

George Mackay Brown (1921-96)

The Stations of the Cross through the Eyes of Veronica

(First Station - Jesus is condemned to death)

Close your linen-shop, Veronica.

Who buys and sells the day a death-sentence is given?

(Second Station - Jesus takes up his Cross)

This young man

I saw among the palms and shouting children! He must carry the dead tree.

(Third Station - Jesus falls the first time)

He is not riding a colt today.

He is on his face, in swirls of hot dust.

(Fourth Station - Jesus meets his Mother)

A woman says his name

Like a mother that calls her child in from play.

(Fifth Station - Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the Cross)

He can't bear that baulk further.

A countryman slopes the burden across his shoulder.

(Sixth Station - Veronica wipes the face of Jesus)

I'm a quiet woman. But I took

A napkin I wove this morning to the blood, thorns, dust, sweat, on his face.

(Seventh Station - Jesus falls for the second time)

The centurion thrust me back. Six soldiers

Dragged him again to his feet.

(Eighth Station - Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem)

There is weeping along the road.

The town women think of their sons, all the Sorrows of Man.

(Ninth Station - Jesus falls for the third time)

I would (but for the guardsmen)

Gather him up from the hot stones.

(Tenth Station - Jesus is stripped of his garments)

I would weave for such a one a coat of great beauty.

(Eleventh Station - Jesus is nailed to the Cross)

God created trees

For birdsong and fruit, not for this.

(Twelfth Station - Jesus dies on the Cross)

Tell me, sir - I can't read -

What is the writing on the tree? THE KING OF THE JEWS

(Thirteenth Station - Jesus is taken down from the Cross)

Now the mother folds him home.

The child has never come back to such a sleep at evening, out of the country fields.

(Fourteenth Station - Jesus is laid in the tomb)

Go home now, Veronica, to your looms.

In a field outside the city, see, a sower is burying seed in a furrow.