

Malcolm Guite

The Green Man, Mid-Winter

Amidst the tympanum
His stone hair startles from
A face in the foliage,
Not just the bearded barleycorn
But a whole field springing,
The vine and all its tendrils,
Unfold from the face,
Trip from the tongue
That speaks the Word
Amidst the tympanum.

But hard by the rood-screen here,
His face is set like flint,
For stony silence.
He gives his back to the smiters
His cheeks to them that pluck out the hair,
His spring is come to shame and spitting,
Under the blows the cut stones splinter
The Green Man comes to winter,
To the harness and the harrow
As flails fall to split the bearded husk
And seeds fall to the furrow,
Amidst the tympanum,
Hard by the rood-screen here.