

You and Me, Death

An essay evaluating the insistence of melancholy

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Lyrics to the record named *Du & Jag Döden* by Kent. Swedish original and English translations

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Introduction

“Kärt barn har många namn”, reads a Swedish expression. A loved child has many names. Researching melancholy clearly shows this: Melancholy seems to be a phenomenon that is widely recognizable, yet resisting pinpointed description as well as its exact relation to philosophical issues. Melancholy seems to have no real ‘reason’; nonetheless, it affects body and soul totally and feels independent of external circumstances. It is like an invasion, almost; one’s own will can’t control it –still it is comprehensive. One’s world seems devoid of significance and meaning, but the melancholic often has many words for her state of mind. What are the relations between one’s sense of self –and life itself, other people, God, ideas of truth, interaction? How do we articulate what is going on?

Melancholy, as I have understood and examined it in this text, is illustrated by many different names with slightly different descriptions. The word *acedia* derives its roots from words meaning indifference; to *not care*. *Ennui* means boredom; to *bore* or to annoy. *Depression* is common today. *Tristitia* means sadness. The noon-day devil; or the *noon-tide demon* attacked the early monks, solitaire in the desert; the heat of the midday left them in despair and desire to leave their posts. An existential slumber threatened to take place; the kind that allowed the virtuous soul to neglect the knowledge of God. How does one wake up from existential slumber? And where should one go when awoken?

As we shall see, this essay’s objective can operate in a diverse array of fields. For instance: As a physiological state, a Catholic’s sin, a poet’s requirement or, looking at the other side of the coin; as the ecstasy of the faintly mad. Questions I deal with here are those concerning the nature of melancholy, its sources, value and, above all, its persistence. *Why* are we melancholy? Is melancholy a product of the modern attitude, where the voyage inwards is highly valued; where we are spurred towards truthful confessions about private feelings and intimate fantasies for ‘therapeutic’ purposes? Or, is melancholy an inevitable feature of human existence? And, are there any advantages to its effects?

In my first chapter, I look into the theology of early monks so as to outline a divine aspect of the melancholy disposition. I then move to the ancient Greeks, to look at their version of the causes and cures of this inexplicable sadness. In Chapter 2, I examine psychoanalytical explanations of the mind’s workings to gather a draft for a contemporary analysis of the depressed being. Here, I have also brought in a wonderful rock-band’s songs. Through looking at their lyrics and melody, I will analyse signs of melancholy in today’s pop-culture –and admit that poetry has been one of its products. In the last, and shortest, chapter, I attempt to round off my discussion by means of pulling early and late thought together in a value shift adopted from the ancient Greeks. For this essay is an evaluation of the *insistence* of melancholy, as it has presented a puzzle throughout the ages.

1. Sins and Humours

Acedia: Grace, Will and Faith

For as the moth injures the garment, and the worm the wood, so dejection the heart of man.¹

Dejection injures one's heart, monk John Cassian (AD360-435) concluded some sixteen hundred years ago. This gloominess, heavy-heartedness, depression – a loved child indeed has many names- is one of the seven capital sins of the Catholic Church: The Sin of Sloth. (A sin, here, refers to “conduct that involves a wrong attitude toward God and results in alienation from Him”.) The Sin of Sloth signifies a spiritual laziness, or putting off what God asks you to do; or not doing it at all. Theologian Thomas of Aquinas (1225/7-1274) agrees: Sloth is “sluggishness of the mind which neglects to begin good”³. A religious information resource website describes the sin as

the desire for ease, even at the expense of doing the known will of God. Whatever we do in life requires effort, and everything we do is to be a means of salvation. The slothful person is unwilling to do what God wants because of the effort it takes to do it. Sloth becomes a sin when it slows down and even brings to a halt the energy we must expend in using the means to salvation⁴.

The core of sloth, here, is a kind of inactivity, unresponsiveness or indifference to life and its tasks.

Cassian developed an ethics around “eight principal obstacles to perfection encountered by monks:

Gluttony, impurity, covetousness, anger, dejection, *acedia* (ennui), vainglory, and pride⁵”. It is *acedia*; or *acedia*, that I will look into here. The word stems from the Greek ἀκείδεια; *indifference*: a- + κείδος; *care*⁶. An article named “The Great Sin of Sloth: Acedia”, describes how *acedia* shows itself in different individuals:

/.../ it can be egocentricity-born of fearfulness and uncertainty, or lack of imagination. It appears as a “don't care” attitude which no amount of sentimentalizing as “contentedness”, “minding one's own business” and/or “live and let live” can cover up. A common excuse for inaction, indifference or lukewarm response is the “fear of becoming involved”. Exactly, yet all life is a matter of involvement somewhere with something or many somethings. This chronic fear and consequent withdrawal is surely a common sin. It is a kind of being “scared to death” - at least to nonlife⁷.

It is thus this indifference, which in the previous quote is accredited to “a kind of being ‘scared to death’” (as above), that concerns Cassian. (What is here meant by that fear is, I think, the lack of energy that leads to a kind of emotional *sleep* –which in turn leads to its death: “Do not admit sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids!”⁸) reads a commentary ascribed to Christian theologian Origen of Alexandria (AD 185-254).) A monastic life lived for the glory of God becomes the realization of our destiny and true self –

¹ Cassian, John. “Book IX: On Dejection”, Chapter II

² <http://mb-soft.com/believe/text/sin.htm> See Bibliography and References

³ www.ccel.org/a/aquinas/summa/SS/SS035.html#SSQ35A1THEP1 See Bibliography and References

⁴ <http://deadlysins.com/sins/sloth.html> See Bibliography and References

⁵ Hassett, M. From the Catholic encyclopedia. See www.newadvent.org/cathen/03404a.htm

⁶ See www.thefreedictionary.com/acedia

⁷ www.sojourner-institute.com/archives/identification/salvation/workprayer/acedia/acedia.html See Bibliography and References

⁸ Origen. Quoted in Wenzel, “Origins”, page 8

that identity which was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27⁹), but which was lost in the Fall (Genesis 3:1-24¹⁰). Cassian saw a revered life as a life in control; a stoic attitude, beyond passion: An ideal life is a life in calm contemplation. “By spiritual meditation we may keep our mind constantly occupied with hope of the future and contemplation of the promised blessedness.¹¹” –The devil might come in disguise, and even a “good” feeling may hence be “bad”. Moodiness, or a disposition to a wide range of feelings, makes one vulnerable to the devil and his demons. In the melancholic state, the demons have taken over. Acedia is therefore a sin, as the desperate person *denies the sense in life*, and in her own being. She is giving up the fight against the constant threat of demons *and* blocking herself off from divine help.

Showing indifference to the purpose and meaning of God’s creation further becomes a sin specifically against the Holy Ghost:

Mortal sin destroys the spiritual life in which God dwells in us through charity. And that sin is mortal which in its own proper nature is opposed to charity. Now spiritual sloth is such; for the effect of charity is joy in God; but spiritual sloth is weariness of spiritual good as Divine. /.../ This is opposed to that spiritual joy in Divine good which is the inward effect of charity¹².

In other words; there are particular intellectual, moral and theological virtues, one of which is *Charity*. “Charity” signifies the recognition of God’s intrinsic *goodness* as well as its presence in our neighbour. (Charity differs from the virtue “Faith”, as it regards God not under the aspect of truth but of good, and from “Hope” inasmuch as it regards God “not as our good precisely (*nobis bonum*), but as good in Himself¹³.”) Then, there are particular sins, of varying gravity, being classified as sins due to their alienating properties. *Acedia* is one of the gravest sins because it violates the virtue of charity. *Charity* is that which gives rise to spiritual life and joy in God. The Holy Ghost, furthermore, is the one who allows us to make charity an inner experience. The conclusion will then be that since acedia by its nature is contrary to charity, which stems from the Holy Ghost, it is a sin against the Holy Ghost. This thesis is also acknowledged in the following quote, an introduction to a prayer from an online Catholic Community Forum:

The gifts of the Holy Ghost perfect the supernatural virtues by enabling us to practice them with greater docility to divine inspiration. As we grow in the knowledge and love of God under the direction of the Holy Ghost our service becomes more sincere and generous and the practice of virtue more perfect. *Such acts of virtue leave the heart filled with joy and consolation and are known as Fruits of the Holy Ghost¹⁴*. [My emphasis.]

We have now established how acedia became a sin in the Catholic Church. But what does the sinner do about her sin, how does she reach redemption? Is this sin at all forgivable? For this part of the discussion,

⁹ See www.bible.org

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Cassian, John. “Book IX: On Dejection”, Chapter XIII

¹² www.nd.edu/Departments/Maritain/etext/emt11.htm See Bibliography and References

¹³ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15472a.htm> See Bibliography and References

¹⁴ www.catholic-forum.com/saints/novena19.htm See Bibliography and References

I will add a contemporary of Cassian; St. Augustine (AD 354-430), as well as a great Dane from fifteen hundred years onwards, Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855).

Augustine concludes his major and sympathetic work *Confessions of a Sinner* with the following words:

It was only after a lapse of time that we were impelled to do good, that is, after our hearts had received the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Before then our impulse was to do wrong, because we had deserted you. But you, who are the one God, the good God, have never ceased to do good. *By the gift of your grace some of the works that we do are good, but they are not everlasting. After them we hope that we shall find rest, when you admit us to the great holiness of your presence*¹⁵. [My emphasis.]

Grace: This is the key word. Salvation; freedom from any of the devil's deeds and followers, comes from the benevolence of God. Augustine's confession looks like the result of a careful self-examination, a looking through and listing one's deeds in what we assume to be an honest fashion. Augustine does not hesitate to reveal difficulties, on and again, with living without sin. For him, conversion is an ongoing process; one has to, so to speak, choose God's way every day. The text is, moreover, written almost as a diary letter addressed to God. But, who is God? What does it mean to say that mankind was created in His image: Who am I in relation to God?

God is infinite, I hear. God is within. And since we are also created to His likeness, it might follow that the search for one's self should be done in the knowledge of oneself as endless –and, with an aspect of incompleteness. (Poetically phrased, one could claim that eternity becomes a point stretching infinitely in every direction, so that “God” becomes the choice to make all the time, everywhere. ‘Evil’ is just a pest, with no essence of its own; it is but the twisting of God. Origen encourages “that your thought be never detached from God; each time it separates itself from Him, bring it back!¹⁶” The Lebanese poet, philosopher and artist Kahlil Gibran (1883-1931) put it like this: “When you love you should not say, ‘God is in my heart’, but rather, ‘I am in the heart of God’.¹⁷” Choose your home well.) Perhaps one's self-analysis should also be endless.

As we saw, Augustine ends his text on a positive note. It is as though, in kneeling before God at the end of the day, he presents his fallibility with humbleness and in devotion to the power of God's goodness; that is to say: Augustine's view on humanness includes a declaration of dependence on God and His mercy. Now, is there a sound basis for the belief in salvation through the grace of God? Augustine's philosophy on the nature of the one divinity says that God by virtue of being all-good does not *require* ‘extra’ ‘goodness’: “You are Goodness itself and need no good besides yourself. You are forever at rest, because you are your own repose¹⁸”. In other words; God is all-good and His only wish is to fulfill this goodness in His creation. He will grant blessings to the ones who desire it –for it is goodness that they desire. (Gibran, on a similar note, said: “Love gives naught but itself and takes naught but from itself.

¹⁵ Augustine. *Confessions of a Sinner*, page 114

¹⁶ Origen. Quoted in Wenzel, “Origins”, page 13

¹⁷ Gibran. *The Prophet*. “On Love” See www.geocities.com/Athens/5484/Gibran.htm

¹⁸ Augustine. *Confessions of a Sinner*. Page 114

Love possesses not nor would it be possessed; for *love is sufficient unto love*¹⁹. [My emphasis.] God is, so to speak, only interested in that which is of Him; in that, which is true, good and so forth.) So, if it is true that we are always sinners –this is how we can redeem it: “Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find” (Matthew 7:7²⁰).

John Cassian, as I understand him, emphasizes the power of the free will over the power of God’s grace. Where lays the sense in condemnation of God’s children? –Perhaps in testing their conviction, their faith. “The roots and causes of our falls are found not in others, but in ourselves²¹.” It is proved by experience, Cassian continues, that “a fit of acedie [acedia] should not be evaded by running away from it, but overcome by *resisting* it²²” [my emphasis]. A text on early monasticism by Siegfried Wenzel confirms this: “The chief remedy against [acedia] is to practice endurance and patience²³”. (Wenzel further writes that Cassian’s “chief weapon against *acedia* is manual work”, yet I am tempted to induce that manual work is a secondary cure attributed to *fortitudo*; “strength or courage²⁴”, which is the opposite virtue of *acedia*.) This must be conducted per individual, by means of a steady conviction in the power of the will.

For Kierkegaard too, the *will* is certainly a force to be reckoned with. Though different, what it is asked to do is not a less thorny task. For Kierkegaard, there is a step to take which cannot be guided by reason, by contemplation or philosophical meditation.

Kierkegaard’s conclusion lies in taking a *leap of faith*, so as to end up in the arms of God. After one has tried to seize the day in an aesthetic lifestyle, and then living according to eternal ethical values, it will be clear to the individual that

/.../ no matter how rigorous your logical system, there will always be gaps. As these gaps are logical gaps, it is futile to try and bridge them. Instead, they can only be breached by a leap of faith. What characterises a leap of faith is the absolute uncertainty that underlies it. Faith is by definition that which cannot be proven or disproved²⁵.

The key issue for Kierkegaard, I think, is that people need a sense in their lives. It is only Christianity, which “paradoxically combined the temporal and the infinite in the God-man Jesus Christ²⁶”, that bridges the gaps between the eternal values we would like to adhere to, and the fluctuating, mortal moments and actions that we represent or witness all the time and which lead us to despair. A leap of faith beyond rationality is thus Kierkegaard’s cure for melancholy. He does not underestimate that “faith in God is an

¹⁹ Gibran. *The Prophet*. “On Love” See www.geocities.com/Athens/5484/Gibran.htm

²⁰ See www.bible.org

²¹ Cassian. “Book IX: On Dejection”. Chapter VII

²² Cassian. “Book X: On Accidie”. Chapter XXV

²³ Wenzel. “Origins”, page 5

²⁴ Wenzel. “Origins”, page 20

²⁵ Lee-Yang. “Kierkegaard”. See www.philosophers.co.uk/cafe/phil_sep2001.htm

²⁶ Ibid.

agonistic and often fearful struggle to cast one's entire person into relation to God²⁷: Faith is never easy or probable. I will return to Kierkegaard in Chapter 2, "Weltschmerz and Doomsday Lookouts".

Under the next heading, I will discuss non-Christian approaches to the phenomenon melancholy. But for now, the meaning of being melancholic is contradicting the place of the Christian God within us. We overcome it by adopting a contemplative attitude *or* by throwing ourselves into the arms of God, heart first –because He knows our imperfection but loves us anyway.

Melancholia: Diagnosis and Prescription

From Greek melankholi²⁸: mel²⁹, melan-, *black* + khol³⁰, *bile*³¹.

Black bile, phlegm, yellow (or red) bile and blood constituted the Four Humours or Spirits in the human topography according to the Ancient Greeks. These humours corresponded to

/.../ the cosmic elements and the division of time; they controlled the whole existence and behaviour of mankind, and, according to the manner in which they were combined, determined the character of the individual²⁹.

It is the *black bile* that we are interested in here. The humours in equal quantity produce a healthy, sane man –but anything in excess leads to disruption: "Illnesses arise from the predominance or defect of a quality³⁰". I will develop this after a short description of the background on which the discussion takes place.

The Greeks regarded the number four as specifically significant. They used to "swear by four, 'which holds the root and source of eternal nature'³¹", and often categorized momentous elements fourfold³². Important principles that governed rational men (the Greeks were indubitably misogynous) were located in the brain, heart, navel and phallus. The soul's fourfoldness stood in intellect, understanding, opinion and perception. Sun, earth, sky and sea were the four roots of all. Boyhood, youth, manhood and old age were the four ages of man. The seasons are also four by number.

Disease was primarily explained by means of a balance disturbance of some kind (say, inflammation would be said to be caused by an 'overdose' of *phlegm*³³, due to its attributes; coldness and moist. These would then be shown to become unduly present in, say, the autumn or winter), and rational thinking or empirical research would provide these conclusions. *Melancholia*, as it is treated by Aristotle (384-322 BC) in "Problem XXX" and discussed by Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, came to present a problem due to its blurry definition; is it a physiological disease, or a disease of the mind? Melancholy was once mainly characterized by "symptoms of mental change, ranging from fear, misanthropy and

²⁷ Storm. "The Leap and the Qualitative Leap of Faith." See http://sorenkierkegaard.org/primer_5.htm

²⁸ See www.thefreedictionary.com/melancholy

²⁹ Klibansky et al. "Melancholy in the Physiological Literature of the Ancients", page 3

³⁰ Philiston. Quoted in Klibansky et al. "Melancholy in the Physiological Literature of the Ancients", page 7

³¹ Klibansky et al. "Melancholy in the Physiological Literature of the Ancients", page 4 (incidentally)

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid. Page 8

depression, to madness in its most frightful forms. Later, melancholia could equally well be defined as a bodily illness³⁴), but it seems to persistently be caused by the black bile. All humours were present in all men, but some may have had more of any one; due to their individual constitution. The humours have qualities, such as heat or wetness, which could be affected by outside factors, such as the season (as shown in the case with inflammation, above) or, as we shall see, wine. *Melancholia*, then, is by inference an affliction both stemming from the internal structure of a person *and* from external sources.

The melancholic shows many of the characteristics attributed to drunks, Aristotle writes; for instance in being “irritable, benevolent, compassionate or reckless³⁵”. This is noteworthy in understanding how the Greeks diagnosed and explained *melancholia*, for it shows what a mystery this burden was already then. “As one man is momentarily, while drunk, another is by nature³⁶”, the comparison goes. “One can see that wine makes the most varied characters by observing how it gradually changes those who drink it³⁷”, Aristotle continues, and recounts a plodding transformation from cool and taciturn to talkative, then boisterous, reckless and, “if they drink still more it makes them insolent, and then frenzied; while very great excess enfeebles them completely³⁸” –and here, he makes a comparison to those who are prey to disproportionate melancholy. Now, how does one *explain* the reasons behind these remarkable similarities between the ill and the drunk? For the Greeks, this has to do with black bile, the quality heat, and the element air. All processes, namely, are governed by *heat*. Black bile is by its nature cold, yet it is possible to heat it: “The black bile becomes very hot and very cold.³⁹” When very cold, it generates a kind of lethargic stupidity –but when very hot, it manufactures a sort of frenzy, as mentioned in connection with too much drinking, above. (I will return to this in Chapter 3, “Medusa and Oblivion”.) Both melancholy and wine produce *air*: Melancholy because it is governed by surplus black bile (which also may lead to abdominal disorders⁴⁰ –I am tempted to think that this is where the ‘air’ comes in); and wine because of the froth that forms on it (“for oil does not produce froth, even when it is hot⁴¹”). It is also this air that describes the correspondence between wine being such an aphrodisiac, and most melancholics being lustful –for the “virile organ quickly increases from a small size by inflation.⁴²” (One wonders how the theory would have altered had that inflation been accredited to *blood* instead.)

It is now clear enough –for the purposes of this essay- that the melancholy disposition, according to the ancient Greeks, comes from both within and without. Its discourse is an assorted collection of mannerisms, many of which match those showing when alcohol consumption has taken place. So far, melancholy is a peculiar but sorry state. There are recorded remedies for it, however; a list which I will

³⁴ Ibid. Page 14

³⁵ Ibid. Page 19

³⁶ Ibid. Page 20

³⁷ Ibid. Page 19-20

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid. Page 28

⁴⁰ Ibid. Page 21

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid. Page 22

here recount in full –for it is, I think, properly sensitive and, for lack of a better word, lovely. Klibansky et al report the suggestions

Living in a room full of light (as opposed to the old view that darkness was soothing); avoidance of heavy food; moderation in the drinking of wine (especially strong wines); massage, baths, exercises and (if the patient was strong enough) gymnastics; fighting insomnia (not with medicaments but by gentle rocking to-and-fro, or by the sound of water); change of surroundings, and long journeys; especially, strict avoidance of frightening ideas; cheering conversation and amusements; gentle admonition; sympathetic treatment of any fixed ideas; discussions in which the patient should be brought into a different frame of mind more by unobtrusive suggestion than by open contradiction; and, most important of all, music...⁴³

Some seven hundred years split this philosophy from that under the previous heading. In the next chapter, I will look into modern accounts of melancholy, bringing in psychoanalytical theories alongside Sartre and the lyrics of a contemporary, Swedish rock band.

2. Weltschmerz and Doomsday Lookouts

A pessimistic sense of inadequacy and a despondent lack of activity... Persistent morbid meditation on a problem...⁴⁴

I have just returned from a party of which I was the life and soul; witty banter flowed from my lips, everyone laughed and admired me –but I came away, indeed that dash should be as long as the radii of the earth's orbit-wanting to shoot myself.⁴⁵

Depression: Abandoned and Objectified

In his essay “Mourning and Melancholia”, Sigmund Freud talks of melancholy (depression) as being conditioned by experiencing oneself as an *object*. For where mourning regards overcoming the conscious loss of an object –requiring a replacement of the libido (a love which used to be directed at the object in question but now has no ‘place’) and an amount of time when the outside world “has become poor and empty⁴⁶”; depression seems to involve an *unconscious loss* and a *libidinal confusion* –and it is the melancholic herself who has become ‘poor and empty’. That is, when a depressed person unashamed talks about her own uselessness, Freud argues that the words used seem to refer to “someone whom the patient loves or has loved or should love⁴⁷”. In this way, an imagined or actual ‘disappointment’ by that ‘someone’ becomes internalized (that is, an object-love is perceived as narcissism) and overcasts the person herself. This means that melancholy, in psychoanalytical terms, is an affliction of the psyche. It may superficially look like an act of mourning –feelings including dejection, unresponsiveness, indifference; what you will, with, so to speak, an apparent *cause*. Yet this cause does not lie where one would expect it. For if a loved object had vanished, the love directed towards it would eventually be redirected elsewhere. But when a loved object has not vanished, but failed to ‘deserve’ this love somehow (and it should not have), then its failure becomes unconsciously internalized as a failure of the subject herself. The love that each person

⁴³ Ibid. Page 45-46

⁴⁴ See www.thefreedictionary.com/melancholy

⁴⁵ Lee-Yang. “Kierkegaard”. See www.philosophers.co.uk/cafe/phil_sep2001.htm

⁴⁶ Freud, S. “Mourning and Melancholia”, *On Metapsychology*, page 254

⁴⁷ Ibid. Page 257

directs inward so as to keep living (which Freud calls narcissism) is overshadowed by a sense of lacking, of ‘undeserved-ness’. This is how melancholy occurs. Perhaps the ‘someone’ failing could be interpreted as the world, or humanity itself –or as a particular understanding of justice, for example. “There comes a point”, Freud writes in *Civilization and its Discontents*, “at which each of us abandons, as illusions, the expectations he pinned to his fellow men when he was young and can appreciate how difficult and painful his life is made by their ill will⁴⁸”.

“Dostoyevsky wrote that ‘if God did not exist, then everything would be permitted’”, Jean-Paul Sartre begins one of his texts, and argues that “if God does not exist, everything really is permitted, and humankind would consequently be abandoned, since she neither within nor without has any access to support or help.⁴⁹” He continues:

This is what I want to express when I say that humankind is condemned to freedom. Judged, since she has not created herself, and still free, since she –once flung into the world, carries responsibility for all that she does⁵⁰.

There is a sense of condemnation in one’s very existence as a human. For Freud, man is a wolf to man: “Homo homini lupus⁵¹”. Civilized society must overcome people’s innate aggressiveness –and this is why we have developed ideal demands such as the Christian doctrine ‘love thy neighbour’ –and especially thy enemy. Aggressive tendencies become recognized as evil, which “is something for which one is threatened with loss of love; it must therefore be avoided⁵²”. This is put into practice by means of allowing the aggression to be projected inwards; “internalized, actually sent back to where it came from⁵³” and thus directed to one’s own ego, forming the super-ego or *conscience*. There arises a sense of guilt, and a need for punishment. One feels sinful. Furthermore, the most virtuous people become the ones who accuse themselves most rigidly of sinning: “The more virtuous a person is, the sterner and more distrustful is his conscience⁵⁴”. I am not sure whether there is a way out of this construction. Perhaps merely an awareness of the possibility that some form of melancholy is inevitable can ‘help’. For Freud, the struggle between Eros and death; creation and destruction, is almost a condition for the society which provides security in place of unlimited opportunities for the fulfilment of needs, however aggressive they may be. “This struggle is the essential content of life; hence, the development of civilization may be described simply as humanity’s struggle for existence.⁵⁵” He warns, however, that there is a danger “where social bonding is produced mainly by the participants’ identification with one another⁵⁶”. This may lead to especially strong occurrences of psychological misery of the masses. (Mind, mutual identification is a great deal worth in today’s consumer culture. Antidepressants sales are steadily on the rise, and it is not stopping: “Just as the

⁴⁸ Freud. *Civilization and its Discontents*. Page 62

⁴⁹ Sartre. *Existentialism is a Humanism*. Page 20-21

⁵⁰ Ibid. Page 21

⁵¹ Freud. *Civilization and its Discontents*. Page 61

⁵² Ibid. Page 78

⁵³ Ibid. Page 77

⁵⁴ Ibid. Page 79

⁵⁵ Ibid. Page 74-5

⁵⁶ Ibid. Page 62

USA and Soviet Union increased their nuclear capability in response to escalation by their opponents during the cold war, so pharmaceutical companies scale-up the size of their sales forces in response to competitor increases⁵⁷.)

In an article on the Sin of Sloth, John Casey discusses Sartre's perception on mental attitudes. These are "intentional, that is to say, boredom, curiosity, depression, lassitude, perhaps even tiredness /.../ imply an orientation or project towards the world as the field for our actions, as *inviting us to action*⁵⁸" [my emphasis]. To Casey, this suggests a philosophy where a mental state (say, boredom) naturally goes with, and maybe also *implies* a certain disposition of the body. Now, how does this relate to melancholy as psychoanalysis describes it? Sartre himself admits that "existentialism willingly states that humankind equals angst⁵⁹". He explains the conflict:

For not a single one of our actions, while it creates the human we want to be, does not also create an image of the human as we feel that she should be. To choose to be this or that at the same time means that one recognizes the value of what one chooses, for one never chooses something bad⁶⁰.

As we saw, our choices are established by an idea that we should promote 'virtuous' behaviour so as to not risk losing love. Yet its backside is still a sense of guilt. Melancholy, as it has been described throughout this essay, entails a kind of non-activity, indifference with pains. Is it now right to assess that the human disposition *per definition* acquires a problematic sense of a self-in-the-world? –But it cannot be that 'melancholy' *means* 'humanness', for there are people who are not melancholy; or at least, who are not any more. What is the truth about the melancholy state? It is as were "one's very own life /.../ at once out of reach and imposing itself⁶¹", M. B. Pranger asserts in an essay analysing a Henry James novel. Feeling hopeless about one's self and its place in, and relation to, the world and what is in it, but not knowing why.

A rope in my hand and rain in my hair...

I once read somewhere that the reason the gladiator games in Rome were so popular, was that the people needed to see the sacrifice, the tearing, and to hear the screams, in order to be able to go back and live again. The other suffers instead of you: This was to explain why one feels 'better' after the main characters in one's favourite film die in the end. –Because *you did not*; by a kind of identification, you let them carry your weight. They die and you go back to live. Perhaps that is also an account for Kent's popularity. This band's latest record *You and Me, Death* (Du & Jag Döden, 2005) lets hymn and lyric convey both despair and its 'other side'; rapture. "Waiting, always this waiting / From white to grey, to black / This year was

⁵⁷ Hosken. "Get Out of the 'Arms Race'" See www.pharmafocus.com/cda/focusH/1,2109,22-0-0-0-focus_feature_detail-0-127991,00.html

⁵⁸ Casey. "On Sloth". See www.bfpubs.demon.co.uk/sloth.htm

⁵⁹ Sartre. *Existentialism är en Humanism*. Page 16

⁶⁰ Ibid. Page 14

⁶¹ Pranger. "Henry James and Augustine on Still Life". Page 10

black”, Joakim Berg sings in *Roses and Palm-leaves* (Enclosed: 11), a song whose melody rises high, but to drop again in suspension. In this section, I will blend the narrative of the words of music with Kierkegaard’s autobiographical writings, and the fitting analytical descriptions of M. B. Pranger, originally attributed to a very different set of texts. The title *You and Me, Death* is, I think, meant as something you would say at the pub; your arm around the grim reaper’s shoulders. “With swaying scythe your old friend waits”. (Enclosed: 2)

The Man in the White Hat (16 years on) (Enclosed: 1) is, to me, a manifestation of polarity; it sings the unspeakable joy of living, while conveying the full extent of that uninvited but inevitably ever-present melancholy. “All the feelings hit and blew / The everyday life full of holes”. The tune starts off carefully, as were it testing its step. There is a mumble in the background. Then, as if one’s mind was finally made up –the devil is looked straight in the eye and every word is spoken; unleashed, when all instruments come together. It is a *scene*, almost staged, that is at first described:

One bench row in a restless, late April/I look over my shoulder and see your eyes flinch/-I can have you whenever you want to/A wind blows scraps along the corridor one last time/And you and I hold our breath and/Hold hands in the leap.../Home is not so far

“Finally, we pass their borders”, and we will “never apologize again”; for not being satisfactory, for not being satisfied, for not accomplishing. Note that there is a leap involved. The drums come in, the piano. Crescendo. Softer and lighter notes appear and there is suspense again, filled with memory of the sort that turns the stomach into stone: “Do you remember that oath we swore in blood / .../ -I remember everything like the nails on glass / .../ In a time when nothing happened / In a city that always slept”. There is a sense of an *imposing*, “never-ending process of remembering and expecting, of consciousness⁶²”. Violin. And this memory has been kept, treasured and repeated. Why? –For “I throw stones in my glass house / I throw arrows in my incubator / And so I breed my fear; I keep sowing new seeds / In my greenhouse I am safe”. It is a *choice*. *This is how* I breed my fear, Joakim Berg sings. He *tells* the steps of a procedure which he himself sets into motion almost as were it a statement given to an officer of the law. It holds a kind of unwillingness to perfection –as was one standing at the gates of heaven, but not lifting ones’ arms to open them. I detect the same sense of ‘blocking oneself off from divine help’ that we saw in Chapter 1; there is a lack of persistence in the quest for ‘happiness’ or a ‘way out’. This lack, Pranger writes, is “not a refusal to join in the story and plot of faith, but a *denial of life before it is given*⁶³” [my emphasis]. Ferguson discusses Kierkegaard’s autobiographical writing similarly. What is odd, he argues, is that “while truthful, melancholy contests the very truth it proclaims. It protests, as it were, against itself⁶⁴”. I see this ‘protest’ in *You and Me, Death* too. It is as had the notes and sounds of the instruments been stretched or pulled; the guitar is moaning and the drums are like pushes and kicks of thunder. “How you played when you were kids... / .../ And [now] no one comes to your defence / So you stand at attention

⁶² Pranger. “Henry James and Augustine on Still Life”, page 10

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ferguson. *Melancholy: The Depth of Modern Life*, page 5

with your back straight and receive / Four hundred blows” (Enclosed: 2). The xylophone of *Max. 500* (Enclosed: 9) along with the whispery singing voice and African drums create a remarkable atmosphere. There are sounds like those of harps and electric guitars playing unusual notes from the lower orders. “Like magic, a light one drowns in / There are little tricks that make people give you more / Than you are worth”.

“Five steps backward, two steps forward / At some distance it resembles dancing / And in the dream you are holding my hand” read the lyrics to *M* (Enclosed: 14). Nothing has any value at all in a world built by men for men, “Except the memory of / All that was ours”. Death –for it seems like death is what this song contests- *seems* straight-forward; but it is not. This is not living in the heart of God; this is the absence of *fortitudo*. It is as if the subject had disappeared. As if the ‘I’ was but a pain in the chest and a pair of aching shoulders; there is no body to carry it or shield it. The Greeks recommended ‘strict avoidance of frightening ideas’ as well as ‘change of surroundings’ (see Chapter 1). “I don’t know why, but I always / Return here / I guess it was something we did, something we said here” (Enclosed: 7). “It is deeds like these / That follow me wherever I go / And I flee under protection of my private cloud” (Enclosed: 12) –but there is nowhere to go, for it is I who have failed the world in my mind, it is *I who am responsible* for all that is happening here. And the ‘I’ has become hopeless and tedious, a repetition...

The tune called *You Were My Army* (Enclosed: 5) begins with the imperative, “empty your room of teenage-thoughts now”. It continues

You said: Make your choice, make an independent decision/I held a hand then/Against your warm skin/You said: Close your door, we have something to sort out/You stood there with your knife/next to your German car/You cut my cool life/Patterned to a war/You stole my gaze, you went your own path/You said: There are little tricks that make people/Mean well/And the songs I have heard/And the movies I saw/Were the wildest things I have done

There is no independent, productive decision made here. For someone immobile, (as if living under water; placed sitting around the reed in brown water, just deep enough to cover the eyes), there is no point in announcing that it would be a good idea to make a better life choice. She would be “frozen in [her] own irreversible moods and [her] decision *not* to move.⁶⁵”

Kierkegaard, Ferguson recounts, at times exulted in an “‘unlimited freedom of being able to deceive’ which allowed him the privilege of being ‘absolutely alone with [his] pain’.⁶⁶” Note the relation between the ‘you’ and the ‘I’ in the lyrics quoted just above: There is a distance between them, a *non-dialogue*. The two do not understand each other; for one describes the other as harmful, as one would picture the dangerous man in the dark alley; the other just wants to talk. Engaging in a discussion would at that point be close to self-deception –because, I think, as Ferguson puts it; “melancholy is essentially incommunicable⁶⁷”. Kierkegaard further thought that there was something uniquely truthful in the

⁶⁵ Pranger. “Henry James and Augustine on Still Life”, page 4

⁶⁶ Ferguson. “Melancholy: The Depth of Modern Life”, page 5

⁶⁷ Ibid. Page 4

melancholic's self-withdrawal. Writing was a refuge, perhaps successful as an antidote. Mind, the most significant Greek remedy to *melancholia* was music.

3. Medusa and Oblivion

Art is after all the only border-exceeding [gränsöverskridande] activity that our culture accepts.⁶⁸

Standing Out: The Exceptional Melancholic

In her book *Mad Men and Medusas*, psychoanalyst Juliet Mitchell makes a case for reclaiming 'hysteria' for our understanding of the human condition. Hysteria is "a particular response to particular aspects of the human condition of life and death⁶⁹". Her account gives references showing similarities to the frenzy discussed by the ancient Greeks, as well as the 'symptoms', if you will, seen in for example Kierkegaard. Cross-culturally and trans-historically, Mitchell claims that the symptomatic variations are all thematic to a certain way of surviving. The ego is "overinsistent because it is not felt to exist⁷⁰". Although hysteria and melancholy are admittedly different things, I would here like to make a case for the 'other side', or extreme, of melancholy. This is a kind of tumult; craziness. For the Greeks, frenzy became the source of the highest spiritual exaltation⁷¹ and melancholy was even regarded as an "intellectual gift, which in turn stimulate[d] the two other divine frenzies, poetry and philosophy⁷²". That is; melancholy could become a *blessing* allowing great beauty and, perhaps, unexpected truths to arise. Plato is said to have claimed that "we receive the greatest benefit through frenzy /.../ and the melancholic is more fitted than any other to receive this 'divine gift'⁷³." As a university course description puts it:

While madness or melancholy remove one from community, they give one the opportunity to comment from outside on that same community, inviting those inside to learn a new language with which to speak in. Madness then invites an oppressive, unfeeling society to restructure itself after the prophetic moment of sensibility⁷⁴.

This thought, however, developed later. In the earliest writings, melancholic frenzy referred mostly to insanity –nothing which could elevate philosophical enquiry. The melancholic could be tyrannical. Black bile when cold, as noted above, produced weaklings and fools, but when hot, "produces mad, lively, erotic, and otherwise excitable people, who (since the seat of the black bile lies near the seat of reason) are prone to trances and ecstasies like /.../ those poets who only produce good work when in ecstasy⁷⁵". It was said that those men with much black bile were mentally 'abnormal', but this 'abnormality' could sometimes "consist in abnormal *talent*⁷⁶". Maybe we can replace the word 'abnormal' with *outstanding*. And all outstanding men, write Klibansky et al, "whether in the realm of the arts or in those of poetry,

⁶⁸ Fredriksson. "Efterord". Page 641

⁶⁹ Mitchell. "Hysteria: From Catastrophe to Trauma", page 317

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Klibansky et al "Melancholy in the Physiological Literature of the Ancients". Page 16

⁷² Ferguson. "Melancholy: the Depth of Modern Life", Page 12

⁷³ Ibid. Page 7

⁷⁴ <http://www.engl.virginia.edu/enec981/termpages/melancholy.html> See Bibliography and References

⁷⁵ Klibansky et al, "Melancholy in the Physiological Literature of the Ancients". Page 32

⁷⁶ Ibid. Page 31

philosophy or statesmanship –even Socrates and Plato- were melancholics⁷⁷”. What is it about this affliction that makes men outstanding and, if we –boldly- bring in Mitchell, shapes the ego so that it is felt not to exist, and thus demands its over-assertion? I have no answer to this. But as Gellius (AD 130-180) ironically said, melancholy became “a disease of heroes⁷⁸”. (This statement, I think, makes the hero feel ‘worse’; it implies yet another useless aspect of melancholy and thus yet another failure of the melancholic herself.)

It is worth noting that a shift of values came about with the recognition of the positive aspects of melancholy. Rather than stressing the ethical command of being virtuous, the Greeks came to emphasize “the emotional ‘Be different!’⁷⁹”. For indeed; “divine frenzy came to be regarded as a sensibility of the soul, and a man’s spiritual greatness was measured by his capacity for experience and, above all, for suffering⁸⁰”. I like the sound of that.

Crossing the Borders

It is only too true that a lot of artists are mentally ill –it is a life which, to put it mildly, makes one an outsider. I’m all right when I completely immerse myself in work, but I’ll always remain half crazy. /.../ Though I am often in the depths of misery, there is still calmness, pure harmony and music inside me. I see paintings or drawings in the poorest cottages, in the dirtiest corners. And my mind is driven towards these things with an irresistible momentum⁸¹.

How do we make the most out of that which is sin, disease and unconscious –thus difficult to attend to? *Medusa* of the Greek mythology started off as a beautiful woman, who was then raped by Poseidon, Athena’s rival, in Athena’s temple. “Upon discovery of the desecration of her temple, Athena changed Medusa’s form to match that of her sister Gorgons, as punishment⁸²”. A *gorgon* is a terrifying and ugly woman; a “vicious female monster⁸³”. For the last section of this essay, however, I present her as the mediator, if you will; who also “rips away our mortal *illusions*⁸⁴” [my emphasis]. She represents

...past, present and future. The Cycles of Nature as life, death and rebirth. She is universal Creativity and Destruction in eternal Transformation. /.../ She destroys in order to recreate balance. She purifies. She is the ultimate truth of reality, the wholeness beyond duality⁸⁵.

Medusa in the title of this finishing chapter stands for a reminder of the mad as beyond the laws of civilization and perhaps also nature. For Medusas, it is not unwarranted to take a Greek stance on craziness. In the afterword of a novel trilogy, author Marianne Fredriksson tells that “In Ernest Jones’

⁷⁷ Ibid. Page 17

⁷⁸ Gellius. Quoted in Klibansky et al ”Melancholy in the Physiological Literature of the Ancients”. Page 16

⁷⁹ Klibansky et al ”Melancholy in the Physiological Literature of the Ancients”. Page 41

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Van Gogh. <http://earthrenewal.org/vincent.htm> See Bibliography and References

⁸² See

www.answers.com/main/ntquery;jsessionid=1157isaqklqpd?method=4&dsid=2222&dekey=Medusa+%28mythology%29&gwp=8&curtab=2222_1&sbid=lc04a&linktext=Medusa

⁸³ See www.answers.com/topic/gorgon

⁸⁴ Le Van. ”The Gorgon Medusa”. See Bibliography and References

⁸⁵ Ibid.

biography over Freud there is a story that in a wonderful manner shows how we have let the dualist thinking dominate our views:

During a conversation, Freud admits –with great discomfort- that he has so much proof in favour of telepathy that it is difficult to deny it. Choked, Jones stares at the master, saying: But if we are to acknowledge that mental processes can float around in the air, we might just as well believe in angels. That's right, Freud answers gloomily. Not to mention the good God.⁸⁶

For indeed, there is no manual for how to deal with odd manifestations of the mind's undertakings.

Conclusion

A counsellor once asked me: Why are people so afraid of being a little bit depressed? It is not dangerous; one does not have to fight it so vigilantly. I remember feeling uplifted by that remark.

Oscar Wilde is said to have claimed that he was not able to write when happy.

“Remember this, and you will be able to understand a little of why I am writing, and in this manner writing...⁸⁷” British actor, comedian and author Hugh Laurie, whose frequent working companion Stephen Fry played Oscar Wilde in the film *Wilde* (1998) is said to have realized that he was “much happier being sad⁸⁸”. He sought therapy only because he was afraid that his children might be influenced by his melancholy. Having researched the phenomenon and written this essay, I do not feel that I have reached a satisfactory conclusion. The insistence of melancholy is still a mystery to me (–yet I believe that I would feign an approach based on belief in grace, the consoling and therapeutic properties of music, and psychotherapy, to the ones afflicted). The anonymity of acedia, ennui, tristitia, depression or the noon-tide demon continues, unravelled.

At the end of *The Man in the White Hat (16 years on)* (Enclosed: 1), the electric guitar climbs to its highest crescendo and there is a sense of ecstatic joy. This is when the song reaches the breath-taking happiness that is so difficult to talk of with words. At the same time, Joakim Berg sings: “And I fear for my life in living / And I'm scared to death of dying / But darling / We will all one day die / We will all one day die”.

You and me, Death. Let's talk.

⁸⁶ Fredriksson. "Efterord". Page 639

⁸⁷ Wilde. "De Profundis". See Bibliography and references

⁸⁸ Laurie. Quoted in "Celebrities Lead Their Way in Promoting Counselling and Psychotherapy", BACP. See Bibliography and References

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2. 400 Blows

The verdict fell on a morning-flight to London
Silent, heavy steps coming toward you
The verdict fell even though you always used a condom
With swaying scythe your old friend waits

And how you played when you were kids
You stood at attention with your back straight and received
Four hundred blows

The sleep came and you who were so right in time
The verdict fell like tears against your monitor
The sleep came like a opinion, right-winged
But against dollars & yen, death easily becomes a joke

How you played when you were kids
You lost your war, you're standing there left alone
And no one comes to your defence
So you stand at attention with your back straight and receive
Four hundred blows.

3. You Are Steam

You say
-When you were little; what drugs did you take then
-When we were little, we hit sap, bark and steel
And the brain got soft from Lutheran anxiety before God
And then I got sick and became the shadow you see now

But when the night was bright
In our sixties-house
We were far, far, far away from here
In our dream of escaping
To something new

I was born in a time
just when the dust had settled
A meaningless time
Exactly one thousandth (of a second?) too late
Surely there lives a scream somewhere in your calm, quiet life
A wild fantasy being drowned
In box-wine-nostalgia

But when the night is bright
In your seventies-house
And you are steam, trace of a cloud
In a dream of escaping
To something new

And you are holding so tight
When the longing gets hard
Then I am yours, yours, yours
To take with, to take out, to take in
To something new

When the night is bright
In our eighties-house
Then we are far, far, far away from here
In our dream about escaping to something new

And we hold too tight
But this dream is ours
And you are mine, mine, mine
To take with, to take out hunting

2. 400 Slag

Domen föll på en morgonflight till London
Tysta, tunga steg på väg mot dig
Domen föll trots allt du alltid använt kondom
Med lien på svaj väntar din gamle vän

Och som ni lekte när ni var barn
Du stod givakt med din rygg rak och tog
Fyrahundra slag

Sönnen kom och du som låg så rätt i tiden
Domen föll som tårar mot din skärm
Sönnen kom som en åsikt högerviden
Men mot dollar och yen blir döden lätt ett skämt

Och som ni lekte när ni var barn
Du förlorade ditt krig, du står ensam kvar
Och ingen kommer till ditt försvar
Så du står givakt med din rygg rak och tar
Fyrahundra slag.

3. Du Är Ånga

Du säger
-När ni var små, säg; vilka droger tog ni då
-När vi var små sköt vi kåda, bark och stål
Och hjärnan blev mjuk av luthersk ångest inför Gud
Och så blev jag sjuk och blev den skugga du ser nu

Men när natten var ljus
I vårt sextioalshus
Så var vi långt, långt, långt härifrån
I vår dröm om att fly
Till någonting nytt

Jag är född i en tid
precis när dammet lagt sig ner
En meningslös tid
Exakt en tusen del för sent
Visst bor det ett skrik nånstans i ditt lugna, tysta liv
En vild fantasi som dränks
I lådvinsnostalgi

Men när natten är ljus
I ditt sjuttioalshus
Och du är ånga, spår av ett moln
I en dröm om att fly
Till någonting nytt

Och du håller så hårt
När längtan blir svår
Så är jag din, din, din
Att ta med, att ta ut, att ta in
I någonting nytt

När natten är ljus
I vårt åttioalshus
Så är vi långt, långt, långt härifrån
I vår dröm om att fly till någonting nytt

Och vi håller för hårt
Men den här drömmen är vår
Och du är min, min, min
Att ta med, att ta ut på jakt

For the time that escaped.

4. *The Dead Angle*

I was long lonely; an only child
A monster at the bottom of a homemade storey bed
And at a distance I saw the lights die in the fog
Exactly when the darkness is lit up again

And I saw you running over the snow's crust
In pursuit of your magnificent view
You taught me how to completely disappear
In to your thoughts, in your head
I stand free

Give me a winter-drug, give me all you've got
Come now, I am chronically low
Only the darkness is heard
In your eye was a storm I saw
Like summer-snow
In the dead angle I see everything you do

There they come, I can see them between the trees
Please help me escape
Their eyes are like mare-fire over the world
I'm crawling there in the ashes; Phoenix
Born like new

Give me a winter-drug, give me all you've got
Come now, I am chronically low
Only the darkness is heard
In your eye was a storm I saw
Blowing summer-snow
In the dead angle I see everything you do

Give me a winter-drug, give me summer-snow
Come now, I am chronically low
Only the darkness is heard
In your eye dance storms, small
But it is you who lead
In the dead angle I see everything you do.

5. *You Were My Army*

Empty your room of teenage-thoughts now
You said: Make your choice, make an independent decision
I held a hand then
Against your warm skin

You said: Close your door, we have something to sort out

You stood there with your knife next to your German car
You cut my cool life
Patterned to a war

You stole my gaze, you went your own path
You said: There are little tricks that make people
Mean well

And the songs I have heard
And the movies I saw
Were the wildest things I have done, but nothing was as big
As when

You stood there with your knife next to your German car
You cut my cool life
Patterned to a war.

Efter tiden som flytt.

4. *Den Döda Vinkeln*

Jag var länge ensam; enda barnet
Ett monster underst i en hembyggd våningssäng
Och på håll såg jag ljusen dö i dimman
Precis när mörkret tändes upp igen

Och jag såg dig springa över skaren
I jakten på din sagolika vy
Du lärde mig att fullständigt försvinna
In i dina tankar, i ditt huvud
Står jag fri

Ge mig en vinterdrog, ge mig allt du har
Kom nu, jag är kroniskt låg
Bara mörkret hörs
I ditt öga var en storm jag såg
Som sommarsnö
I den döda vinkeln ser jag allt du gör

Där kommer de, jag ser dem mellan träden
Snälla, kan du hjälpa mig att fly
Deras ögon är som mareld över världen
Jag kryper där i askan; fågel Fenix
Född som ny

Ge mig en vinterdrog, ge mig allt du har
Kom nu, jag är kroniskt låg
Bara mörkret hörs
I ditt öga var en storm jag såg
Blåsa sommarsnö
I den döda vinkeln ser jag allt du gör

Ge mig en vinterdrog, ge mig sommarsnö
Kom nu, jag är kroniskt låg
Bara mörkret hörs
I ditt öga dansar stormar små
Men det är du som för
I den döda vinkeln ser jag allt du gör.

5. *Du Var Min Armé*

Töm ditt rum på tonårstankar nu
Du sa: Gör ditt val, ta ett självständigt beslut
Jag höll en hand då

Mot din varma hud
Du sa: Stäng din dörr, vi har något att reda ut

Du stod där med din kniv bredvid din tyska bil
Du skar mitt svala liv
Mönstrat till ett krig

Du stal min blick, du gick din egen väg
Du sa: Det finns små trick som får folk att
Vilja väl

Och sångerna jag hört
Och filmerna jag såg
Var det vildaste jag gjort, men inget var så stort
Som när

Du stod där med din kniv bredvid din tyska bil
Du skar av mitt svala liv
Mönstrat till ett krig.

6. *Palace & Main*

I shot a DJ late last night
The blood splashed, became a Pollock in his booth
I flee through a darkened corridor
My indie-heart pounds and pounds and pounds
I'm standing at an airport and wait for the feeling
A man by a ledge
An ice-cold Michael Caine
And all who have loved you have hated me out of fear
That I will see them as victims at Palace & Main

I push everything before me
Like Robin Wright-Penn does in State of Grace
You have everything I've said on tape
So you think you have a future without me

I'm standing at an airport and wait for the feeling
A man by a ledge
Disguised as Michael Caine
And all who have loved you have hated me out of fear
That I will see them as victims at Palace & Main

I'm standing at an airport and wait for the feeling
A man by a ledge
An ice-cold Michael Caine
And all who love you must learn to wait
My plan is to wait
I wait at Palace & Main

7. *Iron-ghosts*

They burnt down Grönan
And the school stands there alone now
Bike-racks still stand empty, though the breaks are over

They cut down chestnut-trees in the avenue by the school yard
I move quietly
Do not belong here
I am the ghost

I don't know why, but maybe that's why I
Remember it so well
Your big eyes, your brown hands
Your sharp knees

Was it you I saw like a shadow from my dreams
Was it you I saw, you whom I swore not to forget

They dig in the park and the frost in the ground becomes a
Defence
At the corner of the church
Where the railroad goes, they have blocked off
Someone is lying in the grass with frosty clothes
So still and white, the blue lights flash
Imagine what you can do with a small knife

I don't know why, but I always
Return here
I guess it was something we did, something we said
That changed my life

Was it you I saw like a shadow from my dreams

6. *Palace & Main*

Jag sköt en DJ sent igår
Blodet stänkte, blev en Pollock i hans bås
Jag flyr genom en nedsläckt korridor
Mitt indiehjärta slår och slår och slår
Jag står på en flygplats och väntar på känslan
En man vid en avsats
En iskall Michael Caine
Och alla som älskat dig har hatat mig av rädsla för
Att jag ska se dem som offer vid Palace & Main

Jag skjuter allting framför mig
Som Robin Wright-Penn gör i State of Grace
Du har allting jag sagt på tape
Så du tror du har en framtid utan mig

Jag står på en flygplats och väntar på känslan
En man vid en avsats
Förklädd till Michael Caine
Och alla som älskat dig har hatat mig av rädsla för
Att jag ska se dem som offer vid Palace & Main

Jag står på en flygplats och väntar på känslan
En man vid en avsats
En iskall Michael Caine
Och alla som älskar dig får lära sig att vänta
Min plan är att vänta
Jag väntar vid Palace & Main

7. *Järnspöken*

De brände ner grönan
Och skolan står där ensam nu
Cykelställen står tomma än, trots att loven är slut

De faller kastanjetråd i allén framför skolgården
Jag rör mig tyst
Hör inte hemma här
Jag är vålnaden

Jag vet inte varför, men kanske är det därför jag
Minns det så väl
Dina stora ögon, dina bruna händer
Dina vassa knän

Var det dig jag såg som en skugga ur mina drömmar
Var det dig jag såg, dig jag svor att aldrig glömma

De gräver i parken och frosten i marken blir
Ett försvar
Vid hörnet av kyrkan
Där järnvägen går har de spärrat av
Någon ligger i gräset med frostiga kläder
Så stilla och vit, blåljusen blinkar
Tänk vad man kan göra med en liten kniv

Jag vet inte varför, men jag återvänder
Alltid hit
Det var väl något vi gjorde, något vi sa
Som förändrade mitt liv

Var det dig jag såg som en skugga ur mina drömmar

Was it you I saw, you whom I swore not to forget
Was it you I saw, like a ghost from dead dreams
Was it you I saw

Have I finally managed to forget

8. *The Bungler*

You're walking in your inimitable way
Over the school yard's gravel by yourself
In your newly cut hair, like an Irish idol's
Your reflection in window glass
Admires every step you take

And so there is a flash

Green, red, yellow lights

You were on needles when you came
With your smuggled-in intoxication
And they switch off all the lights
For one final quiet chance
And everything blackens in a panic when you see
That everyone already has a dance

And everything is like before

You remember who you were with contempt, some hatred
One will come to resemble one's mother or father
You have changed your ways, erased every trace
But in the soul of yours; far, far inside

Echoes the teenager's roar

And so there is a flash

And they switch on all the lights

You were alone when you came
Now the magic has burned out
And so they switch them off
All the signs, all the lights
And when the park lies empty you realise
That your evening has just ended

And everything is like before

And so there is a flash

And they turn on all the lights

You were alone when you came
You are just as lonely now
And so they switch them off
All the streets, all the houses
And when the city lies empty you realise
That this is what your life looks like

And everything is like before.

9. *Max 500*

The moon hangs low over everything you think you saw
Under a broken cloud goes a Yeti-trail

500 miles in the snow
A UFO over the lake
And in a gaze I see Keats standing next to Baudelaire
Like magic, a light one drowns in
There are little tricks that make people give you more
Than you are worth

Mary Shelley's dream sews a zigzag pattern
Over everything the winter has hidden
Over everything the heart has forgotten

500 miles in the snow
A UFO over the lake

Var det dig jag såg, dig jag svor att aldrig glömma
Var det dig jag såg, som ett spöke från döda drömmar
Var det dig jag såg

Har jag äntligen lyckats att glömma

8. *Kläparen*

Du går på ditt oefterhärmliga sätt
Över skolgårdens grus för dig själv
I ditt nyklippta hår likt en irländsk idols
Din spegelbild i fönsterglas
Beundrar varje steg du tar

Och så blinkar det till

Gröna, röda, gula ljus

Du var på nålar när du kom
Med ditt insmugglade rus
Och så släcker de ner
För en sista stilla chans
Och allting svartnar i panik när du ser
Att alla redan har en dans

Och allting är som förut

Du minns den du var med förakt, lite hat
Man blir lik sin mor eller far
Du har förändrat ditt sätt, suddat ut varje spår
Men i själen din; långt, långt in

Ekar tonåringens vrål

Och så blinkar det till

Och de tänder alla ljus

Du var ensam när du kom
Nu har magin brunnit ut
Och så släcker de ner
Alla skyltar, alla ljus
Och när parken ligger tom inser du
Att din kväll just tagit slut

Och allting är som förut

Och så blinkar det till

Och de tänder alla ljus

Du var ensam när du kom
Och du är lika ensam nu
Och så släcker de ner
Alla gator, alla hus
Och när staden ligger tom inser du
Att det är så ditt liv ser ut
Och allting är som förut.

9. *Max 500*

Månen hänger lågt över allt du tror du såg
Under trasigt moln går ett yetispår

Femhundra mil i snön
Ett ufo över sjön
Och i en blick ser jag Keats stå bredvid Baudelaire
Som magi, ett ljus man drunknar i
Det finns små trick som får folk att ge dig mer
Än du är värd

Mary Shelleys dröm syr en sicksacksöm
Över allt som vintern gömt
Över allt som hjärtat glömt

Femhundra mil i snön
Ett ufo över sjön

And in a flash, Lady Day dances a waltz with Astaire
Like magic, a light one drowns in
There are little tricks that make people give you more
Than you are worth

500 miles in the snow
A UFO over the lake
And with one look I make people believe
In magic, a light one drowns in
There are little tricks that make people give you more
Than you are worth

10. Romeo Returns Alone

An icy wind over the water carries
An echo from the world of the dead
A greeting from a jealous, scornful sea
And the winter tears the pier's shack
Tears lanterns from a celebrated July
From the Ferris wheel's skeleton of wood and stone

I want you, are mine, you are only mine
I want you, I am yours, I am only yours

In the city rules constant low season
The restaurants stand empty all year around...

And in bars the wrecks cling on
We mourn a lost cargo
And the snow assist the debris onto shore
Black twigs block the house white
Haven't been here since it all was yours
A for sale-sign covered in snow and sand

I want you, are mine, you are only mine
I want you, I am yours, I am only yours

On the porch the wind chime sings your song
Empty windows stand banging all night long
And old memories are like the flakes that whirl
Against a sky of iron and poison and lead...

Like a Romeo in jeans on your balcony
I am the shadow by your screen-door once more
Your dress is like rags in my hand
And I leave no prints even in sand.

11. Roses and Palm-leaves

Waiting, always this waiting
From white to grey, to black
This year was black
And the lilies fall from a window in Västerås tonight
I hear your laughter

Over the plumes, palm-leaves and crosses
That rattle there in the wind
That sounded like hoarse voices
From those who do the commercial
Chase zombies from out their graves
Give me something that makes itself felt

Longing, always this longing
From here to far away; far, far away
And the roses shed all the petals again

Och i en blick dansar Lady Day vals med Astaire
Som magi, ett ljus man drunknar i
Det finns små trick som får folk att ge dig mer
Än du är värd

Femhundra mil i snön
Ett ufo över sjön
Och med en blick får jag folk att tro
På magi, ett ljus man drunknar i
Det finns små trick som får folk att ge dig mer
Än du är värd.

10. Romeo Återvänder Ensam

En isig vind över vattnet bär
Ett eko från de dödas värld
En hälsning från ett svartsjukt, hänfullt hav
Och vintern sliter pirens skjul
River lyktor från en firad juli
Från pariserhjulets skelett av trä och sten

Jag vill ha dig, du är min, du är bara min
Jag vill ha dig, jag är din, jag är bara din

Inne i staden råder ständig lågsäsong
Restaurangerna står tomma året om...

Och på barer klänger vraken fast
Vi sørjer en förlorad last
Och snön hjälper spillrorna iland
Svarta grenar skymmer huset vitt
Har inte varit här sen allt var ditt
En till salu-skyld som täckts av snö och sand

Jag vill ha dig, du är min, du är bara min
Jag vill ha dig, jag är din, jag är bara din

På verandan sjunger vindspelet din sång
Tomma fönster står och slår nu natten lång
Och gamla minnen är som flagorna som yr
Mot en himmel av järn och gift och bly...

Som en Romeo i jeans på din balkong
Jag är skuggan vid din skärmdörr än en gång
Din klänning ör som trasor i min hand
Och jag lämnar inga fotspår ens i sand.

11. Rosor och Palmblad

Väntan, alltid denna väntan
Från vitt till grått, till svart
Detta är var svart
Och liljorna faller från ett fönster i Västerås i natt
Jag hör ditt skratt

Över plymerna, palmbladen och korsen
Som skallrar där i vinden
Som lät som hesa röster
Från dem som gör reklamen
Jagar zombies upp ur graven
Ge mig nåt som känns

Längtan, alltid denna längtan
Härifrån långt bort; långt, långt bort
Och rosorna faller alla kronblad igen

As if cried they blood
Because life is so short

And people in the locked, quiet houses
Slightly open the curtain and stare out into the street
With eyes that are frightened
Of everything that could happen
 Though it already has.

12. Benevolent & Atrocious Deeds

You came to me in a dream
And said: Save me, keep me hidden
I wait there one nightmare's night
I hear them walking, I hear doors slam

A rope in my hand and rain in my hair

It is deeds like these
That follow me wherever I go
And I flee under protection of my private cloud
I will steal a treasure
The one hiding at the end of the rainbow
It is mine, it is you

Come with me, not a sound
He sleeps lightly with lit candles
So climb now, here, take my hand
And feel how my blood whispers truths about me
A swift, jet black river that rushes for you

It is deeds like these
That follow us wherever we go
And we flee under protection of our private cloud
We will steal a treasure
The one hiding at the end of the rainbow
A perfect substitute.

13. All Versus All

Now the supplies shall be emptied
Now all must go, the final sale
But the shopping malls are empty; we ran out of people

And now all shall be cleansed
I don't see how that will happen
-We have never been able to agree,
Sing: "We shall overcome"
'67 is over-played
Now it is I and the mine, against them

Now the world shall be saved
All broken shall be whole
And I spray names on the wall
All of those who think wrong

You might know what I mean
"In love and war..." and all that
Riot-fences against rocks
In a revolt that never came
Your '67 is polluted
Now it is I and the mine, against them.

14. M

Som grät de blod
För att livet är så kort

Och människorna i de tysta, låsta husen
Gläntar på gardinen och stirrar ut på gatan
Med ögon som är rädda
För allting som kan hända
 Fast det redan hänt.

12. Vålgärningar & Illdåd

Du kom till mig mitt i en dröm
Och sa: Rädda mig, håll mig gömd
Jag väntar där en mardrömsnatt
Jag hör hur dom går, jag hör dörrar slå

Ett rep i min hand och regn i mitt hår

Det är dåd som det här
Som förföljer mig vart jag än går
Och jag flyr i skydd av mitt privata moln
Jag ska stjäla en skatt
Den som döljer sig vid regnbågens slut
Den är min, den är du

Kom med mig, inte ett ljud
Han sover lätt med tända ljus
Så klättra nu, här ta min hand
Och känn hur mitt blod viskar en sanning om mig
En snabb, kolsvart flod som rusar för dig

Det är dåd som det här
Som förföljer oss vart vi än går
Och vi flyr i skydd av vårt privata moln
Vi ska stjäla en skatt
Den som döljer sig vid regnbågens slut
Ett perfekt substitut.

13. Alla Mot Alla

Nu ska lagren tömmas
Nu ska allting säljas ut
Men köpcentren står tomma; alla människor tog slut

Och nu ska allting renas
Jag förstår inte hur det ska gå till
-Vi har aldrig kunnat enas,
Sjunga: "We shall overcome"
'67 är överspelat
Nu är det jag och mitt mot dem

Nu ska världen räddas
Allting trasigt ska bli helt
Och jag sprayar namn på muren
Alla de som tänker fel

Du vet nog vad jag menar
"I kärlek och krig..." och allt det där
Kravallstaket mot stenar
I en revolt som aldrig kom
Ditt '67 är förorenat
Nu är det jag och mitt mot dem.

14. M

You fall headlong in front of me
On your way to unknown lands
And when your sickness has taken you
I shall give some street your name

Take out our camera, take yet another picture
Where you just smile and lie still

It seems so easy, friend
Yet it is so incomprehensibly difficult
It seems so easy, friend
But I guess, nothing in this world was ever
Easy to understand

I assumed a role when you fell ill
A role that demanded harder skin
But the power reserve is soon depleted
As is my belief in an interventionist God

In your big heart the beats are getting small
You touch my cheek so that I understand
That there are but hours until you leave

Five steps backward, two steps forward
At some distance it resembles dancing
And in the dream you are holding my hand

It seems so easy, friend
Yet it is so incomprehensibly difficult
In a world built by men, for men
Where nothing has any value
Except the memory of
All that was ours.

Du faller handlöst framför mig
På din väg mot okända land
Och när din sjukdom tagit dig
Ska jag ge någon gata ditt namn

Ta fram din kamera, ta ännu en bild
När du bara ler och ligger still

Det verkar så enkelt, vännen
Ändå är det så obegripligt svårt
Det verkar så enkelt, vännen
Men ingenting i denna världen var väl någonsin
Lätt att förstå

Jag tog en roll när du blev sjuk
En roll som krävde hårdare hud
Men kraftreserven tar snart slut
Liksom min tro på en ingripande Gud

I ditt stora hjärta börjar slagen bli små
Du rör min kind så jag förstår
Att det bara är timmar tills du går

Fem steg bak, två steg fram
På lite håll liknar det dans
Och i drömmen håller du i min hand

Det verkar så enkelt, vännen
Ändå är det så obegripligt svårt
I en värld av män, för männen
Där ingenting har något värde
Utom minnet av
Allt som var vårt.