

IV

AND A REED IN HIS RIGHT HAND

καὶ κάλαμον ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ
(Matthew 27.29)

what is it?

a reed a flute a staff a pen a yardstick an arrow a fishing rod
you hold it because they place it in your palm
the oldest reflex

what is it?

it is agency it is dignity it is voice it is honour it is truth it is
music it is proportion it is the force of attraction

they genuflect, and it is none of that

it is a whippystick to smack the thorns in deeper
it is the splintered reed that wounds the hand that leans on it
it is their saliva on your sternum, because the cloak doesn't cover you
it is the party hat that pierces the scalp
it is the new clothes that expose you before all their eyes

it is none of the things they tell you it is

it is #YouToo #YouToo #YouToo

and between the blows that echo across the church hall
I message you back:

A bruised reed he will not break
A bruised reed he will not break
A bruised reed he will not break

κάλαμος: reed; *also* staff, flute, shaft of an arrow, measuring-rod, pen, fishing rod