

Ewan Maccoll

"The Joy Of Living"

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Farewell you northern hills, you mountains all goodbye
Moorland and stony ridges, crags and peaks goodbye
Glyder Fach farewell, Cul Beag, Scafell, cloud-bearing
Suilven
Sun warmed rock and the cold of Bleaklow's frozen sea
The snow and the wind and the rain of hills and
Mountains
Days in the sun and the tempered wind and the air like
Wine
And you drink and you drink till you're drunk
On the joy of living

Farewell to you my love, my time is almost done
Lie in my arms once more until the darkness comes
You filled all my days, held the night at bay, dearest
Companion
Years pass by and they're gone with the speed of birds
In flight
Our life like the verse of a song heard in the
Mountains
Give me your hand then love and join your voice with
Mine
We'll sing of the hurt and pain
And the joy of living

Farewell to you my chicks, soon you must fly alone
Flesh of my flesh, my future life, bone of my bone
May your wings be strong, may your days be long, safe
Be your journey
Each of you bears inside of you the gift of love
May it bring you light and warmth and the pleasure of
Giving
Eagerly savour each new day and the taste of it's
mouth
Never lose sight of the thrill
And the joy of living

Take me to some high place of heather, rock and ling
Scatter my dust and ashes, feed me to the wind
So that I will be part of all you see, the air you are

Breathing

I'll be part of the curlew's cry and the soaring hawk
The blue milkwort and the sundew hung with diamonds
I'll be riding the gentle wind that blows through your
Hair
Reminding you how we shared
In the joy of living

Mountain references: Glyder Fach is in Snowdonia,
North
Wales; Cul Beag and Suilven are in Wester Ross in
Scotland; Scafell in the English Lake District;
Bleaklow in the Derbyshire Peak District (near Kinder).

Ling is a variety of heather, milkwort and sundew also
Grow on such mountainous areas.

MacColl said about the song in a book of poetry (1989):
The last time I climbed Suilven, or to be more precise,
Failed to climb it, was in my seventy-second year. I
Was with my wife and fourteen-year-old daughter Kitty.
"You go ahead," I told them, "I'll meet you at the
Top." But 'the flesh is bruckle, the fiend is slee',
And I hadn't gone more than half the distance when my
Legs refused to carry me further. My body had given
me
Plenty of warnings over the last seven or eight years
But this was the final notice. My mountain days were
Over. I sat down on a rock feeling utterly desolate.
The feeling lasted for several days and then my grief
And feeling of loss gave way to nostalgia and I wrote
The Joy of Living. In an odd kind of way it helped me
To come to terms with my old age. (Ewan MacColl in
Bell, Poetry 104)

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