

Classic Poetry Series

Johannes Ewald
- poems -

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Johannes Ewald(1743-1781)

Johannes Ewald (18 November 1743 – 17 March 1781) was a Danish national dramatist and poet.

Ewald, normally regarded as the most important Danish poet of the 2nd half of the 18th Century, led a short and troubled life, marked by alcoholism and poor health. The son of a Copenhagen pietist vicar and fatherless from an early age, he was educated as a theologian, but his real interest was in literature. An unhappy love for a girl, Arendse, inspired his later poetry deeply (his description of this love is the first "modern" Danish poetic treatment of the subject). After a time as a soldier and war hero in the Prussian Seven Years' War he was 1760 brought back seriously weakened. The following years were spent living as a bohemian and writing poetry in Copenhagen; they were also a time of alcoholism and conflicts with his mother and stepfather (for most of his life he was under their tutelage and he never took up a profession). His lifestyle had much in common with his contemporary Johan Herman Wessel, but, as writers they differed greatly.

From 1773-75 he had a rather happy convalescence at Rungstedlund (later the home of Karen Blixen). Ewald wrote some of his best verses during this time, but a conflict with his family led to his removal to the small North Zealand town of Humlebæk (1775-77), which depressed him and worsened his alcoholism. Finally, friends brought him to Søbækshus, near Helsingør, and where he lived for some years under growing public interest and literary fame, until his early death, caused by drinking and rheumatism.

Quite until the days of romanticism Ewald was considered the unsurpassed Danish poet. Today he is probably more lauded than read; though considered classics, only few of his works have become popular.

As an author Ewald is a prominent representative of Danish sentimentalism but at the same time a forerunner of romanticism. His main inspiration was German poetry (Klopstock), but British writers like Edward Young and Sterne, as well as Rousseau, are obvious inspirations as well. Violent expressions of feeling (happiness, sorrow and love) are typical in his writing; these elements are apparently spontaneous but, at the same time, deliberately and artificially drawn up. Behind this a clear pietist tune is felt.

Several Ewald poems are Danish classics. He had his break-through with a melodious and expressive commemorative poem at the death of King Frederick V

(1766). The famous Rungsted's Lyksaligheder (1773 - "The Happiness of Rungsted") is an ode to the Creator. (Rungsted is a city on Sjælland) Ode til Sjælen ("For the Soul") is a worthy hailing of Man's uniqueness. Til min M*** ("For my M(oltke)) is a grateful praise for a noble benefactor, during the unhappy Humlebæk period. The hymn Udrust Dig, helt fra Golgatha ("Arm Yourself, Hero of Golgatha", 1781), practically written on his death-bed, must be mentioned. Minor humorous verses and satires are less known today.

Just as important are Ewald's dramas. Ewald was the first to rely heavily on Norse mythology, a trend which begins to point towards romanticism. He wrote the plays Rolf Krage in 1770, Balders Død (Eng. transl. "The Death of Balder", 1889) in 1773, and Fiskerne (The Fishermen) in 1779. From the latter play one song is still remembered by most Danes: King Christian stood by the lofty mast that shares the position of being the national anthem of Denmark (the other is Oehlenschläger's "There is a lovely Land").

Ewald's main prose work was the unfinished autobiography Levnet og Meninge ("Life and Opinions", written 1774-78, published 1804-08).

Aftenen

Indsvøbt i al sin Skræk og vred, og vild,
Nedbruser han fra Bjergene — O flye,
Du Roesens og de spæde Liliers Ven! —
O skjærts ey meer saa tryg med Søelunds Høy! —
Din Fiende kommer! — Flye du gyldne Soel! —
Fra Helsinge — fra Østens nøgne Fjeld
Nedbruser han — hans Aandedræt er Storm —
Og huul og sørgelig, som Bølgens Lyd,
Der tørner mod en ensom Klippes Fod;
Er Lyden af hans Komme — Glædens Spor —
Hvert yndigt Malerie af Grønt og Guld —
Hver Gnist af Skovens skummende Christal —
Hvert flygtigt Glimt af Bølgens sølvblaae Ryg,
Har alt hans store Skygge sletted ud! —
Bag ved den Morder er Naturen død! —
O flye du Glædens Ven! — o skjærts dog ey
Saalænge med Sophies gyldne Spiir! —
Forlænge kysser du hver enkelt Busk,
Hver vestlig Høy, hvormed du drevst din Skjærts! —
De rødme ved dit kjælnes Afskeeds-Kys! —
Snart skal de blegne! — som den stolte Møe,
Hvis Hjerte Helte kun tør trettes om —
Hvi sidder hun, saa ensom i sin Port —
Saa tankefuld? — Hvi løfter hun saa tit,
De store Øyne; dem, som Dyd, og Mod,
Og Viisdom, og endnu jeg veed ey hvad,
Saa yndigt blandes i — Hvi løfter hun
Dem smagtende saa tit mod Bjergets Vey? —
Hun venter ham — sit Hjertes skjulte Haab —
Sin stille Tankes Ven — den unge Helt —
Hun skildrer ham sig seyerrig — beladt
Med Jeters Rov — og alt tillaver hun
Et meer end venligt Smiil; og Helte Sang —
Og paa sit Skjød udbreder Kampens Møe,
Det bunte, det med Guld isprængte Skjærf,
Som hun har virked til sit Hjertes Helt —
Nu kommer han — han kommer! --- ha, han flyer! --
Nu blusser hendes Kind — Hun skjuler vred
Det Guldisprængte Skjærf — Men ak hun seer

Den sorte Jette, som forfølger ham
Med høyt opløftet Sværd — Nu zitrer hun —
Nu svømmer hun i Graad — Hun blegner — Flye
Guuldhaarede, før Jetten knuser dig! —
Saa rødme Leyre Høye ved din Flugt —
Og vrede skjule de der' gyldne Pragt,
Som hver for sig udbredte dig til Lyst;
Du bunte Høyes Elsker! — Men de see
Din sorte Fiende — Skrækkelig og vild
Forfølger han der' Ven i lange Skrit —
Da zittre de — da svømme de i Dug —
Snart skal de blegne! — Flye du elskte Soel,
Før Jetten naaer dig! — Guul er Jettens Hjelm,
Som Dødens Farve — Fra dens høye Kam
Nedsvæver Busken, smudsig rød og bleg,
I tynde Streifer af hans brede Ryg! —
Sort er hans Skjold, som Sorgen — Som det Floer,
Bag hvilket Enken græder — Skrækkeligt,
Som Almagts Sløer, hvormed den skjuler sig,
Naar den i Harm tillaver Dødens Ild —
Et ildrødt Meteor, er Jettens Sværd —
O see det lyne bag hans Hjelm! — og flye,
Du milde Kjæmper med de gyldne Haar! —
Ewald.

Johannes Ewald

Aftenen. Et Fragment

Johannes Ewald

Aftenen. Et Fragment (Ii)

Johannes Ewald

Anledning Af Universitetets Indvielse For 300 Aar Siden

Johannes Ewald

Arie

Johannes Ewald

Arioso [en Bonde Seer Fra Ploven]

Johannes Ewald

Arioso [en Søemand, Med Et Modigt Bryst]

Johannes Ewald

Cantata For Raadhuus-Strædets Concert

Johannes Ewald

Cantate Opført Ved Universitetets Sædvanlige Høitidelighed I Anledning Af Kongens Fødselsdag 1779

Johannes Ewald

Cantate Ved Jubileet Den 11 May 1779 I

Johannes Ewald

Claus Rimers Gravskrift

Johannes Ewald

Da Den Høysalige Konge Blev Udført

Johannes Ewald

Da Jeg Var Syg

Johannes Ewald

Den Fornuftige Datter

Johannes Ewald

En Aandelig Sang

Johannes Ewald

En Passions-Sang [stabat Mater]

Johannes Ewald

Epigram

Johannes Ewald

Eselet Og Bonden

Johannes Ewald

Et Glimt Fra Tiden Ind I Evigheden

Johannes Ewald

Et Hengivent Ønske

Johannes Ewald

Fabel Hønen Og Kyllingerne

Johannes Ewald

Følelser Ved Den Hellige Nadvere

Johannes Ewald

Fra Et Brev Til Moderen

Johannes Ewald

Fragment [er Det Kun Lyst Som Viise Glædes Ved]

Johannes Ewald

Fragment [før Kunsten Kom Var Pragt Og Orden]

Johannes Ewald

Fragment [hellige, Hellige, Hellige Gud]

Johannes Ewald

Fragment [indhyllet I Mig Selv Og Taus Og Mørk Som Du]

Johannes Ewald

Fragment [lær Mig]

Johannes Ewald

Fragment [skjønt Himlen Taug Og Dagens Hersker Smilte]

Johannes Ewald

Fragment [svulmende Vellyst, Du Som Mit Bryst Af Leer]

Johannes Ewald

Gratulation Da Seigr. Peder Huulegaard

Johannes Ewald

Haab Og Erindring

Johannes Ewald

Hedningernes Frelse

Johannes Ewald

I Abrahamsons Stambog

Johannes Ewald

I Anledning Af Den Sal. Mad. Jacobsens Dødsfald

Johannes Ewald

I Anledning Af Hans Excellence Hr. Grev Haxthausens Afgang Fra Søde Etaten

Johannes Ewald

I Anledning Af Hendes Kongelige Majestæts Dronning Juliana Maria Høie Fødsels-Fest

Johannes Ewald

I Anledning Af Hr. Palludan Og Jfr. Lønborg's Mariage

Johannes Ewald

Impromptu

Johannes Ewald

Indføds-Retten

Johannes Ewald

Indskrift Ved En Fest I Samme Anledning

Johannes Ewald

Indskrifter Ved Festen

Johannes Ewald

Johannes Ewald's Last Poetic Sentiments Some Hours Prior To His Death

To arms, hero of Calvary!
Lift high your bright-red shield;
For sin and dread – as you can see –
By force would have me yield.

In righteous ire your sword outstretch
'Gainst those who you defy!
Hurl from the light – and me, poor wretch –
Such foes before I die.

Safe in your hand I then will view
My death without dismay;
And my saved spirit offer you
On its now unmade clay.

Oh Lord! rest and relief vouchsafe;
Though if you would chastise me,
Teach me endurance – prayer – and faith,
Let my heart CHRIST suffice me.

Johannes Ewald

Klage-Sang Af En Bekiendt Ved Hr. Haagensens Grav

Johannes Ewald

Klage-Sang Over Skiødehunden: Maske

Johannes Ewald

Morgen-Sang

Johannes Ewald

Natte-Tanker

Johannes Ewald

Nytaarsdigt Til En Fader (I)

Johannes Ewald

Nytaarsdigt Til En Fader (Ii)

Johannes Ewald

Nytaarsdigt Til En Moder

Johannes Ewald

Ode Til Arve-Prindsen, Den 11. October 1776

Johannes Ewald

Ode Til Printz Friderich, Da Han Fornyede Sin Daabes Pagt

Johannes Ewald

Ønske Til Jomfrue Cecilia Wormstrup, Paa Hendes Fødsels-Dag

Johannes Ewald

Over Andreas Schyth

Johannes Ewald

Over Hr. Hermanny

Johannes Ewald

Over Johannes Kinast

Johannes Ewald

Over M. B**

Johannes Ewald

Over M. Th**

Johannes Ewald

Paa Kongens Fødsels-Dag

Johannes Ewald

Paaskrift Paa En Kaffekande

Johannes Ewald

Philet En Fortæling

Johannes Ewald

Poenitenten. En Ode

Johannes Ewald

Poenitenten. Et Fragment

Johannes Ewald

Recitativ Og Aria

Johannes Ewald

Rimbrev Til L. Bensen

Johannes Ewald

Romance [en Edder-Fugl Var Haardt I Klemme]

Johannes Ewald

Romance [kong Christjan Stoed Ved Høien Mast]

Johannes Ewald

Romance [Iiden Gunver Vandrer Som Helst I Qveld]

Johannes Ewald

Rungstedts Lyksaligheder. En Ode.

Johannes Ewald

Sang I Anledning Af Kongens Fødselsdag 1778

Johannes Ewald

Sørge-Digt Over Frue Rahbek

Johannes Ewald

Sørge-Sange I Christiansborgs Slots-Kirke

Johannes Ewald

Taarer Ved Herr Frederik Von Arnsbachs Grav

Johannes Ewald

Tanker Da Arveprinds Frederik Giennemgik Smaa- Koppernes Indpodning

Johannes Ewald

Tanker I Anledning Af Frøken Sophia Dorthea V. Holstein's Dødsfald

Johannes Ewald

Tanker I Anledning Af Hr. Hans Ebbesen...

Johannes Ewald

Tanker I Anledning Af Sr. Huulgaards Dødelige Afgang

Johannes Ewald

Tanker Ved Graven Af Den Unge Jens Sanderschov

Johannes Ewald

Tanker Ved Salig Hr. Ulrich Friderich Suhms Grav

Johannes Ewald

Til Cecilia Wormstrup

Johannes Ewald

Til Generalinde Elisabeth Moltke

Johannes Ewald

Til Hans Kongelige Høihed Arveprinds Frederik

Johannes Ewald

Til Herr Berling Og Jfr. Godiche

Johannes Ewald

Til Hr. Find Og Jfr. Lund

Johannes Ewald

Til Hr. Hiersing Og Jfr. Malling

Johannes Ewald

Til Jomfrue Anna Hedevig Jacobsen

Johannes Ewald

Til Min M** Paa Hans Broders Fødselsdag

Johannes Ewald

Udrust Dig, Helt Fra Golgotha

Johannes Ewald

Under Frue Caroline Walthers Portrait

Johannes Ewald

Ved En Fest Paa Kronprindsens Fødselsdag

Johannes Ewald

Vers

Johannes Ewald

Vers Paa Et Sølv Skildt

Johannes Ewald

Verse mageren

Johannes Ewald

Vinteren, Et Fragment

Johannes Ewald

When I Was Ill

Beatus ille, qui procul negotiis – Horace:

Happy the man, who far from life's allure
Is not too rich – and likewise not too poor
Whose soul untroubled then can contemplate,
The being too that it should emulate!
Should fools' acclaim and glory's empty shell –
Should heaps of gleaming metal and their spell –
Should golden chains – a slave that has been crowned –
The world – as dear as our own soul be found?
Why did your once strong soul sink helplessly,
You first of men – deep – to inconstancy?
Why did you quail at the Almighty's hand?
Distraction your wise spirit not withstand?
For all distraction marks the soul's demise,
At anger's voice all thoughts are scattered wide
In great confusion they now reel about
Midst things both good and bad weave in and out,
Soul hold to blessedness! – 'tis yours today!
By dust you are from heaven called away!
Chimera swallows all the dust you saw!
Your own thoughts you do not know any more!
Ah! – when devotion – when my prayers are warm,
When I uplifted – high – on mercy's arm,
Spread God abroad – and feel divinely blessed,
Why does Dorine then come to my breast?
And when I found pure love in its full flush
The fire at which no wise man e'er would blush,
Why does a thought of Homer then wrench free
My soul from that fair Helen whom I see?
Ah! were our thoughts but constant, good and wise
Our soul would find – and stay in paradise!
For blessedness reflection can espy
It feels it but is not attached thereby.
Oh child of Adam! – oh unhappy one!
Why do you seek distraction you should shun?
Why are you faint? – Behold the maelstrom – quake!
Think now! – is not your precious self at stake?

Happy the man who's not by clink so gay
Of brimful glass – nor by the sirens' lay
Nor the enslaving voice of gold – nor clash
Of murd'rous steel, nor by some herald brash
Nor false friends' mocking tones – nor wretches' tears
The tedium of bores – fools' counsel's snares
Nor by foes' mighty roar – or weak men's cries,
Deprived of God – joy – sense – himself likewise!
Welcome you poison raging in my breast!
Welcome all pain that has my joy suppressed!
And lack – you who it was took my last friend,
Welcome! – since you gave me myself again.
Since my Creator only can know pure delight,
And without others' help be happy quite,
I will then honour him – my self stay nigh,
Forget all fame – and gold – each roar – and cry!

Johannes Ewald