

# Musée 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;  
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  
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  
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  
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,  
had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.