

The Sheiling

Silverdale

nr. Carnforth.

20th. June 1923.

Dear Frederick Carter,

How scandalous and altogether graceless of me. I can only assure you that I appear so because I thought I had acknowledged your prints. Let me thank you again — to make quite sure — for the large pleasure ~~of~~ they give me, and for the honour you do me in making me a depository of them: I trust they will find many admirers in my house.

It is an especial delight to me that such a fine attempt to reinstate ideal art among us should be made by a fellow Yorkshireman — a fact which is another strength to my thesis that the artistic impulse of Southern England, the cradle of our original civilisation, is exhausted and withering; and that the ~~real~~ centre of gravity has shifted in all things to the industrial North, where aesthetics are still nascent and everywhere a deep blind instinct for the arts is stirring which might break into a marvellous fecundity if our tremendous Northern human force could be focussed in that direction: I like to think that such fellows as you and I are forerunners and sign-posts. And perhaps I am most ~~of~~ delighted of all to think that these portents of yours have come out of

that old Bradford which was once the very City of Dreadful  
Night to me —

"It is full strange to him who hears and feels  
while wandering in some deserted street  
The booming and the jar of ponderous wheels...."  
You know the lines. They always make me think of  
Hall Ings at 7 o'clock of a November night.

I believe that most of our modern art has gone  
wrong because it has not a sufficient subject-matter  
and tries to fudge it out by proclaiming that it does not  
need one; and that some great belief or ideal to be  
expressed is the only source of great art. But at the  
same time I believe equally that when a work of art  
is achieved it is not at all valuable for the belief it  
expresses, but only by the significant beauty which it  
achieves.

So that I have to confess to you that I feel sure  
the exposition of your mystical doctrine will not help  
you art to acceptance, and that you would serve your  
art better ~~to~~ if you were to let it stand by itself  
without explanation. I ought to confess to you  
too that astrology and the other things that are so  
dear to you do not mean anything to me, and that  
I disbelieve in some of them ardently; but then I  
do not believe in the Greek religion which impelled  
Aeschylus to produce the dramas which sweep over  
me in august majesty and seem to me still the  
greatest productions of the human spirit; nor in

\* And I feel that mystical doctrines  
can only find full expression in complete  
terms of eternal nature.

Blake's mystical doctrine which impelled him to 2.  
produce masterpieces of graphic art and of poetry  
which are entirely satisfying to me and seem to me  
some of the greatest glories of our country: so I  
shall not question your beliefs ~~whenever~~ when they  
furnish you with satisfying and significant symbols  
of our life and experience to turn to the purposes of  
artistic creation.

The only reservation and criticism I have secretly  
made to myself on your work is that your faith has  
not so far given you such power ~~as~~ over the rest  
of nature as it has over the human form: you have  
not found such a noble interpretation of the life  
of the rocks in Lamentation as you have of that of the  
woman in front of them. But at all other points  
I feel great sympathy with the intention of these  
engravings; and Balance, The Dreamers, and  
Dionysia still stir my admiration as they did it  
first, and maintain ~~my~~ their power over my imagination.

You must not think I want to argue and  
confute. I don't: "à chacun son" passions and  
beliefs: but I thought I owed it to you to be  
cautious about my own beliefs and not to mislead  
you by a polite gliding over the things in  
which I cannot follow.

I hope your plans for American publi-

cation will sanctify and bring you the audience and  
the opportunity you seek.

My wife joins me in very kind regards to you  
and we should be happy if you would remember  
us to the Clements.

Believe me most gratefully

Your well-wisher

Gordon Bottomley.

4006-1-1-6

BOTTOMLEY

The Sheiling Silverdale nr. Carnforth [Lancashire]  
20th. June 1923.

Dear Frederick Carter,

How scandalous and altogether graceless of me. I can only assure you that I appear so because I thought I had acknowledged your prints. Let me thank you again - to make quite sure - for the large pleasure they give me, and for the honour you do me in making me a depository of them: I trust they will find many admirers in my house.

It is an especial delight to me that such a fine attempt to reinstate ideal art among us should be made by a fellow Yorkshireman - a fact which is another strength to my thesis that the artistic impulse of Southern England, the cradle of our original civilisation, is exhausted and withering; and that the centre of gravity has shifted in all things to the industrial North, where aesthetics are still nascent and everywhere a deep blind instinct for the arts is stirring which might break into a marvellous fecundity if our tremendous Northern force could be focussed in that direction: I like to think that such fellows as you and I are forerunners and signposts.

And perhaps I am most delighted of all to think that these potents of yours have come out of that old Bradford which was once the very City of Dreadful Night to me--

"It is full strange to him who hears and feels

While wandering in some deserted street

The booming and the jar of ponderous wheels. . ."

You know the lines. They always make me think of Hall Ings at 7 o'clock of a November night.

I believe that most of our modern art has gone wrong because it has not a sufficient subject-matter and tries to fudge it out by proclaiming that it does not need one; and that some great belief or ideal to be expressed is the only source of great art. But at the same time I believe equally that when a work of art is achieved it is not at all valuable for the belief it expresses, but only by the significant beauty which it achieves.

So that I have to confess to you that I feel sure that the exposition of your mystical doctrine will not help your art to acceptance, and that you would serve your art better if you were to let it stand by itself, without explanation. I ought to confess to you too that astrology and the other things that are so dear to you do not mean anything to me, and that I disbelieve in some of them ardently; but then I do not believe in the Greek religion which impelled Aeschylus to produce the dramas which sweep over me in august majesty and seem to me still the greatest productions of the human spirit; nor in Blake's mystical doctrine which impelled him to produce masterpieces of graphic art and of poetry which are entirely satisfying to me and seem to me some of the greatest glories of our country; so I shall not question your beliefs when they furnish you with satisfying and significant symbols of our life and experience to turn to the purposes of artistic creation.

The only reservation and criticism I have secretly made to myself on your work is that your faith has not so far given you such power over the rest of nature as it has over the human form; (#) you have not found such a noble interpretation of the rocks in Lamentations as you have of that of the woman in front of them. But at all other points I feel great sympathy with the intention of these engravings; and Balance, The Dreamers, and Dionysia still stir my admiration as they did it [at] first and maintain their power over my imagination.

