

Auden, Musée des Beaux Arts

 english.emory.edu/classes/paintings&poems/auden.html

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;
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.

Pieter Brueghel, The Fall of Icarus

Oil-tempera, 29 inches x 44 inches.
Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels.



