

John Pickard

THE BORDERS OF SLEEP

(Nine Poems by
Edward Thomas)

for

Baritone and Piano

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Bardic
Edition

BARDIC EDITION

The Borders of Sleep John Pickard (b.1963)

- Nine Poems by Edward Thomas

This work was composed for its dedicatee, the baritone Jeremy Huw Williams, who commissioned it with financial assistance from the Arts Council of Wales. It was begun in the summer of 2000 and completed a year later.

Until recently I have written very little vocal music. For me, the problem is not writing for the voice but finding the right words. If I find a good poem I am afraid that I will spoil it by setting it to music. Conversely, a poem only needs one musically problematic word and I am unable to set it. So the task of selecting appropriate texts invariably takes far longer than actually setting them. This was a great inhibition, until I started reading Edward Thomas - and everything fell into place.

Edward Thomas (1878-1917) was killed in the Great War, at the Battle of Arras. He is therefore often grouped with Owen, Sassoon and Brooke as a "war poet". In fact, he tends to deal far less directly with the war in his work than do the others, but in some of the poems one can, as it were, hear the shell-fire in the background. As a composer, that obliquity interests me: it opens up an expressive space for the music to occupy. For similar reasons, I was also attracted to the striking lack of metaphors in most of these poems. Generally speaking, the poems are simply intense observations - any symbolic associations stand outside and beyond the text itself. Again, this uncluttered approach frees up space for the composer and aids comprehensibility when set to music.

Apart from the first and last, I wrote the songs in a completely different order from the one in which they now appear. As I became increasingly involved with Thomas's poetic world, what began as an arbitrary collection of three or four songs, each of which could stand alone as a separate item, grew into an extensive nine movement cycle, lasting about half an hour. This is because, as I worked at the songs, a sort of imaginary narrative began to emerge: a soldier at the front lies in his bunk, half-awake (at "the borders of sleep" as the last poem says) the night before he goes "over the top" into no-man's land. Recollections of the natural world from back home (he is a countryman) and of lost love, merge with images of war. The memories to darken, culminating in the macabre vision of the central song "The Gallows". The final song, "Lights Out", brings release in the oblivion of sleep.

It is worth mentioning that the penultimate song, "The Sorrow of True Love", sets Thomas's last poem. It was found on the final page of the war diary he kept until the 10th April 1917, the day a shell blast killed him. He was 39 years old and had been writing poetry for just two years.

John Pickard

The Borders of Sleep

1. Tall Nettles

Poems by Edward Thomas (1878-1917)

John Pickard

Con moto ♩ = c. 104

Baritone

sempre legatissimo, senza crescendo, senza diminuendo

Piano

pp

Tall net- tles

4

co - ver up, as they have none These ma - ny springs, the ru - sty

mf

p

8vb

7

har - row, the plough Long worn out,

10

and the rol - ler made of stone: _____ On - ly the elm butt tops_

13

the net - tles now. _____

16

mf

This cor - ner of the farm - yard I like

19

most: _____ As well as a - ny bloom up - on a

8va

22

p

flower I like the dust on the net - tles,

(8)

25

ne - ver lost Ex - cept to prove the sweet - ness of a

ppp

28

pp

shower. rit.

guz

2. The Trumpet

Marziale $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 88$ *ff*

Baritone

Rise up, — rise up, — And,

Piano

5

as the trum - pet — blow - ing — Chas - es the

9

dreams of men, As the dawn

14

glow - ing — The stars — that left un - lit

meno f

19 *ff*
 The land and wa - ter, Rise up, Rise up, and

secco sf sf

23
 scat - ter the dew that co - vers The print of last night's

ff

28
 lo - vers_ Scat - ter it, scat - ter it!

fff mf

32 *f*
 While you are lis - ten - ing To the clear horn, For -

f

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57

62

f

O - pen your eyes to the air That has washed the eyes of the

67

stars Through all the dew - y night: Up with the

71

light, To the old wars; A-rise, a-rise!

3. The Mill-Water

Agitato ♩ = c. 80

Baritone

Piano *pp*

3 *p*

On - ly the sound re - mains Of the old mill;

5

Gone _____ is the wheel;

7 *mf*

On the prone roof and walls the net-tle reigns.

mf

6

9 *poco più f*

Wa - - ter that toils no more

f

6 6 6 6 6 6

11 *mf*

Dan-gles white locks and, fal - ling, mocks The

mf

3 6 6 6 6 6

13

mu - - sic of the mill - wheel's bu - sy

cresc.

6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

15 *f*

roar.

f dim. 6 6 6 6 6 6

17 *meno f*

3 Pret-ty to see, by day Its sound is

p 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

19 naught Com - pared with thought and talk

6 6 6 6 6 6

21 *dim.* *p*

and noise of la - bour and of play

6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

23

25

28

31

35 *ff*

sound comes surg - ing in up - on the

f

37

sense:

dim.

39 *p*

Sol - i - tude, _____ com - pa - ny, _____

41

When it is night, _____ grief _____ or de - light _____ By it must

sub. p

43 *mf* *p*

haun - ted or con - clu - ded be. —

mf 6 6 6 *p* 6

45 *pp* *mezza voce*

Of -

pp *p* *legatissimo*

47

- ten the si - lent - ness Has but this one com -

50

pan - ion; Wher - ev - er one creeps in the

53

o - ther is:

pp

55

p

Of - ten a thought is drowned By it, some - times

57

piu f

Out of it climbs; All thoughts be - gin

mf

59

or end up - on this sound,

cresc.

f

61

On - ly the i - dle foam Of wa - ter fall - ing Change - less - ly call -

64

- ing, Where once men had a work - place and a home._____

68 **meno mosso e morendo**

pp *rit.* *ppp*

4. Out in the Dark

Misterioso ♩ = c. 120

Baritone *p*

Out in the dark o-ver the snow The fal-low fawns in-

Piano *pp*

4

-vi-si-ble go With the fal-low doe; And the winds blow

ppp

7

Fast as the stars are slow. Stealth-i-ly the dark haunts

pp

10

round And, when the lamp goes, with-out sound At a

ppp

13

swift - er bound Than the swift - est hound, Ar - rives, and all else is

16 *dolce*

drowned; And star and I and wind and deer, are in the dark to-

19 *p*

-ge - ther, near, yet far, and fear Drums

22

on my ear. In that sage com - pan - y drear. How

25

weak and lit-tle is the light, All the u - ni - verse of

28

sight, Love and de - light, be - fore the night, If you

31

love it not, of night.

pp

35

Molto rit.

pppp

5. The Gallows

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 100$

Baritone

Piano

4

8

11

The musical score is written for Baritone and Piano. The Baritone part is mostly silent, with some notes in the first system. The Piano part is the main focus, featuring a complex texture of chords and triplets. Dynamics range from piano (pp) to fortissimo (ff). A large blue watermark 'Preview File Only' is overlaid on the score.

14

p
There was a

17

wea - sel lived in the sun With all his fa - mi - ly, Till a

20

kee - per shot him with his gun And hung him up - on a tree, Where he

24

swings in the wind_ and rain, In the sun and in the snow, With - out

28

plea - sure, with - out pain, On the dead oak tree bough.

32

There was a crow who was no

36

slee - per, But a thief and a mur - der - er Till a

40

ve - ry late hour; and this kee - per Made him one of the things that

43

p

were, To hang and flap in rain and wind, In the sun and in the

pp

47

mf

snow, There are no more sins to be sinned On the dead oak tree

51

p

p

bough. There was a mag-pie, too,

55

Had a long tongue and a long tail; He could both talk and do But

58 *f* *p*

what did that a - vail? He, too, flaps in the wind and rain, A -

f *pp*

62 *mf*

- long - side wea - sel and crow, With - out plea - sure, with - out pain, On the

mf

66 *p* *mf cresc.* *f* *pp* *f*

dead oak tree bough. And ma - ny o - ther beasts And birds,

pp *f* *ff*

69 *f* *martellato* *fff*

skin, bone, and fea - ther, Have been ta - ken from their

fff

72

feasts. And hung up there to - ge - ther, To swing and have end - less

ff *pp*

p 2

76

lei - sure In the sun and in the snow, With - out

79

pain, with - out plea - sure, On the dead oak tree bough.

p 2

83

f *pp* *f* *pp* *f* *pp*

87

Musical score for measures 87-90. The score is written for piano and includes a bass line and two treble staves. The bass line contains sustained chords. The upper treble staff features chords with dynamic markings *f* and *pp*. The lower treble staff contains triplet patterns. The key signature changes from one sharp to one flat between measures 88 and 89.

91

Musical score for measures 91-94. The score is written for piano and includes a bass line and two treble staves. The bass line contains sustained chords. The upper treble staff features chords with dynamic markings *f*, *ff*, and *pp*. The lower treble staff contains triplet patterns. A large blue watermark "Preview File Only" is overlaid on the score.

95

Musical score for measures 95-98. The score is written for piano and includes a bass line and two treble staves. The bass line contains sustained chords. The upper treble staff features chords with dynamic markings *pp* and *pppp*. The lower treble staff contains triplet patterns.

6. Rain

♩ = c. 80

Baritone

Piano

pp sempre legatissimo

p

3

p

Rain,

mid - night

5

rain,

no - - - thing but the wild - - - rain

7 *p*

on this bleak hut, and sol - i - tude,

9 *mf*

and me Re-mem - b'ring a - gain that I shall

11 *p*

die And nei - ther hear the rain nor give it thanks For wash - ing

13

me clean - er than I have been Since I was born in - to this

15

sol - i - tude.

p

17

mf

Bless - ed are the dead that the rain rains u - pon:

mf

19

p

But here I pray that none whom once I loved is dy - ing to -

p

21

-night or ly - ing still a - wake

23

So - li - ta - ry, list - en - ing to the rain,

pp

25

Ei - ther in pain or thus in sym - pa - thy Help - less

p

27

— a - mong the li - ving and the dead,

mf

f *pp*

29

p

Like a cold wa - ter a - mong bro - ken reeds,

31

sotto voce

My - riads of bro - ken reeds all still and stiff,

33

p

Like me who have no love which this wild rain Has

35

not dis - solved

ex - cept

the love of death,

37 *p*

If love it be for what is per-fect and Can-not,

39

the tem-pest tells me, dis-ap-point.

41

7. No One Cares Less than I

♩ = c. 100

Baritone

Piano

3

5

'No one cares less than I, No -

9

- bo-dy knows but God, Whe - ther I am

13

des - tined to lie

f *p* *ff*

15

Un - der a for - eign clod'

ff *sff*

18

Slower (Alla marcia) ♩ = c. 60
meno f

Were the words I made to the bu - gle call in the morn - ing

21

But laugh - ing, storm - ing,

mf cresc.

f

Detailed description: This system contains measures 21, 22, and 23. The vocal line is in bass clef with a 4/4 time signature. The piano accompaniment consists of two staves. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and accents, while the left hand provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines. Dynamics include *mf cresc.* and *f*. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

24

scorn - ning, On - ly the bu - gles know what the

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Detailed description: This system contains measures 24 and 25. The vocal line continues in bass clef. The piano accompaniment features more complex textures with triplets and slurs. A large blue watermark 'Preview file Only' is overlaid diagonally across the page.

26

bu - gles say in the morn - ing,

ff

Detailed description: This system contains measures 26, 27, and 28. The vocal line is in bass clef. The piano accompaniment is highly rhythmic, featuring numerous triplets in both hands. The dynamic *ff* is indicated. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

28

ff

And they do not care, when they blow the call that I

31

heard and made words to ear-ly this morn - ing.

ff

34

allargando

martellato

fff

8. The Sorrow of True Love
(Last Poem)

Con moto $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 66$

Baritone

Piano

p

The sor - row of true

pp

4

love is a great sor - row

And true love part - ing

8

black - ens a bright mor - row:—

Yet al - most they e - qual joys,

mf

11

since their de - spair is but hope

blind - ed by its

sub. p

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14

p

tears, and clear A - bove the storm the hea - vens

18

wait_ to be seen. But grea - ter sor - row_

pp

21

from less love has been That can mis - take lack of des - pair for hope

pp

24

cresc.

And knows not tem - pest and the per - fect scope Of

cresc.

26

f *P*

sum - mer, but a fro - zen driz - zle per - pe - tu - al Of

f *pp*

30

drops that from re - morse or pi - ty fall And can - not ev - er

34

p

shine in the sun or thaw, Re - moved e - ter - nal - ly — from the

pp

Rit. — A tempo *pp*

38

sun's — law. —

ppp

9. Lights Out

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 66$

Baritone

Piano

p

f

pp

p

f

pp

p

f

f

p

The musical score is written for Baritone and Piano in 4/4 time. The tempo is marked as approximately 66 beats per minute. The Baritone part consists of a single line of music with rests throughout. The Piano part is written in two staves (treble and bass clefs). The score is divided into four systems, with measures 6, 13, and 17 marked at the beginning of each system. The piano part features various dynamics including *p* (piano), *f* (forte), and *pp* (pianissimo). The music includes melodic lines with slurs and ties, and a steady bass line with chords and single notes. A large blue watermark 'Preview File Only' is oriented diagonally across the center of the page.

21

p senza espressione

I have come to the bor - ders of sleep,

25

The un - fa - thom - a - ble deep Fo - rest where all must lose Their

The un - fa - thom - a - ble deep Fo - rest where all must lose Their

28

way, how - e - ver straight, Or win - ding, soon or

way, how - e - ver straight, Or win - ding, soon or

33

late; They can - not choose. Ma - ny a

late; They can - not choose. Ma - ny a

road and track_____ That, since the dawn's first crack, Up to the

fo - rest brink_____ de - ceived the trav - el - lers, Sud - den - ly

now blurs, and in they sink_____

pp

ff appassionato

51 Here love__ ends, De - spair,____ am - bi - tion ends;

pressando

55

f

Vocal line for measures 55-56. The melody consists of quarter notes: G2, A2, B2, C3, B2, A2, G2. The lyrics are "All plea - sure and all trou - ble,".

All plea - sure and all trou - ble,

Piano accompaniment for measures 55-56. The right hand features a sixteenth-note arpeggiated pattern with a crescendo hairpin. The left hand plays a simple bass line. Dynamics include *mf* and *f*. A fermata is placed over the final chord.

A tempo (subito)

57

ff

p

Vocal line for measures 57-58. The melody consists of quarter notes: G2, A2, B2, C3, B2, A2, G2. The lyrics are "Al - though most sweet or bit - ter, Here ends in".

Al - though most sweet or bit - ter, Here ends in

Piano accompaniment for measures 57-58. The right hand has a long note with a fermata. The left hand has a simple bass line. Dynamics include *ff*, *fff*, and *p*.

61

Vocal line for measures 61-62. The melody consists of quarter notes: G2, A2, B2, C3, B2, A2, G2. The lyrics are "sleep that is sweet - er Then tasks most no - ble. There is not a - ny".

sleep that is sweet - er Then tasks most no - ble. There is not a - ny

Piano accompaniment for measures 61-62. The right hand has a long note with a fermata. The left hand has a simple bass line. Dynamics include *ppp*.

65

Vocal line for measures 65-66. The melody consists of quarter notes: G2, A2, B2, C3, B2, A2, G2. The lyrics are "book Or face of dear - est look That I ___ would not turn ___ from ___".

book Or face of dear - est look That I ___ would not turn ___ from ___

Piano accompaniment for measures 65-66. The right hand has a long note with a fermata. The left hand has a simple bass line.

70

now To go in-to the un-known I must en-ter, and leave, a-lone, I

75

know not how. The tall fo-rest to-wers; Its clou-dy fo-liage lowers A-

80

-head, shelf a-bove shelf; It's si-lence I hear and o-

84

-bey That I may lose my way And my-self.

The Borders of Sleep

1. Tall Nettles

Tall nettles cover up, as they have done
These many springs, the rusty harrow, the plough
Long worn out, and the roller made of stone:
Only the elm butt tops the nettles now.

This corner of the farmyard I like most:
As well as any bloom upon a flower
I like the dust on the nettles, never lost
Except to prove the sweetness of a shower.

2. The Trumpet

Rise up, rise up,
And, as the trumpet blowing
Chases the dreams of men,
As the dawn glowing
The stars that left unlit
The land and water,
Rise up and scatter
The dew that covers
The print of last night's lovers -
Scatter it, scatter it!

While you are listening
To the clear horn,
Forget, men, everything
On this earth new-born,
Except that it is lovelier
Than any mysteries.
Open your eyes to the air
That has washed the eyes of the stars
Through all the dewy night:
Up with the light,
To the old wars;
Arise, arise!

3. The Mill-Water

Only the sound remains
Of the old mill;
Gone is the wheel;
On the prone roof and walls the nettle reigns.

Water that toils no more
Dangles white locks
And, falling, mocks
The music of the mill-wheel's busy roar.

Pretty to see, by day
Its sound is naught
Compared with thought
And talk and noise of labour and of play.

Night makes the difference.
In calm moonlight,
Gloom infinite,
The sound comes surging in upon the sense:

Solitude, company, -
When it is night, -
Grief or delight
By it must haunted or concluded be.

Often the silentness
Has but this one
Companion;
Wherever one creeps in the other is:

Sometimes a thought is drowned
By it, sometimes
Out of it climbs;
All thoughts begin or end upon this sound,

Only the idle foam
Of water falling
Changelessly calling
Where once men had a work-place and a home.

4. Out in the Dark

Out in the dark over the snow
The fallow fawns invisible go
With the fallow doe;
And the winds blow
Fast as the stars are slow.

Stealthily the dark haunts round
And, when the lamp goes, without sound
At a swifter bound
Than the swiftest hound,
Arrives, and all else is drowned;

And star and I and wind and deer,
Are in the dark together, - near,
Yet far, - and fear
Drums on my ear
In that sage company drear.

How weak and little is the light,
All the universe of sight,
Love and delight,
Before the might,
If you love it not, of night.

5. The Gallows

There was a weasel lived in the sun
With all his family,
Till a keeper shot him with his gun
And hung him up on a tree,
Where he swings in the wind and the rain,
In the sun and in the snow,
Without pleasure, without pain,
On the dead oak tree bough.

There was a crow who was no sleeper,
But a thief and a murderer
Till a very late hour; and this keeper
Made him one of the things that were,

To hang and flap in rain and wind,
In the sun and in the snow.
There are no more sins to be sinned
On the dead oak tree bough.

There was a magpie, too,
Had a long tongue and a long tail;
He could both talk and do -
But what did that avail?
He, too, flaps in the wind and rain
Alongside weasel and crow,
Without pleasure, without pain,
On the dead oak tree bough.

And many other beasts
And birds, skin, bone, and feather,
Have been taken from their feasts
And hung up there together,
To swing and have endless leisure
In the sun and in the snow
Without pain, without pleasure,
On the dead oak tree bough.

6. Rain

Rain, midnight rain, nothing but the wild rain
On this bleak hut, and solitude, and me
Remembering again that I shall die
And neither hear the rain nor give it thanks
For washing me cleaner than I have been
Since I was born into this solitude.
Blessed are the dead that the rain rains upon:
But here I pray that none whom once I loved
Is dying tonight or lying still awake
Solitary, listening to the rain,
Either in pain or thus in sympathy
Helpless among the living and the dead,
Like a cold water among broken reeds,
Myriads of broken reeds all still and stiff,
Like me who have no love which this wild rain
Has not dissolved except the love of death,
If love it be for what is perfect and
Cannot, the tempest tells me, disappoint.

7. No One Cares Less than I

No one cares less than I,
Nobody knows but God,
Whether I am destined to lie
Under a foreign clod,
Were the words I made to the bugle call in the
morning.

But laughing, storming, scorning,
Only the bugles know
What the bugles say in the morning,
And they do not care, when they blow
The call that I heard and made words to early this
morning.

8. Last Poem [The sorrow of true love]

The sorrow of true love is a great sorrow
And true love parting blackens a bright morrow:
Yet almost they equal joys, since their despair
Is but hope blinded by its tears, and clear
Above the storm the heavens wait to be seen.
But greater sorrow from less love has been
That can mistake lack of despair for hope
And knows not tempest and the perfect scope
Of summer, but a frozen drizzle perpetual
Of drops that from remorse and pity fall
And cannot ever shine in the sun or thaw,
Removed eternally from the sun's law.

9. Lights Out

I have come to the borders of sleep,
The unfathomable deep
Forest where all must lose
Their way, however straight,
Or winding, soon or late;
They cannot choose.

Many a road and track
That, since the dawn's first crack,
Up to the forest brink,
Deceived the travellers,
Suddenly now blurs,
And in they sink.

Here love ends,
Despair, ambition ends;
All pleasure and all trouble,
Although most sweet or bitter,
Here ends in sleep that is sweeter
Than tasks most noble.

There is not any book
Or face of dearest look
That I would not turn from now
To go into the unknown
I must enter, and leave, alone,
I know not how.

The tall forest towers;
its cloudy foliage lowers
Ahead, shelf above shelf;
Its silence I hear and obey
That I may lose my way
And myself.

Edward Thomas (1878-1917)