

## *An Absolutely Ordinary Rainbow*

The word goes round Repins,  
the murmur goes round Lorenzini's,  
at Tattersalls, men look up from sheets of numbers,  
the Stock Exchange scribblers forget the chalk in their hands  
and men with bread in their pockets leave the Greek Club:  
There's a fellow crying in Martin Place. They can't stop him.

The traffic in George Street is banked up for half a mile  
and drained of motion. The crowds are edgy with talk  
and more crowds come hurrying. Many run in the back streets  
which minutes ago were busy main streets, pointing:  
There's a fellow weeping down there. No one can stop him.

The man we surround, the man no one approaches  
simply weeps, and does not cover it, weeps  
not like a child, not like the wind, like a man  
and does not declaim it, nor beat his breast, nor even  
sob very loudly - yet the dignity of his weeping

holds us back from his space, the hollow he makes about him  
in the midday light, in his pentagram of sorrow,  
and uniforms back in the crowd who tried to seize him  
stare out at him, and feel, with amazement, their minds  
longing for tears as children for a rainbow.

Some will say, in the years to come, a halo  
or force stood around him. There is no such thing.  
Some will say they were shocked and would have stopped him  
but they will not have been there. The fiercest manhood,  
the toughest reserve, the slickest wit amongst us

trembles with silence, and burns with unexpected  
judgements of peace. Some in the concourse scream  
who thought themselves happy. Only the smallest children  
and such as look out of Paradise come near him  
and sit at his feet, with dogs and dusty pigeons.

Ridiculous, says a man near me, and stops  
his mouth with his hands, as if it uttered vomit -  
and I see a woman, shining, stretch her hand  
and shake as she receives the gift of weeping;  
as many as follow her also receive it

and many weep for sheer acceptance, and more  
refuse to weep for fear of all acceptance,  
but the weeping man, like the earth, requires nothing,  
the man who weeps ignores us, and cries out  
of his writhen face and ordinary body

not words, but grief, not messages, but sorrow,  
hard as the earth, sheer, present as the sea -  
and when he stops, he simply walks between us  
mopping his face with the dignity of one  
man who has wept, and now has finished weeping.

Evading believers, he hurries off down Pitt Street.

Les Murray