

Great Circle

Safe Harbour, Why Leave?

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Homecoming

All texts by Nick Hart, except 'The Menace of the Call' which has been drawn from a poem by Ada Cambridge and another anon.

The *Sunday Times* Golden Globe Race was a non-stop, single handed round-the-world yacht race, held in 1968 -1969. No one had so far succeeded in accomplishing this epic voyage non-stop and solo.

Nine sailors set out, but only one finished, and it claimed the life, probably through suicide, of one of the entrants.

Based on the stories of three of the sailors, 'Great Circle' explores the extraordinary strength, passions and resolution of those who heard the siren call to pit themselves against the power of the world's most feared oceans – and of those who stayed behind, watching and waiting. The cantata reflects the triumph and the tragedy of sailors and families, storms and doldrums and the aching void of separation from human contact. That only one sailor finished the ordeal – Sir Robin Knox Johnston, who sailed into the history books – makes this a compelling narrative in its own right.

Safe Harbour

Safe harbour out to open seas,
Why leave?
Why chase the fickle breeze,
Deceive
Yourself that currents carry fate?
The wheel,
Hand held in moon-gripped state,
Is real,
Free willed but frozen in its course.
The beck
And call of sirens with the honeyed force
To wreck
The sailor less his deafening wax.
He sings
To harmonise the strength he lacks.
Just sings.

The Menace of The Call

Siren voices are heard
I hear the menace of the call,
To rope and rivet, wheel and mast.
Slack water stands quite still.
Unroped, I silent in my dream,
In hopeless apathy.
A tug, the gentlest pull;
The first declining moment of the tide
Draws nibbling ripples of this urgent call
Across the vacant page.

Let go your ropes,
Leave dreams and hopes

In the almighty hand of fate.

Let go your fears,

Your anguish, your tears,

And let the call dictate.

Let go your ropes,

Leave dreams and hopes

In the almighty hand of fate.

Let go your fears,

Your anguish, your tears,

And let the call to cast off the ropes:

Cast off your ropes

And all is in the slipstream

Of a turbulent delight.

For the wind is always behind you,

The journey holds nothing of dread.

Look back if you dare or you must do

For sunlit adventure's ahead.

At anchor the ropes rap their rattle

And sing in furled sails to be free;

The chain chaffs the block and the tackle

Yearning to reach for the sea.

Go Safely!

I am your wife, your daughter, your mother
Who gave you life as you gave me meaning;
I am your friend, your sister, your lover,
The one, like a fool, who believes in your dreaming.

Chorus

Go safely, Go swiftly,
And take our love with you.
Go safely, Go! Go! Go!
Go safely, Go swiftly,
And know we sail with you.
Go safely, Go! Go! Go!

I am your father, your son and your brother,
I held your bike as you wobbled along.
I am your mate as we sank 'just another',
I am the club to which you belong.

Chorus

Be brave, we say, from the bliss of warm comfort,
Vanquish our dread as you live out our fears.
You carry all our hopes and ambitions,
We hear dark storming and stifle our tears.

Chorus

Alone Now

Alone now, in this darkest star-bright night,
The white flecked wave is hissing 'gainst the bow;
It scores across the ocean's steel black skin.
I am alone, I am alone now.

Phosphorescence, showers of light, beneath the creaking, creaking hull,
Its colour, keener than the day could ever make,
Paints whorls and spirals in the shimmered tissue of the sea.
A galaxy of ocean stars are seething in our wake.

I am alone now.

Clip The Cringle

Full and by
Jib, genoa, yankee, mizzen, stay,
Block, baggywrinkle, making way.
Clip the cringles,
Haul the halyard,
Winch the sheet and sail her full and by.
Feel the helm begin to quiver
As the boat bends to her task,
Ease the main and free her headsails,
As she gives all we ask.

From Psalm 107, The Storm

Who am I who goes to sea in a ship?

And who dares do business in this great water?

Who am I?

I see the works of the Lord

And his wonders of the deep.

Does he command and raise the mighty wind?

That lifts on high those mighty waves?

They mount up to Heaven and go down again to the depth.

My soul is melted because of trouble,

I reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man.

Who am I?

Am I? At my wit's end?

I cry to the Lord in my trouble.

And he brings me out of my distress,

He makes the storm a calm.

The waves once more are still.

And I am glad that I'm becalmed.

Carry My Love

A wind has kissed me, brushed me in my sleep,
It stroked my cheek, ran fingers through my hair.
I felt your love borne on its dove-soft wings -
A tender breeze that whispers my despair.
I hear our child cry in his pillowed dark,
The distant mewling call, the kittiwake
Whose endless, easeful glide on curling wave
Brings you to me in dreams and as I wake.

Chorus

The stars that light the lonely night,
The bitter-sweet of the stinging sea,
Your joy, your touch, your eyes' delight
Are all of you, Oh please remember me.
And carry my love, carry my love,
Oh please remember me.

The sun that warms me, playing on my skin
Like love's hot breath, like fire within my soul,
Burns arid on my shell of solitude.
I move with you in every ocean roll.
The day begins to dim, the dying rays
Cast shadows on my images of you.
Can I still feel the truth of your caress?
The night sky's black, I'm indigo and blue.

Chorus

The Sun Is Over The Yardarm

All the sailors referred to occasional 'sundowners' and at Christmas a bit more as well. And their thoughts would turn to the pleasures denied the solitary sailors, followed by maudlin introspection.

It's six o'clock somewhere for certain
And time to break out the rum,
The Doldrums are driving me crazy,
I've started to cry for my mum!
A cruise ship passed by to starboard
And all aboard waved with delight;
But all I sensed was the perfume
And what I was missing at night.

Chorus

Oh, the sun is over the yardarm,
My boat's in a sulk on the sea,
My head is quite numb from the chart work,
I'm locked up - and want to be free.

Shall I serve drinks in the galley
Or lie in my cockpit and dream?
Or shall I stand watch on the foredeck
With a bottle of Bristol Dry Cream?
Do dolphins turn into mermaids?
How would the small talk begin?
How sweet and welcome their kisses -
It's time for another stiff gin!

Chorus

What did she mean when I left her:
'Follow your wandering star.'

How do I know if she's waiting
Or finding her own Shangri-La.
What kind of life is the future
When everything now is on pause?
And if I come last, or worse, second,
Will I just be her lost cause?

Chorus

Oh, the sun is over the yardarm,
My boat's in a sulk on the sea,
My head is quite numb from the chart work,
I'm locked up, tied up, lonely and want to be free.

Why Finish For Finishing's Sake?

The celebrated French sailor, Bernard Moitessier, found himself in a very strong position in the race and looked very likely to win. He made the extraordinary decision to continue sailing round the world in his beloved yacht Joshua and ended up in Tahiti - the longest solo non-stop journey ever made at that time. He left behind his wife Francoise and her three children.

He was a true sea wanderer and mystic; his log books include:

Drunk with joy, full of life, I was flying among the stars now...

Together my heart and hands held the only solution

and it was so luminous so obvious, so enormous, too,

that it became transcendent, a non-stop journey around the world!...

All Joshua and I wanted was to be left alone with ourselves ...

You do not ask a tame seagull why it needs to disappear

from time to time toward the open sea. It goes, that's all....

Worn out by fatigue and emotion, I fall into bed ...

I am tremendously tired, yet I feel crammed with dynamite,

ready to level the whole world and forgive it everything.

Today I played and won. My beautiful boat ... is as beautiful as ever.'

There are two terrible things for a man: not to have fulfilled his dream, and to have fulfilled it.

From Plymouth to Plymouth - what kind of a journey is that?

Text for this movement:

Brimful of joy's intensity,

Intoxicant delight,

Transported through enormity,

The stars and I fly silver through the night.

I no longer know how far I have gone,

Nor what I have left in my wake.

The truth lies in azimuth, sextant and sight,

Why finish for finishing's sake?

Safe harbour? No, the restless sea!

Return home? What becomes of me?

Here where my boat and my soul are as one,

The quest is for freedom! The race is dead. Done.

Safe harbour is my beautiful,

My faithful, certain craft.

Safe harbour is the white bow wave,

Uncertainty lies aft.

I am at one now.

Hypothesis

Found in the margin of Donald Crowhurst's logbook

were these words of Einstein:

*That light requires the same time to traverse the path A to M
as for path B to M is in reality neither a supposition nor a
hypothesis about the physical nature of light, but a stipulation
which I can make of my own free will in order to arrive at a
definition of simultaneity.*

*Crowhurst went on to write 12000 words of mystical and mathematical
philosophy as he descended into madness, believing that he could leave his body
and that he alone understood a great cosmic truth which he could be at one with.
His last words written, presumably before he took his own life, include:*

*Now is revealed the true nature and purpose and power
of the game offence I am*

I am what I am and I see the nature of my offence ...

...It is finished -

It is finished

IT IS THE MERCY

Lyrics for this movement:

Hypothesis is not a supposition,
A definition of simultaneity,
Free will allows for simple stipulation
Of synchronisation with transcendent deity.
I am the end of a beginning
And hear the call
The menace of the call
The menace or the mercy
I am, I am, I am at one with all
I am at one, the mercy and the menace,
The beginning of an end to it all.

Widowmaker

A wordless musical reflection of loss, the tune based on 'Go Safely!'

The Needle Points

While Bernard Moitessier sailed off to Tahiti his wife Françoise remained at home with her three children - her life on hold. She was reportedly very understanding about her husband's desertion, but she was equally driven to travel. So she built her own boat and undertook some very long solo journeys herself.

The needle points its shortwave finger on the dial,
Its crackling silence with no echo of regret.
He holds the wheel and knows the course his spirit steers,
He's travelling by a star that only he can see
While I am held within my own four lonely walls,
Adrift, at sea, and waiting helplessly.

C'est moi, je suis perdu,
C'est moi, qui ignore ce milieu,
Ma vie, dessine une carte vide,
Sans voie, ni joie, ni dieu.

But I will take a boat that's only me for me,
I'll sail away and find my own true solitude;
The ocean's vast and there is room for me as well,
I'll set my sail whichever way the wind will blow.
Then I'll be held within a compass of my own,
And make a world that only I can know.

C'est moi, je m'suis trouvé,
C'est moi qui connais bien ce lieu.
Ma vie n'est pas une carte vide,
Ma voie, ma vie, mon dieu.

Called To Be The Man

Robin Knox-Johnston writes of his belief that only a British sailor would gain the supreme achievement of being the first to sail non-stop around the globe, following an illustrious maritime tradition. He felt that it was his destiny to be that man.

His craft was the solid traditional Norwegian gaff cutter Suhaili, a tried and tested design, unlike some of the more experimental and downright unseaworthy yachts of his rivals.

It is a very British thing that I am called to do!
There is no other outcome in the plan.
I am the tortoise or the turtle,
Not the trimarans that hurtle.
I believe that I am called to be the man.

It is a test of man's resolve to sail around the world.
Our boat and plans are equal in the measure.
The storms that spared me, left me spinning,
Strengthened my belief in winning,
The pain is there to justify the pleasure.

Safe harbour? It's the steady course.
Return home? With no regrets or remorse?
I never gave a backward glance,
The two of us in one delighting dance.

It is a very British thing that I am called to do!
There is no other outcome in the plan.
I believe that I am called to be the man.

Homecoming

And he brings me out of my distress,

He makes the storm a calm.
The waves once more are still.
Suhaili carried me alone,
So alone,
And I am home.

The race is done and only one has made it home,
Can claim the legend and the champion's burnished robe;
Suhaili's fame as certain as a Victory,
While others lie in pieces round the lonely globe.
I steered my course and kept my faith with log and time,
My friends - the wind, the sun and ancient rime.
The sea has let me go,
The sea, a shadow on my soul;
She keeps her deeper meaning close,
And how she takes her toll.

It is a very special thing that I was called to do!
There was no other outcome in the plan.
First home! First home!
There was no other outcome in the plan!

The sea has let me go,
The sea, a shadow on my soul;
She keeps her deeper meaning close,
Of who must pay the toll.

(small group of children)

The sea, he had to go!
The sea, a shadow on my soul.
She keeps her deeper meaning close
And how we pay the toll.