

THE FALL OF ICARUS



— Pieter Bruegel the Elder

Musee des Beaux Arts W.H. Auden

About suffering they were never wrong,
The Old Masters; how well, they understood
Its human position; how it takes place
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking
dully along;
5 How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting
For the miraculous birth, there always must be
Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating
On a pond at the edge of the wood:
They never forgot
10 That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's horse
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.
In Breughel's Icarus, for instance: how everything turns away
15 Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green
Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen
20 Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,
had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

Landscape With The Fall Of Icarus William Carlos Williams

According to Brueghel
when Icarus fell
it was spring
a farmer was ploughing
5 his field
the whole pageantry
of the year was
awake tingling
near
10 the edge of the sea
concerned
with itself
sweating in the sun
that melted
15 the wings' wax
unsignificantly
off the coast
there was
a splash quite unnoticed
20 this was
Icarus drowning