

Through a Glass Darkly

A Christmas triptych – three voices in search of reason

1. The Fourth Magus

Another star? And why should that mean more
than the last, recorded in the books
we all have read? Our peoples being sore
afraid, did the world mend its ways or looks,
or (may he rest in peace) to borrow my
old tutor's hat, what evidence was there
that men improved, grew good, that God on high
brought peace on earth or changed things anywhere?

You'll go? In curiosity or trust?
No matter, you will see what you will see
and reach your own conclusions as you must.
The wonder will be if you all agree.
Yet bring me word. If you do not, well, so;
for if God's kingdom comes, *shall we not know?*

2. Joseph

Caught between God and Caesar, that's me,
Not to mention Herod, and our Liz
who's also had a boy, as like to his
father as any little angel ought to be.
I know what people think. But it's a fact
that Liz is past the age, and who would swear
that Mary lies? Still, it's safer here where
only sheep and oxen talk behind our back.

The son I've always wanted, eh? May be.
But will he carry on the trade and take
good care of us when we are old and make
us proud and be our boy? These strange guests see
something else. Well, in time he'll find his voice,
but if this is God's child, we have no choice.

3. The Shepherd

Find my sheep, he said, find my lost lambs. Well now,
I says to him, that's easier said than done.
You know how many wolves there are? And how
they'll lie in wait for hours for just one
kill? Forgive them too, he says, they know
not what they do. Oh yes they bloody do, I say,
or him as made them does. Forgive? You show
us how. He stopped, quite still, and then just turned away.

Now when he was a babe, the magic rolled
all over us. We heard the angels sing.
We thought the time had come, you know, as told –
God's peace, wrongs righted, all that sort of thing.
It didn't happen. Something did. But planned?
Well you tell me. I still don't understand.