

Crucifixion and Resurrection for a casual bystander

Yet another dusty cloud of soldiers
Pushing, shoving the condemned,
Too weak to bear his own horrific scaffold

Out onto the rubbish tip again
To join the grisly pile of splintered timbers;
Ropes hauled, and voices raised up in command
Through heat and dust and smell of sodden fear.

Down on his back he goes. I block my ears
To the awaited scream of pain as nail
Fastens sinuous wrist to wood -
What can this one have done this time ?
Two other fall-guys join his company.

Has he shared the same crimes ?
Oh yes, he seems to think they do.
Flies and sweat will be the last perception
Of this poor victim of an alien trial.
(The Roman Empire knows a thing or two
about the stringing out of suffocation).

Our own clergy are here too, mocking him.
I suffocate from cant, and heat, and stench
While he perches up there with his own
Smothering of breath and some failed life,
As squaddies split his meagre clothing.

I feel impelled and raise a bunch of thyme
With sponge of vinegar lanced upon my staff.
He fathoms me, as overhead the sun is blotted out.
I quiver with the ground beneath my feet.

The trembling earth we get from time to time
And sun's eclipse is not unknown. But *this* ?
A soldier's lance blots out my own.

What in heaven's name is going on down there ?
This rushing round so early in the morning,
Something must have gone intensely wrong.

Joseph's tomb had soldier guards last night
But he's not dead, so who was that in there ?
Well, I see he's gone now, since
The stone's rolled back.

There are women running up the path
Two young fishermen close behind,
Lacking conviction.
Take care ! That quaking ground
Is quite severe.

Sunshine fills the opening into empty space
Showing only linen, soiled, unwound.
Who was there, and who is gone ?
And can those shining people let me know

Where he is now ?
In heaven's name is some new Life begun again
In the garden, early in the morning ?

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