

# Requiem for an auld frere

*Quhat is this lyfe bot ane straucht wey to deid ?*  
— Dunbar

by

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MA (1968) B.Phil (1973)

A composition in Lowland Scots submitted as an entry for the  
Sloan Prize.

December 1990

## *Kyrie*

Hallow-day; the fest o aa the saunts, an cranreuch-cauld.  
Ma walk at e'en led me tae an antrin gate:  
I wandered frae the path an kenned-na whaur I wis,  
Doolie thochts dirlin, black an dour, in ma mind.  
I draigled by barescrape bushes, rid-bricht wi berries,  
An the cauld air — shairp, schellachie —  
Grippit aathin, nippin, as the doon-gaun sun  
Bleezed bluid-rid in the gloam.  
Syne I cam, by Lord-kens-whit path  
Tae the braid sea

θαλαττα θαλαττα

An a straik o saun, blawn wi saut-bree.

I minded oor wurd  
deid, dry —  
Echoes frae times  
lang by ...

- We'll hae tae get thegither, ane o thae days ..
- Aye. We'll hae a guid blether, an a dram  
forbye...
- Aye. Catch up, ye ken. There's nivver ony  
time...
- Naw. Nae time.

—  
Ane o thae days. Aye. There's aye the morn. Whit wis it  
Brutus said owre the corp o his freen:  
*I shall find time, Cassius ?* But there wisna time enow.  
The morn cam, an the sun didna rise for ye,  
An ye gaed tae the yird: thon cauld empire  
O the wurm an the moudiwarp.  
We little jaloose the doon-the-brae doomin  
the soomin  
O the blastin see-bree in oor lives.

*Ad te omnis caro veniet*

The bruckle flesh ...  
O Christ, I'm feart!

*Kyrie eleison*  
*Christe eleison*

## *Dies Irae*

Passin doon the straun I cam tae an auld biggin  
Aa tummelt-doon: a rickle o mossit stanes  
Wi a lanesome gable-end left staunin.

I minded oor wurd  
Deid, dry —  
Echoes frae times Lang by...

- They're takin care o ye?
- O aye. Canna complain. Aa mod cons.
- Onythin I can dae for ye?
- Naw, naw. Thanks for the grapes, mind.
- That's okay. We'll hae a wee get-thegither when they let ye oot.
- Aye. Catch up on auld times, eh?
- Aye. The auld times.

Ye thocht ye'd hae time tae blether, dram in haun,  
When the darg was owre-wi, an there wis easedom an rest.  
But the daurk cam for ye instead. Whaur are ye noo  
Ma auld frere? Whit day o calamatie an misery  
Bides its doom-hour dawnin: laithly, muckle and bitter?

*Tremens foetus sum ego, et timeo ...*

I spied a when corbies, bleak an dour on the auld gable,  
Black-gleamin, horn-nebbit

*... crawl ... crawl ...*

A rusty, drouthy girnin in the cauld efternuin

*... crawl ... crawl...*

A scrunt o black tungs ower splitten gless.  
Sayin

We are the Deid —  
Craikin on oor crawl-steppit gable;  
Keekin doon, quhaip-like, bidin oor time;  
Huddroun, humph-backit hoodie-craws;  
Auld spy-wives, spirran-like  
Spurtle-leggity skelets,  
Cripple and grisk.  
Nae remeid:  
We are the Deid.

*Timor mortis conturbat me.*

## *Agnus Dei*

O Christ, I am feart o the daurk. No the black o nicht  
But ma ain pit-mirk thochts, thon hairt-sair dool  
At gars me grue, ma sowl doon-hadden —  
Coorin doon, shroudit  
In the deid-sheet o draggin doots.  
Nae licht in ma sowl.  
Whaur are ye noo, ma auld frere?  
In the cauld mirk o thon lang hame is there  
Nae glent o licht frae the lift?  
Nae glimmer o the life tae come?

*Lux aeterna lucent eis, Domine.*

As for me, pair sinner at I am,  
I am still feart

*Timor mortis conturbat me*

O the daurk. Ma ain daurk. Feart o masel.  
Mair licht.

*Mehr Licht!*

## *Offertory*

*Fac em, Domine, de morte transire ad vitam*

Frae the stour we cam, an tae the stour we maun gan:  
I ken that.  
But I canna faddon the eldrichness, the finality o't;  
I jist canna thole it—the fecht tae come frae which  
I canna flee, and canna win.  
I tremmle, fear-f angit, thinkin  
like auld Dunbar

O the deid's fell straik:  
O the instant when I sail be feenisht—  
By wi.

*Ad te omnis caro veniet*

But ye've trod this gate, ma auld frere.  
It wis haurd tae let ye gang  
On your wey, whaur I maun follow...  
O Christ, yon day  
When aa ma howps, ma luves; thae things  
At mak me whit I am  
Sail scudder awa like stour, blawn intil the lift.

*Ad te omnis caro veniet*

On your wey, auld frere.  
It'll no be ower lang, I'm thinkin  
Till I'll be wi ye. There isna muckle here  
Tae bind me tae the yird—  
Jist ma fear:  
The loup intil the daurk I daurna mak;  
The step intil the mirk I daurna mak;  
When aa the here-an-noo sail brak  
An clatter doon,  
As I, like ye, ma auld frere, swound  
An faa intil the daurk o eternity.  
An it's funny, aamaist, for on that day  
*Dies irae*

*We'll hae time.*

Time tae blether.  
Tae catch up.  
Time, time, wi nae end till't.

## *In Paradisum*

*In paradisum deducant angeli...*

In heivan may the angels haud thee tae their  
hairts

*In tuo adventu suscipiant te martyres ...*

At your winnin-hame may aa the martyrs  
enfauld thee in their airms

*Te perducant te in civitatem Sanctum Jerusalem ...*

An lead ye intil the Halie Citie o Jerusalem

*Chorus angelorum te suscipiat...*

Whaur the choir o angels sail tak thee up

*Et cum Lazaro quondam paupere ...*

an, thegither wi Lazarus, umquhile  
beggar-loon,

*Aetarnam habeas requiem. Amen.*

May ye hae easedom an rest for evermair.  
Sae be it.