
Requiem: For the Innocents

BENSON BOBRICK

ὅτι εἰ ἐν τῷ ὕγρῳ ξύλῳ ταῦτα ποιοῦσιν,
ἐν τῷ ξηρῷ τί γένηται;
Luke 23:31

There are some things that must not be denied—
the heart sinks more than one had thought it could,
the mind loses its bearings to go by,
invoke whom you will to condone it from on high—
if they would do this in the green wood,
what may happen in the dry?

Merciful God, it must be testified,
from Rachel in Ramah, who wept hard tears
for all the children of Jerusalem—
which, some say, also prophesied
Herod, and those who would out-Herod him,
in time, killing the innocents they would,
from the ghettos of Europe to Gaza,
to the skulled mound where the True Cross stood—
there must not be a world of passers-by.
We know that one Samaritan was good.
If they would do this in the green wood,
what may happen in the dry?

Yet there is One, we hope, who hears their cries,
who died for them and for our brotherhood.

Let no one say it can be justified—

you cannot cut a cumin seed with God!

If they would do this in the green wood,

what may happen in the dry?