow Where voices harmonize And vibrate through me With a semblance of physical pleasure close to peace Although in side my imaginary rainbow My body is devoid of substance And of pain I am a spirit being and therefore free. My spiritual rainbow Where my own spirit is mercifully received Blameless and forgiven A companion that I return to in trust My colorful rainbow Where colors merge into each other There are no boundaries, No right or wrong No winners and looses No black and white My mystery rainbow That has no solution That I can not rationalize or analyze Where acceptance is the only currency

And I can not fathom the meaning

Only that it is.

Isle Of Bute

The mainland
string of sodium
shadow in misty rain
no more
a shallow tide
red rock
beach
a walk away
across an expensive stream.

A beautiful green isle
of sleepy dreams
and farms
narrow lanes
winding down to pebbled beaches,
the old town
a shabby port
Victorian pleasure palace
putting greens
sodden in the drizzle.

Across the gray water from the upper deck of the old ferry I look back on Bute old houses hug the coast fadeout of sight as the boat glides further from the shore.

It Would Be Nice To Think So

Another place to be, we live, when we die. Paradise perhaps. We go on, a spirit or reincarnation, blessed. A higher existence, immortal spirits, Or heroes dwelling in the hall of valiant warriors Valhalla Ghosts or Angels, at God's side with Jesus or Who? There must be something more! We can not just fall stop moving die, rot, decay. There has to be something more, unless that's it It would be nice to think so.

January Parting

Ι

Tried

Catching

Her tears

From sad

Pathetic eyes

But

They slowly

Trickled

Through my fingers

Dissolving the white unfeeling snow.

Lambs And Swallows And Dandelion Days

Plaintive calls across dale,
babes of meadow grow quickly in dandelion days.
Following stooping mothers,
nestling teats in a frenzy of feeding.
Tails wag wildly, ecstatic hunger,
quickly skip, prance, and run to play.
Class mates, contemporaries,
seeking each other out.
Woollen "babes in the woods"

Head butting contests, races, idle time.
upon grassy hillocks champions!
Each mother a watching nursemaid
Kindergarten, a field across the wall.
ignorant of destiny, waiting in slaughter yard.

Bred, born to die fattening on grass, spring turns to summer, trees leaf again. Prisoners of Man, boarders of meadow. lambs grow meat, on feet, mint is greening in the garden. Transport trucks, predetermined doom Begin fateful final journey very soon.

Do they see the swallows return?

Do they recognise them for what they are?

Spirit phantoms waltzing boundless sky,
dance hall limitless, come, go, regardless,
ariel entertainers, free from incarceration
in the dandelion dales and the hand of Man.

Mollie Made Me Me

Mollie made me smile, Sunshine to a cold, old miserable man She made me laugh, Like a kings fool Before I could not cope When I forgot how eat the happiness of joy Mollie made me love A flood light on the dark stage of life Her leading man and not an extra Mollie, loyal and affectionate, Tough, strong, resilient The face of a fisher woman of Cullercotes Made famous by a New England artist Mollie made me see The beauty and the benefit of life Through her own imperfect speech And impaired hearing She taught me to appreciate All that I saw and heard Mollie made me Me a better man When she was only a little girl My grand daughter

Never Mine

It was that time of year towards end of summer lately leaves fall with barely a breath of wind in the garden. I remember running after you. tugging at your sky blue skirt. trailing on sun scorched ground, craving attention, child I was. Stooping you picked me up. clasped me to your breast, gently as you picked faded now forgotten flowers. Oh Holy Mother with haloed head I can never be the lover that you lost ecstasy was yours and sorrow Never mine. Carefree childhood days have gone on wings of blossoming wisdom. Prom that Tall Tower of Temptation I saw the World, but let it go. Now mother I'm hanging on this cross spare pitying tears for if I am Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Then ecstasy was mine and sorrow This agony is mine and horror Always mine.

Written in South Africa 1977

Passengers

All travelling through life, but on that coach there are no alternative destinations. Some will continue the journey longer than others; some will have to get off. Not necessarily at the stop they want. Some will have the chance to go back, but it will have changed and the places too. A return visit is not the same. We take the journey full of anticipation; we are disillusioned, or disappointed to a certain degree, no matter what happens. We are distracted or attracted by what goes on, beyond the windows of the bus. With people we are forced to sit on the bus, we do not know, understand or appreciate, in many cases we would rather not be with them, but that is the nature of the journey. Sometimes we wish to get off and the journey would end. That is beyond our control. We do not know of the people travelling with us we share the experience of the trip and nothing more.

Photographs Of A Personel History

Some images of a forgotten past
I had no part of
Now scattered on table and floor
surrounded with tears of remembrances.
Times before I knew you.
I am not there!
as you are absent
from my missing photographs,
Images that do not fade with memories
or conceal the sorrow of secrets
without words.

Poems Of Faith

The Miracle

There was such a crowd so many because He had healed the sick. People followed Him even in to the wilderness. I did not think I would get to see the Teacher. But when his helpers asked for food I came forward, not afraid I wanted so much to see him. The people made way for me, and the Young Master beckoned me to come. I lade my bread and fish before Him. He blessed them so that all could eat. I believed. The people sat down Waves on the grass. We all ate our fill, none was left hungry. All that was uneaten was collected up, nothing was wasted. A food for my family became a feast for thousands. Such was the miracle.

Even dogs eat the crumbs from their masters table

I was desperate;
My daughter was possessed by demons.
She did not know me when she was taken,
remembered nothing when they left her.
She has been this way
for as long as I could remember.
I was in despair, but what could I do?

I heard about a Jewish healer, everyone was talking about him. They call us dogs, despise us.
We are not like them, but I was sure He could heal her.

I had to push through the crowd, His helpers tried to turn me away. I called out to Him. "Master Please help me" At first he ignored me.

I called again.

"Please pity me, please heal my daughter.
"Even dogs eat the crumbs from their masters table"
He spoke very quietly
"Your faith has made it so"
When I came home she was restored
I believe she will never be taken again.

If I will that he would tarry till I come

When I was a young man I walked with God.
I rested on His breast, I saw Him hanging on the cross.
He was the Light in the dark and He changed my life.
After He came back from the tomb He spoke
Showed his wounds and said" follow me"

All my friends and brothers in Christ are gone to glory now.
I remain an old man in exile.
He once said
"If I will that he tarries till I come.
What is that to thee?"

I have thought on this all my life. He was talking about me. He loved me.

I have pondered the Masters words Some thought that I would not die until the End of Days.

But that is not what He said. Yesterday He came back to me in Revelation. The Glory of His Mission I bequest to you all now. I myself, I believe, I go to join Him.

Sea Song

Weave your hair in sun silk waves
Twirl seaweed in tiny hands
Caress your breasts
with salty sea
let it lap, wash, whirl around
sun soaked skin,
golden thighs,
sea is swirling in your eyes
my love, my love

Searching For Our Ancestors On The Internet

Photograph
Captured image of farming folk
A different generation
Two brothers
Insular world
Village and land
Killed six weeks apart
In War.

Their lives
Toil, troubles
Happiness, hopes
Days of rain and shine
Snatched from them.

Eyes and features
Bond of blood
Bequeathed
From my great uncles
To me.

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A Video ghost
Bound to my life
Troubled
Techno world
Restless air
Progress an illusion
Wealth of knowledge
Transitory
Conquests of continents
Providing no contentment
Protection
From ageing or wars.
My Ancestors show me that I will die.

Sophie By The River And Moonlight

Lying in my arms apparently contented you do not fidget or struggle, water soothes, fascinates no temptations to jump, to walk away, that may come later.

I who have stolen time trespass on another mans fate, a substitute grandfather.

No blood binds, heritage, history or haemoglobin.

Both watch water over rocks, over falls, down river.

I see for what it is, but what do you see sitting on grass grasping flowers?

It's dark you are asleep
I sit again as night comes
crescent moon
solitary star low on horizon.
A planet does not twinkle,
parade of street lights up the dale.
Fifty years separates
a generation removed.
A man watching water a mile up river
Does not see the same as me.

You are long asleep from time we sat under shadow of sycamores. pale light, but you will not see You were mine a princess of the river Precious, but not moonlight.

I am beyond you with burden of experience toll of tears.

You are beyond me
Infinite possibilities

your life might take.

Stage Play

A Black stallion in a yellow field Coal over buttercups, beside a river. Midges swarm, an irritated tail swishes spasmodically, falling water failing cascades tunefully. A swooping swift feeds on busy insects on the wing, Restless faun rabbit runs, erratic through yellow green speckled haze. A weary watching walker waits wild wonder, anticipates the end of these innocent incidents orchestrated, choreographed, perfect performance.

The Art Of Playing Dominoes

I played dominoes with my grandson
His last year I played dominoes with my father
My grandsons dominoes had animals on their faces
My father's were the traditional kind
There is little skill in playing
Much is determined by the hand you start with
Chance and luck plays a major role
In who wins the game.
Is that much like life?

My father played with dimmed eyes a befuddled mind
My grandson saw bright animals, knew the differences
Between a cockerel, a cow.a sheep and a pig.
My father saw only dots and found it difficult to concentrate.
My grandson was beginning his life Everything was bright
He knew the colors were alive
My father was ending his
In black and white and gray.

I played dominoes with them both the living link. messenger between the two I was privileged sharing in the Game. My father bequeathed to me the Art of playing dominoes Is that so much like life?

The Final Call

In between the hollow of forgetfulness

And the brief spark of lucidity

My father slips from life

No memory for the moment

No recollections

Only facts repeated by rote

His name, his place of residence

A place he grew up in

"Cross Keys Lane"

over eighty years ago.

He shuffles from chair to table

Incontinent, infirm, frail, silent placid.

Not moved by anger.

Occasionally frustrated by a button

That will not fasten, or a coat sleeve

That will not accommodate

An arthritic arm.

He lives a half existence

In a Home

A total reliance on his carers.

I visit him, knowing he does not know me.

Its hard to see him now

A skeleton wrapped in skin

Jaundiced,

No strength to stand

No mind to think

Nothing but a cry

A random outburst

From a delirious mind.

"Help Me" That final call.

Postscript

My father did not see the spring this year. He died.

There was still snow on the hills, a bitter wind froze my face as I walked from the car park to the hospital entrance.

The Ward, crowded with old people waiting to die.

Delusional, frightened, hysterical and in pain.

This is where my father died.

Afterwards the bed was screened with curtains

His corpse, with half closed eyes lay still, warm, but lifeless. A vase of flowers and an open Bible.

Beyond the curtain screen the tortured cries of the living.

I said a prayer and touched his head and left.

The French

They came into our lives for a short time, bright morning strangers, foreigners, we did not know them, they did not know us. We talked, sat down together, ate a meal, drank wine, did what people do. We found we shared similar experiences, held equal values. A barrier of language dissolved with laughter, despite the rain they left as friends.

The Past Is Pressed Flowers

The past is pressed flowers discovered between pages of a long discarded book. A flimsy brittle remnant forgotten silent summer. The past a friend, my life, unfulfilled desires. secrets, dreams. There are more than books or words in the library.

The Replacement

A friend once told me, we replace people we have lost.

Not a careless, indifference to uniqueness, just away of substituting someone we would rather not live without.

I have always considered that observation a correct one, recently I have had cause to reconsider.

A partner we expect to trust, love and cherish Equally we expect these gifts in return.

Children we love, wonder at, keep a tender spot for them, no matter how they may disappoint or desert.

We still see them as our beloved, our real investment in the future.

There has not been a substitute for my children
I have found my life extremely empty.
They do not appear to have, or need, a replacement for me.

The Saddest Time Of Your Life

A screaming wind unfastened our grip
Aching we clung, desperately embracing,
Breathing like one.
A tear trickled and twinkled
On a sad swollen face
And dissolved to obscurity
In a shower of rain.
Tired eyes revealed the disenchantment
You felt.
Sobbing shabby despair, we waited
For our bus to come.
Out from the cold winter night.
And I loved you there as I look back

On the saddest time of your life. When hidden beneath your coat

Your stomach was swollen with carrying

peter rodenby

Our unborn child.

These Days Of Grace

The distance between forgiveness is a slender thread of pain We persevere and persuade ourselves that we can survive. Its true with time all wounds will be wiped away But in suffering every day we re awaken agony In this day of grace in the garden of the lord We lay down in fields of sweet grasses and forget Only a golden sun will wake us. From our slumbers seduced by innocence again the sent of shaken flowers will pluck us from our dreams A silent warm breeze will caress our spirit And we will know with certainty that sorrow, and sadness And evil and all the badness in the world is gone for us.

Vindolanda Letter

Letter from the land, buried for two thousand years. A note to an intimate friend, a party invitation, a brief occupation in some ones life. Insignificant at the time, discarded afterwards, preserved by chance.

A technique of building, lying layers of moss, turf and stone over wood sealed environment. To be read again by thousands.

Walk Roman roads, marvelling at under floor heating, bath houses and lavatories. Trappings of civilisation at the outpost of the Empire.

We indulge in a kind of time travel imagine the period, touch the evidence its real, its here, its ancient history!

Words scratched on a scrap of pine, scribbled sentences, dead language, lost life, a lady and her letter.

Waterfalls Ambleside

Rhythmic tapping of shoes Ascending a hillside pathway Following a sheep ragged track But seeming like impenetrable steps To a sacred heart. Unexpected wind wriggles free Reaching, probing a weakness. A tree sways, creaking musically, A forgotten oboe tune. A hint of snow Comes from the mountains A fine white dust Slipping between The bare twig bark Hungry naked arms, Stretching out towards the sky Quiver in expectation.

An almost imperceptible drone
Follows the gurgle
Of a turquoise stream.
But slowly lazily,
The drone becomes audible
And the overture begins..
Water music bursts forth,
Shaking air
In a tumultuous explosion.
A cataract shaped like women's thighs.
A torrent divided gushing down
Twenty feet,
Emerging into foam.
Spattering on rocks below
In the damp, restless air of the fall.

We Missed The Tide

The causeway was beginning to flood,
We had to turn back, leave the island
Bleak winter sand, soaked pools of water
Littered the beach.
Watching, safe on the Main land
First wave breaking over the road.
We knew, made the only decision possible.
Still sad, to be forced to leave the island.

From the shelter of the car, the tide raced. Eating lunch, oat cakes and cheese. Showing photographs, talking laughing Crushed in the back seat, I knew By your lips on my face, your hands, By touch, felt your passion. The way your body responded to mine You were there for me and love.

I had come from darkness.

From a long sleep, like Rip Van Winkle.

Being with you was a betrayal

I knew it then I know it now.

Selfish, cruel, hurting some one.

I waited ten years.
For circumstances, situations to change,
Friends and families
Marriages and deaths, kept us apart.

I hoped you would come to me.
I said it then. I say it now.
Only, I am not your friend
A friend could hurt and betray you
I want to be your love.

Wedgwood

Blue sky, blue clouds, blue morning
The sun and snow
Silent slipping sleet
Foot prints dissolve
Through pathways gone
Seldom seen
Rabbits run
A stunted tree
All about quietness
Silent scene.

A white hill top, a house rebuilt A home reborn to incomers No dale folk will return.

Tracks in snow
Foot prints of life
Tide of time turns twofold

A dark ribbon of river Running through white obscurity.

Legacy of Land lords Lords of all Managers of execution Betray the natural way.

Where has the deer gone? Where are badger, otter, and fox?

Across the field, track in snow
Prints of frozen feet
Wandering where?
A leap over shrouded stone wall
Then gone, ghosts gone
Only sounds of guns
Howling hounds, hunters

Hate and haste.
Worst winter since when?

Woodpeckers

Flash of flight

Woodpeckers have returned

I have seen them!

Last year a garden was favoured

Pecking nuts from a bird feeder

Fixed to bark

Enticing with home made fat packs

Suspended from strategic sites

Rustic arches

Bird tables

Washing lines

Eventually they came to our land

Winging over lawn.

Perched on a fledgling apple tree

Nibbling at the bounty

Away again

Flighty

A glimpse of identity

Red, black, white wing

Distinguished bird.

They are back

Preferring wind blown sycamores

Bare neglected trees by winter river

Shy, independent, accepting remoteness

No human contact or reliance

The independent woodpeckers.

Yesterday I Think I Saw The Last Butterfly Of Summer

Yesterday I think I saw the last butterfly of summer Exposing her wings on a late blossoming flower. Autumn just a chilly breathe away Winter an extended harsh memory.

Unexpected beauty of the red admiral Resting in the warmth of October sun Restored my faith Made me believe.

I can endure approaching winter
I will survive against the snow
The icy death and the numbness of despair.
Yesterday I saw a butterfly of summer

You Tell Me Truly Of Your Dream

Tender arms, yesterday
reach out, beyond my prison
they long to embrace me
resurrect the past
passion of dreaming desire.
Secret encounter
I dare not disclose
something fine, beautiful,
something only I know the name.

You tell me truly of your dream but I long to be with you in life. Am illegal rendezvous concealed in deep dark African night. Where talking insects are only witness to the passionate but immoral act. Black is only colour of my secret sorrow my sun tanned skin is still white, my eyes are blue. I'm not like my beloved. Better to live with my regrets a self made prison, than behind someone else's metal bars.

Written in South Africa 1978

Zimbabwe

In the dry stone of Zimbabwe
I wanted to walk look down
from the hill they call "The Acropolis"
where the most interesting
Archaeological finds were made,
to valley of ruins.

High walls that cast longer shadows back into a remote past, wander through intriguing passageways attracted by brooding compelling atmosphere enigma of a vanished society.

But I never made that short trip from Johannesburg.
Our plans were cut short before they materialised.
All I have is a holiday brochure.
Rhodesia was in the turmoil of war guerrilla armies, nagging, engaging, persistent were destroying safety and internal security of white racially dominated society.

They brought down a passenger plane With a ground to air missile, Murdered survivors in the bush, all who could not escape the wreckage of the crash. Incident extensively report in South African papers, but hardly mentioned in England.

System disintegrating
We whites ghostly spirits
African legends linger on.
Wonder will we leave behind
Artefacts and articles
Ruins and mystery
People of Zimbabwe,
Have bequeathed to us.

White living flesh to bones
Our many achievements all to dust,
as theirs have gone before
in the place of the High One's.
In the ruins of Zimbabwe.

Written in South Africa 1979