

Uroboros

Some islands are no more than those we see
on summer evenings—clouds beyond the glass
that shape archipelagos of light, and gloss
our storm-beaten dream. Others feel wintry
and real—have motorbikes, are sanctuary
to dogma, gull, anthrax; a royal house;
Thelwell's ponies; or Muir's heraldic horse...
Though John Donne rings in our ears at the ferry
and bridge, tolling the mainland, still our need
for solitude keeps pressing here where crowds
are pasted up against shopfronts while cars
tourney and quest for space. The errant creed
is "we move on". But on islands, all roads
return to meet themselves, their one route ours.

NOTE: "Uroboros" is the ancient symbol of a snake biting its tail.

Today's Imperative

after Horace, Ode 1:7

Others have herblife, bogland, the bird sanctuary.
Or manmade canals and urban decay.

And they have international flights of fancy too:
But wherever they go,

It all looks and sounds the same to me,
Mountains, some work, a nice sunrise that none of the other
tourists see

Or an epiphany that signals a deeper
Engagement with the local patois/native literature.

Then there are the argotnauts
Who labour in the interstices of a language, or two at most;

And that crowd whose ambition is to introduce gender
To the reader who hasn't got one on her:

Long warm-ups, agreed movements from a to b, and put up the
shutters
With a lyrical turn or various littleknown fabrics and figures,

Such as you often find in those who use family detail as glitter
To stud the rough black rock of their fictions.

And I like all this, but
It doesn't live in me, it doesn't wake me up in my skin at night.

I'd rather sing to you about what's imperative,
So, listen. Take your mind off the stresses and anxiety of life

And whether you're in a southern town
Like Cork or Montpellier, or even Washington or Rome—

Go pour yourself a glass of wine.
Now. Imagine the kind of man who trusts himself to fortune

And says: "Let us go wherever it takes us";
Who says: "We've heard that a better life awaits us *and* we've
seen worse.

Today, banish worry, exile it, the night's young now
And soon we'll be back to the grind, in fact maybe tomorrow..."