

The Widow and a Portrait of Jesus in Grayson's Nursing Home

by John Riley

She said: "I make too much of him.
His face that says 'I know you'll kill me,'
and then cry and cry like the babies
I raised and raised and raised."
He'd hung above her head for months.
A boy, really, lovelier than the last girl on earth.
He came here to destroy all the old rules
and then bundle everything that's wrong
with everything not wrong in a creamy robe.
Where did he think he could've taken it?
"They say it all got washed away but
that means it ended up somewhere else.
He was too smart to do such sloppy work."
What more could she ask of him?
Nothing to do but keep watching the painted
brown eyes and wondering if,
when he was dead those three days,
he walked upside down like an astronaut.
"I'm a silly old woman who cooked
up all her questions with candles.
Now I'm a bundle in a corner room."
When she saw him it'd probably be best
if she kept her mouth shut
as she had most of her life.
"But, truth be told, I wouldn't mind asking
if he sometimes wished he had died forever.
If he ever said to himself,

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when he got to thinking about all
of his hard work that'd gone to waste:
Now I have to begin at the end."

