

SEA-FARER

Of this we can be sure -
The world is the world, the light is light,
This silence a perfection and not merely an overture,
And if the Buddha's poverty is neither fictional not optional
Then my ownership of the day, or this portion of it, is equal to his
And the first responsibility the world places on us
Who would be human to ourselves and those we love

I go to the garden –a decision activating what will follow
Which for the moment, simply states *you may leave or you may stay*
And I stay in silence and satisfaction that the moment cannot be bartered
For less than what it is

Once we spoke of soul where now we speak of mind
But it's the same elusive withinness we're attempting to locate,
The ley-line on which we construct the structures of a poem
That it fortify the life which wrote and reads it.
Knowing this you know you're in Anglo-Saxon territory
Or the sparse stone cells of the Gaelic annals
Where you are a white salad grub feeding the instinctive necessity

Yet now you can write the opposite of what you've written and both
propositions will be true
However this is not the spirit's weariness -
It's a prompting, not always satisfied, which intrigues us
Sometimes to the point of exhaustion
That we guard against all thievery
For what we have known of joy is precious to us and conversation is our
rightful human custom

Yet Pound (and let us forgive him his devils) was right –
The future is hard
The evidence is everywhere and disconcerting though we never get used to it
No more than we do to the fact that grave-diggers who smirk and spit in
their hands and joyfully practise a ghastly trade
Are, without exception or excuse, our brothers
And even while the rivers are frozen and trawlers marooned at their
moorings
Sea-birds continue to preen their feathers to an immaculate gloss in
indifference to our narratives

Life is hard and language is hard and mastery as difficult as it is elusive
Even there at the harbour where our words are knotted in salt and sails
That among sea-angels joy some durable song be ours

Martin Burke