

Rother Baron:

Musical Winter Journey

The Winter: Doom or Utopia?

*A winter meditation with songs from Russia, Italy,
France, Germany, California, Sweden and Iceland*



The winter, nowadays referred to as "winter wonderland" in our Christmas carols, was once synonymous with natural disasters and famine. At the same time, however, it has always been – in the past even more so than today – a time of reflection and coming to oneself. Its connotation thus moves between the extremes of existential fear and inner peace, isolation and coming closer together, resignation and utopia. This is also reflected in the musical exploration of winter.

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Winter as existential threat

From a purely biological point of view, winter is the opposite of life. It stands for a world in which even dying is over. Nothing grows, nothing decays, everything is frozen. This is reflected in expressions such as "regions of eternal ice" or, metaphorically speaking, the "eternal winter" that has taken hold of a soul.

The most obvious way to describe winter would therefore be to associate it with an environment that is hostile to life. This is also the basic tone in most older German folk songs, such as *Ach, bitterer Winter* (Oh, bitter winter) or *Es ist ein Schnee gefallen* (A snow has fallen). Accordingly, in a winter poem by the medieval minstrel Walther von der Vogelweide (*Diu werlt was gelf, rôt unde blâ* – The world was yellow, red and blue), to which there is a beautiful setting by the group Qntal (under the title *Winter*), the snow is only marvelled at by the "fools", while the "poor people" react to the arrival of winter with lamentations.

This reflects the fact that winter could pose an existential threat to people in earlier centuries. Especially in the countryside, where the majority of people lived, it was never sure whether food supplies would last until spring and whether the humble cottages would be able to withstand the masses of snow. The transfiguration of the cold season into a "winter wonderland" is only possible for those who can afford to protect themselves from the death-bringing reality of winter.

It is precisely this aspect of winter – the cruelty with which social differences are made tangible – that is the theme of the song *Jóla kötturinn* by the Icelandic singer-songwriter Björk (born 1965). It is a musical setting of an Icelandic legend according to which a predatory cat prowls around the houses at Christmas time and attacks those people – especially children – who have not been given new clothes. For this reason, the women try to sew at least one new sock for everyone.

Consequently, the song can first of all be generally related to the desperate situation that social exclusion entails, especially in the cold season. In particular, the situation of homeless people is to be remembered here. In view of the fact that the predator can also be kept in check by a symbolic act – the gift of a single sock, which in fact offers no protection from the cold – the "homelessness" could also be interpreted in an existential sense. It would then

result from the complete loss of social ties, from the tearing of the last thin thread that links a person to the community. From this point of view, the winter predator would not be an image for concrete cold and material need, but a metaphor for a state of total isolation that "eats you up" from the inside out.

In a figurative sense, the hostile world of winter can also refer to the social and ecological destruction caused by human beings. This view is taken up by the Swedish singer-songwriter Jennie Abrahamson (born 1977) in her song *Snowstorm*. The song illustrates how the alienation from nature causes environmental destruction – exemplified, among other things, in the carelessness towards insects and their importance for the cycle of life. This in turn leads to an increased alienation from nature and thus sets in motion a vicious circle that threatens to end in the downfall of civilisation if we do not pause. This is precisely the scenario the song evokes through the image of a snowstorm that "sweeps away" or "wipes out" the world of human beings, while they watch their own demise impassively from the window or crawl into their warm beds.



Winter loneliness

On an inner-psychic level, winter appears as a time when feelings of abandonment and lostness come more to the fore. In a world of darkness, cold and frozen life, it is more likely to fall into an emotional downward spiral than in the cheerful environment of spring and its atmosphere of new beginnings. Thus, winter also provides the ideal frame for the staging of love dramas, for taking up themes such as farewell, abandonment and emotional alienation, which find an obvious counterpart in the "frozen tears" of the snowflakes. This makes winter an ideal ground for romantic longing with its dreams of escaping the frozen, grey present into an idealised past – as in the song cycle *Die Winterreise* (The Winter Journey), Franz Schubert's congenial setting of Wilhelm Müller's poems.

Among the countless examples of this kind of winter songs, I have chosen two Italian pieces of music. This is certainly also due to my German soul, which, following a genetic-Goethean predisposition, sees its place of longing in Italy – the land where the lemons bloom, which are so beautiful to look at but taste so sour, the land of dreams, which are only beautiful as long as they remain unfulfillable.

Admittedly, one of the two singers – Salvatore Adamo (born 1943) – is only Italian by birth (more precisely: Sicilian). He grew up in Belgium, where he still lives today. Most people would probably call him a French chansonnier anyway. But the rough, melancholic melting of his voice clearly lets his Italian roots shine through. His song *Tombe la neige* (Snow is falling) was also published in an Italian version (*Cade la neve*) that is less known today.

The other canzone is sung by Sergio Endrigo (1933 – 2005). His heartfelt *Aria di neve* (Snow Aria / Snow Air) is not only similar in content to Adamo's song, but was also written around the same time – in the 1960s.

To overcome the winter blues, it is often emphasised that winter is in fact only a resting phase of life and that the apparent absence of life is the prerequisite for its all the more powerful resurrection. The hopelessness that a grey winter's day emanates, this dreariness without any relief, would thus only be an error of perception, a deceptive fixation on the present moment that ignores the big picture, the eternal return of life.

The same applies, however, from the opposite perspective: winter also returns every year, the eternal return of life is based on the eternal return of death. Seen in this way, the rigidity of life in winter is an absolute one after all – because every new beginning necessarily ends in decay and dissolution.

In his song *Inverno* (Winter), the Italian cantautore Fabrizio de André (1940 – 1999) addresses this conflict between the comforting thought of the next spring, or of happier times in general, and the certainty that these, too, will fade away at some point. Both ways of looking at winter – the one that sees it as a metaphor for an absolute end and the one that considers it a prerequisite for the rebirth of the living – are juxtaposed alternately in the six stanzas of the song.



The liberating power of winter

As the opposite of life, winter is of course the home of death. At the same time, however, its otherness can also be understood in the sense of a counter-design, a "counter-world", in which everything seems possible that is unthinkable in real life. Winter itself is an invitation to this. Although it stands for the total absence of life, its concrete appearance seems to imitate life. Snowdrifts pile up the ice masses and create bizarre landscapes, icicles are similar to the cones of coniferous trees, hoarfrost covers the land with a blanket of glittering ice flowers.

Precisely because winter seems to imitate life, but at the same time alienates it, it provides the basis for dreams of a different world. These can refer directly to the "enchantment" of the world through winter. An example of this is the chanson *Il neige* (It's snowing) by the French chansonnier Lise Martin (born 1984). In her song she describes exactly the mood of a person who consciously enters into the state of suspension into which the world is falling due to the gliding flight of snowflakes. The new emotional state is also accompanied by a different view of reality that transcends the traditional patterns of perception.

In a similar way, the song *Wizard flurry home* by the Californian singer-songwriter Mariee Sioux (born 1985) explores the theme of winter. Her father is a mandolin player of Polish-Hungarian origin, who also accompanies her musically on occasion. Her mother is of Spanish origin, but is also rooted in the Paiute ethnic group. Musically, the singer expresses this, among other things, by incorporating traditional Indian-Mexican flute sounds into her music.

With regard to content, the song refers in particular to the cultic dances of the Paiute, in which a state of trance was to be achieved with the help of ritual drum sounds. At the end of the 19th century, this form of music also took on a political-revolutionary meaning in the so-called "ghost dance movement". Here the dances were intended to bring about visions that would show the dancers the way to liberation from the white occupying power.

Mariee Sioux's song alludes to this insofar as it evokes a "dancing into pieces" of the world by a drumming magician or medicine man. The liberation to be attained through this, however, is not – as hoped for by the ghost dance movement – an external one, but takes place on the inner level, in the sense of an individual initiation into the mystical world of the ancestors.

This becomes clear, for example, in the symbolic meaning of the number five in the poem. It obviously stands for perfection or completion (in the sense of the five fingers of a hand). Thus the "breaking in two" of the heart the text speaks of is not to be understood in the sense of a destructive breaking apart, but in the sense of discovering another, hitherto unknown side of one's own existence. Its central characteristic would be the abolition of isolation and the unison with the one, all-pervading breath of life, as indicated by the all-encompassing snow shower.

In connection with the psychedelic music, the associative text conveys an idea of precisely that "magical" mood to which the title of the song refers. The dissolving sentences, through which the pure sound quality of the words takes on a stronger meaning than the semantic level, also fit well with the described situation of a world falling apart into the mosaic of dancing snowflakes.

By concealing, transforming or "fragmenting" ordinary phenomena in the flurry of snowflakes, winter makes it possible to detach oneself from these phenomena. It thus invites us to a state of contemplation, the basic prerequisite of all mystical experience.

This is also perceptible in a song by the French chansonnier Jean-Louis Murat (born 1952), which also revolves around the experience of "sinking" into the drifting snow. The fact that the title of the chanson corresponds to that of Lise Martin may also be due to the circumstance that both come from Auvergne – a hilly region, where authentic winter experiences can still be found. In the case of Jean-Louis Murat – whose real name is Jean-Louis Bergheaud – the bond with his home region is also expressed in the fact that he named himself after the place where he grew up (Murat-le-Quaire).

Above all, however, this chansonnier is close to Buddhism, in which turning away from the world of material things and external appearances is a central precondition for attaining inner peace. This is also to be considered when the "higher being", which in the song seems to be responsible for the wintry transformation of the world, inflicts pain on the latter as well as on itself by destroying the foundations of natural life and hence of its own "creation". The "great silence", as the only thing that remains, might at first appear like a "knife" that someone holds to a person's "bare throat". At the same time, however, it is the prerequisite for an experience of revelation, in which a brief moment of intuitive "omniscience" opens up the "secret" of being.

As with Mariee Sioux and Lise Martin (here especially in the introductory sounds), in Jean-Louis Murat's work the state of inner contemplation brought about by the snowfall is accompanied by a contemplative music reflecting the turning away from the external world and its images.



Winter as a harbour of utopia – Russian winter fantasies

There is hardly any other place where the threatening character of winter can be experienced as strongly as in Russia, where the cold season is seemingly endless and help is far away in the equally endless expanse of the country. This is also reflected in many ways in Russian literature and music. At the same time, however, the other side of winter – its contrast to life, which predestines it to be a metaphor for a counter-design to the existing conditions – is repeatedly broached in it.

Perhaps the best-known example of a work that combines both aspects of reference to winter is Leo Tolstoy's story *Master and Man* (Russian *Hozyain i Rabotnik*: Master and Servant, 1895). In this tale a wealthy merchant insists on being driven across the steppes by a servant on a business matter despite an approaching snowstorm. When the carriage gets stuck in the snow, his hard-hearted character softens in the face of imminent death from frostbite, and he throws himself over his servant to save his life with the warmth of his own body.

In Tolstoy's work, the self-sacrifice of the protagonist has religious implications. By giving up his self-centredness and greed and radically turning to his fellow man, he experiences the power of grace and redemption, through which he participates in immortality in a spiritual sense despite his real death. The event could, however, also be related to the transcendent power inherent in winter – understood in the sense of a power that surpasses human existence. According to this, the merchant's way of acting would be a result of his insight into the superior forces that drive nature and the universe. His own life is "encompassed" by these forces – and is thus sheltered in them –, but at the same time appears meaningless against their background. Combined, the two complexes of emotions give him the strength to sacrifice his own life for another person. The surrender to the inevitable thus becomes an attunement to its power, a subjective appropriation of the objective force.

A similar mental process also underlies the song *Metyel'* (Snow flurry / Snowstorm) by the legendary Russian band *DDT* (around frontman Yuri Svecchuk), founded in 1981. Here, too, the destructive effect of the snowstorm is emphasised, its archaic power that sweeps away everything hitherto existing and makes the path of life end in nothingness. Corresponding to this, the other

stanzas describe the helpless attempts to light up the wintry darkness with street lamps and candles that implore heavenly help.

The reaction to this is not resignation, however, but a kind of defiantly self-deprecating fraternisation with the storm, raising a toast to the "lost things" and singing of the suspension of time in its all-enveloping "white wall". In the refrain, this culminates in the ecstatic call for the snowstorm to "mature", i.e. to grow to its full strength.

At the same time, the snowstorm is detached from its real presence and linked to the imaginary world of the ego viewing it. In doing so, the ideal of a fulfilled, authentic life is projected onto the unfolding storm. Alongside this, the real destructive force of nature is transformed into an illusion of warmth and an imagined return of spring, which is evoked by the pollen-like snowflakes. In this way, the wish that the snowstorm may show mildness and in this sense "thaw out" is fulfilled on an inner, subjective level. The spirit penetrates matter, it absorbs it and thus gives it a new meaning.

Of course, none of this is anchored in objective reality. When we perceive a snowstorm as a manifestation of a numinous force, when we fraternise with it in our minds or dream up another world out of the bizarre snow landscapes that winter creates, then all this exists only in our imagination.

On the other hand, what springs from our imagination cannot simply be rejected as "unreal". What seems "fantastic" today may already be reality tomorrow. This is how we could understand the song *Snjeg natschnjotsja* (It's starting to snow) by the Tatar-Bashkir singer Zemfira (Semfira, born 1976). Of course, the mysterious You, approaching the self here "across the rooftops", could also be interpreted in a religious sense – especially since the self's gaze is directed "towards the sky". Yet a more general interpretation seems plausible as well, in the sense of alternative possibilities, ways of thinking and acting buried under the rigid corset of reality, which come to light in the world transformed by winter.*

In this way, the same winter that in reality can destroy life, even make it impossible, appears at the same time as the natural starting point of utopia.

* What Zemfira herself says about the song also fits in with this. According to her, *Snjeg natschnjotsja* is a "song about expectations" that she conceived in a time of "relationship crises". The singer explicitly refers to the non-verbal level, to the "cries" and "outbursts", which in this case would be more important than the words. This, too, reflects the approach to something totally new, something unspeakable, towards which the hopes of the self are directed (cf. livejournal.com, October 28, 2007).

Seen in this way, the white winter landscape is like a blank sheet of paper, on which life can be redrawn.

Consequently, in the song *Snilos' mnye* (I had a dream) by the group *Voskreseniye* (Resurrection), winter itself is described as a dream – a dream of a world where peace and tranquillity reign, where isolation and the permanent struggle of each against all have been replaced by a silent understanding among people. The harsh, hostile reality of winter (and a corresponding everyday life characterised by "social coldness") is contrasted here with the utopia of overcoming this very reality, the vision of a radical new beginning as it arises from the power of human beings to transcend reality by dreaming.

Similarly, the song *Utro Poliny* (Polina's Morning) by the band *Nautilus Pompilius* – with its front man Vyacheslav Butusov (born 1961) – evokes the utopian aspect of winter. The song revolves around the life of a kind of ice queen in whose crystal palace the sun never sets. This is already indicated by the name "Polina", which is a short form of "Apollinaria", the female equivalent of the sun god "Apollinaris" (Apollo). At the same time, the song title refers to the core of the utopian: the morning that never turns into day. For it is the essence of utopia that it can never become reality. The term "utopia" comes from the Greek "ou-topos", which means "no place / nowhere". In other words: Where the "nowhere" of the utopian takes root, it necessarily becomes entangled with reality and loses its character precisely because of this.

This does not mean, however, that utopia has no significance for our ordinary daily lives. Rather, it fulfills the function of a regulative, an ideal to which we aspire, although we are aware that we can never achieve it. In this "interplay [of] the impossible with the possible" we expand – as the German poet Ingeborg Bachmann once put it – "our possibilities" (cf. Bachmann's 1959 [speech at the awarding of the Radio Play Prize of the War Blind](#)).

In the song *Utro Poliny*, it says accordingly: "I love you for your expectation waiting for what can never happen." To put it less poetically: only those who do not give up their belief in the utopia of a better world, against all odds, can help us to come at least a little closer to this utopia.

Songs and translations

Qntal / Walther von der Vogelweide: Winter

from: *Qntal V: Silver Swan* (2006); song comprises the first three stanzas of the poem.

Song

Text (Middle High German)

Transcription into New High German

Translation*

The world shone brightly, yellow, red and blue,
the forest wore a dress of green, like so much else,
the little birdies sang their songs.
But now only the hooded crow cries out.
Hasn't the colour changed too? Of course it has!
Pale is the world, pale and grey,
painting worry lines on our foreheads.

I sat on a green hill,
where flowers and clover sprouted
between me and a lake.
It was so beautiful to look at.
Where we used to tie wreaths of flowers,
everything is covered with hoarfrost and snow now,
much to the chagrin of the little birds.

The foolish cry: "Let it snow!"
But poor people: "O woe! O woe!"
So a leaden gloom depresses me, too,
winter's sorrow weighs heavy on me.
But whatever these and other sorrows may be,



I would soon get rid of them
if only summer returned at last.

To no longer have to live like this,
I would gladly eat raw crabs.
Summer, make us happy again!
You embellish meadows and woods.
In your arms I played with the flowers,
my heart was soaring high in the sun.
Now winter has chased it into the straw.

I am as chafed as Esau** from lying down so much,
my straight hair has become all shaggy.
Sweet summer, where have you gone?
How I'd love to watch you working in the fields!
If this melancholy keeps me in its clutches,
I'd rather be a monk in Doberlug.***

* The special musicality of the poem is manifested, among other things, in the fact that the rhymes of each stanza end in a different vowel in the original Middle High German.

** Esau: Esau literally means "the hairy, the shaggy one". According to the Old Testament, his whole body was "reddish" and like a single "hairshirt" – which fits well with the hibernal neglect described by Walther (cf. bibelkommentare.de).

*** Doberlug: The reference is to the Cistercian monastery of Dobraluh (Dobrilugk), founded in 1165, today Doberlug-Kirchhain (Brandenburg). By making the seclusion of the monastery walls – the opposite of the ideal life for a life-loving minstrel – appear as a possible place of refuge, the desolation is emphasised. perceived additionally



Björk (Guðmundsdóttir): Jólakötturinn

Lyrics: Jóhannes úr Kötlum; music: Ingibjörg Porbergs

from: *Hvít Er Borg Og Bær* (Sampler with Icelandic Christmas carols; 1987)

[Song](#)

[Lyrics](#)

[Translation](#)



Jennie Abrahamson: Snowstorm

from: *Gemini Gemini* (2014)

[Song and Lyrics, with introductory words by the singer](#)

[Video clip](#)

[Live version](#)



Salvatore Adamo: Tombe la neige / Cade la neve (Snow is falling)

Song: [French](#) and [Italian](#) version (with lyrics)

Translation 1 (French version):

Snow is falling

Snow is falling,
you won't come tonight.
Snow is falling
and my heart is dressed in black.
This silken funeral procession
of white tears,
the bird on the branch,
weeping for the enchanted world ...

You won't come tonight –
that's what my despair cries out to me.
But the snow keeps falling
like an endless merry-go-round.

Snow is falling,
you won't come tonight.
Snow is falling,
everything is frozen in white despair.
Sad certainty ...
The cold and the absence,
that terrible silence,
white loneliness ...

You won't come tonight –
that's what my despair cries out to me.
// But the snow keeps falling
like an endless merry-go-round. //



Translation 2 (Italian version):

Snow is falling

Snow is falling,
you won't come tonight.
Snow is falling,
I know we won't meet.

The sleeping city
wraps itself in a white blanket,
while my heart
is dressed in black.

You won't come tonight,
I will wait in vain,
while the snow
is slowly falling from the sky.

Snow is falling ...

On the deserted street
not a single voice is heard.
I feel like dying,
you are so far away from me.

You won't come tonight,
I will wait in vain,
// while the snow
is slowly falling from the sky. //

Sergio Endrigo: Aria di neve (Snow Aria / Snow Air)

from: *Sergio Endrigo* (1962)

[Song](#)

[Lyrics](#)

Translation:

Snow Aria / Snow Air

Above the clouds serenity reigns,
but our love
does not belong to the sky.
We are down here,
in the clutter of everyday life,
the grey everyday life.

A touch of snow caresses your face,
my words sound bitter,
for no particular reason.
Sooner or later
everything will slip away.

It is an impossible life,
this life spent with you.
You don't laugh, you don't cry,
you don't talk anymore
and you can't tell me why.

On the road of our love
I have already made up
a thousand new songs
for your eyes,
more than a thousand new songs
that you will never sing.



Fabrizio de André: Inverno (Winter)

from: *Tutti morimmo a stento* (1968)

Lyrics: Fabrizio de André; Music: Gianpiero Reverberi and Fabrizio de André

Song

Lyrics

Translation:

Winter



The fog is rising from the pristine meadows,
like a cypress in a graveyard,
a campanile that seems unreal,
it draws a line between heaven and earth.

But you who are leaving – stay!
You'll see, the fog will disappear tomorrow.
The pleasures of the past will blossom again
in a new summer's warming breeze.

Even the light seems to die
in the vague shadow of a change,
in which even the dawn takes on a dusky hue
and the faces look like waxen skulls.

But you who are leaving – stay!
Even the snow will die tomorrow.
Love will take us in its arms again
in the flowery scent of the hawthorn.

Beneath the snow, the weary earth
is silently dreaming a heavy dream.
Winter weighs it down
with the fatigue of thousands of years.*

But you who linger – why do you stay?
Already tomorrow a new winter will come,
and new snow will fall comfortably
on the fields and on the graveyards.

* Literally: Winter gathers in itself the weariness / of a thousand centuries, since a long
past dawn.



Lise Martin: Il neige (It's snowing)

aus: *Déments songes* (2014)

Song

Lyrics, © Lise Martin

Il neige

Il neige,
dehors tout est blanc,
dehors tout est pur,
sortilège.
Dehors le silence
comme un goût d'absence:
Est-ce un piège?

Il neige,
et les flocons dansent.
Je me laisse prendre
à leur manège
et je danse avec eux
dans l'air froid du vent
je m'allège.

Il neige,
des petites plumes de rien
qui tombent sur mes mains,
diamants venus d'en-haut
qui roulent sur ma peau,
pleurant à ma place,
des larmes de glace
qui roulent sur mes joues,
se glissent dans mon cou
et s'écoulent en rivière,
transparence de verre.



Il neige,
sur ce monde endormi
commence une autre vie,
si sereine.

Dans la douceur de l'air
de ce matin d'hiver
je suis reine.

Il neige,
je me laisse aller
aux rêves insensés
qui m'assiègent.
Je me laisse emporter
et me transforme
en flocon de neige.

Il neige,
des petites plumes de rien ...

Translation:

It's snowing

It is snowing,
outside everything is white,
everything is pure,
enchanted.

Outside, an air of absence
emanates from the silence.
Is it a trap?

It is snowing,
and the flakes are dancing.
I let myself be taken up

on their merry-go-round
and dance with them,
a butterfly of flakes,
in the air freshened by the wind.

It is snowing,
little feathers of nothingness,
falling into my hands,
diamonds of the sky,
gliding over my skin,
crying on me,
tears of ice,
gliding down my cheeks,
running down my neck,
gathering into a trickle,
in crystal translucency.

It is snowing,
in this sleeping world
another life begins,
peaceful and carefree.
In the soft air
of this winter morning
I am the queen.

It is snowing,
I let myself be seduced
by the crazy dreams
that besiege me.
I let myself be carried away
and I turn
into a snowflake.

It is snowing,
little feathers of nothingness...

Mariee Sioux: Wizard flurry home

aus: *A Bundled Bundle of Bundles* (2006)

[Lyrics and Song](#)

[Live version](#)



Jean-Louis Murat: Il neige (It's snowing)

from: *Toboggan* (2013)

[Song](#)

[Lyrics](#)

Translation:

It's snowing

It is snowing on the mountains, on the wide plain.

How the animals are afraid of you!

It has been snowing for days, it is your secret.

It is snowing, some higher being

is weaving himself a cap of snow.

We will never reach the estuary again.

Nothing has ever brought us such sorrow like you,

Nothing has ever brought you such sorrow like you.

It is snowing, all our rocks are already covered,



all the yards, all the trees*,
the whole nature has buried itself [in snow].

It is snowing, nothing remains but a great silence,
a knife on the bare skin.
My heart drifts into a state of omniscience.

Nothing has ever ...

It is snowing, a hunter crouching in the snow,
the maw of the wolf in the darkness ...
What do you want to know?

Nothing has ever ...

* Literally: beeches



DDT: Metyel' (Snow flurry / Blizzard)

from: *Mir nomjer nol'* (World No. 1; 1999)

Song

Lyrics

Live version

Translation:

Snow flurry

Crowned by the moon,
like a sublime beginning,
like a victory that is not mine,
like a fragile hope ...

Outside the window
the snow flurry drifts like a wall.
All life is blown away in it,
loosened from every anchorage
and deprived of all warmth.

Play as best as you can, play,
close your eyes and turn around.
Don't disappear, but thaw out
and wipe away all traces.
Make my window warm,
powder the fields with spring.
Don't hesitate – unfold yourself completely,
then you will be with me forever.

The street lamps grope towards the ground,
the candle flickers towards the sky.
In the snow the traces of dawn appear –



the wings of a fallen star.

So what, blizzard – pour in,
we'll drink the time on an empty stomach.
I'll sing, and you will howl to the beat
of lost things.

Play as best you can ...

Careful, not so fast!
Down by the barge trapped in the ice
with the white wind on its chest
a freezing soul is waiting.



Zemfira (Semfira): Snyeg natschnyotsya (It begins to snow)

from: *Spasibo* (Thank you), 2007

[Song](#) (video clip)

[Lyrics](#)

Translation:

It begins to snow

I can see you.
I can hear you.
Across the rooftops you hurry to me,
anxious to be late.

The eyes turn to the sky,
it's been half an eternity ...
Give me your heart,
Sit down and let us wait

when the snow begins to fall,
when the snow begins to fall.

I can see you.
I can hear you.

Tell me your secrets
and where to look for you

if the snow begins to fall,
begins to fall.

I can see you ...



Voskreseniye: Son / Snilos' mnye (I had a dream)

from: *Voskreseniye* 1

(extended version, 1980)

Song

Lyrics

Translation:

I had a dream



I had a dream last night ...
I dreamt that snow fell unexpectedly.
All of a sudden, the world was quiet and bright,
quiet and bright, tranquil and white with snow.
What a pity that this was only in my dreams!

I had a dream last night ...
I dreamt that over the silent city
a cloud was slowly drifting by,
a cloud of calm over the snow-white city.
What a pity that this was only in my dreams!

And now that I am awake again,
I live and yet do not live,
while I try to preserve the silence.
But the crazy earth day already rises
and sweeps me away.

I had a dream last night ...
I dreamt that for the first time in many years
happiness, for whatever reason, smiled at me,
an illusion of happiness in the rush of the years.
What a pity that this was only in my dreams!

I had a dream last night ...
I dreamt that all sorrow would vanish,
that the lonesome would meet,
meet and silently smile at each other.
What a pity that all this was only in my dreams!



Nautilus Pompilius: Utro Poliny (Polina's Morning)

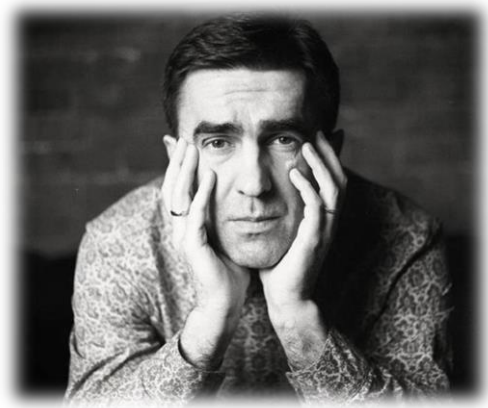
from: *Titanic* (1994)

[Song](#)

[Lyrics](#)

Translation:

Polina's Morning



Polina's hands are like a forgotten song
under sharp thorns.
Idle melodies revolve
like grains of dust above her head.
Drowsy eyes are waiting for the one
who enters and ignites the light in them.
Polina's morning will last 100 billion years.

And in all these years
I can hear her chest rising and falling,
and her breath makes the windows fog up.
And I do not regret that my path is so endless.
In her crystal bedroom it is always, always bright.

There are people who wait
and others who perish from their impatience.
But both are equally boring companions.
I love you for your expectation
waiting for what never can happen.

Polina's fingers are like candles in nocturnal candelabras.
Polina's tears have turned into a stream that never runs dry.
At the threshold of Polina's bedroom,
the twilight lingers indecisively.
Polina's morning will last 100 billion years.

And in all these years ...

Picture Credits

Cover: Albert Bierstadt (1830 – 1902): Winter in Yosemite (Wikimedia)

S. 4: Caspar David Friedrich (1774 – 1840): The winter / Monk in the snow (1807/08); from: Wolf, Georg Jacob / Glaspalast-Künstlerhilfe München (Hg.): Verlorene Meisterwerke Deutscher Romantiker, München 1931: Bruckmann.

S. 6: Alexej Savrasov (1830 – 1897): Winter landscape; Ivanovo, Museum of Art.

S. 9: Alexej Savrasov: Winter landscape (Wikimedia)

S. 20: Caspar David Friedrich: Winter landscape with church (1811); Dortmund, Museum for art and cultural history

S. 25: Pál Szinyei Merse (1845 – 1920): Winter (between 1901 and 1905); Budapest, Hungarian National Gallery

S. 28: Alexej Savrasov: Moonlit Night in the Village / Winter Night (1869); Volgograd, Museum of Fine Arts

S. 31: Claude Monet (1840 – 1926): Snow at Argenteuil (1874/75); National Gallery, London

Portraits of the artists:

Walther von der Vogelweide (ca. 1170 – 1230) in the Codex Manesse (between 1305 and 1315)

Hans Dinkelberg: **Sigrid "Syrah " Hausen**, singer of the band **Qntal**, performing at the 2008 Nox Obscura festival (Wikimedia)

Zach Klein: **Björk** at the Hurricane Festival, New York, July 2003 (Wikimedia)

Urmelbeauftragter: **Jennie Abrahamson** during a concert of the Peter Gabriel Back to Front Tour, April 2014, Frankfurt (Wikimedia)

Eric Koch: **Salvatore Adamo** in Rotterdam (Netherlands), May 1964 (Wikimedia)

Tullio Piacentini / Federico Zanni: **Sergio Endrigo**; Screenshot from the film *Questi pazzi, pazzi italiani* (1965); Wikimedia

Private Work: **Fabrizio de André** with a folk instrument (1975; Wikimedia)

David Desreumaux: **Lise Martin**; photo taken from: Desreumaux, David: [Lise Martin – Mettre au monde cette étoile qui danse](#). In: Hexagone Le Mag. La revue trimestrielle, April 2016

Martijn van de Streek: **Mariee Sioux** (November 2009; Wikimedia)

APB11: **Jean-Louis Murat** at the *Festival de Carcassonne*, July 2010 (Wikimedia; coloured in the original)

Levg: **Yuri Shevchuk**, frontman of the band **DDT**, at a concert in Caesarea/Israel, October 2012 (Wikimedia)

Marina Zakharova: **Zemfira** during a performance at the Olympic Park; Moscow, April 2016 (Wikimedia)

Ivan Kravtsov: The band **Voskreseniye** during studio recordings, January 2000 (Wikimedia)

Alexej Nikishin: **Vyacheslav Butusov**, frontman of the band **Nautilus Pompilius** (1982 – 1997), 2008 (Wikimedia)