

A Dream

Martin Robertson

Something withheld him from lifting the spade to strike
the white-faced tall shopkeeper with the black shock-hair
phoning the police to fetch him in the little shop
in the narrow alley.

But he escaped from the alley,
pursued by police and by the shopkeeper shouting
a list of his crimes. And then the shopkeeper's voice
was the voice of his old bawd, ugly and thin,
crying her sorrow that all his mistresses loved him,
even the little girls she had got for him,
loved him and understood him, she loved him herself,
but he loved only himself. . . voice failing in tears.

And now, alone on the fells, companioned only
by the long sharp line dividing (dun green from black)
rough immemorial pasture from new plough,
laid face on arm he wept—sobbing waves
of hot tears washing the weight of sin and sorrow
away from the heart.

And heart and tears were mine,
as hand on spade in the alley-shop was mine,
my feet struggling from my own pursuing voices
which broke in my own tears.

I woke from tears
dry-eyed to the puzzling presence of a dream.