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To Mother Earth in April

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I shall never forget that sign: “This is Jesus, King of the Jews.” A young woman had fastened it above the Nazarene’s head just as the soldiers were raising the cross. The soldiers laughed and joked. For us there was no humor; the woman herself was wailing. A supreme irony, it was; this demagogue pinned to the cross was the Awaited One, you see, the One who was going to crucify the Roman oppression, who was going to establish a kingdom greater even than that of the despised Augustus; oh yes, the One who was going to give our sons a future—our sons, for we have bred them here. Yes, oh yes—and God, is so difficult, even now, to restrain my curses and my tears.

The heat of the day has passed now, and it is dusk. I have mingled among my friends in hope finding comfort, but the bitterness in our hearts and on our faces is a thing terrible to behold. Three crosses stand silhouetted on Golgotha . . .

In a few minutes, I shall go to watch the soldiers take him down.

To Mother Earth in April . . .

All we thy children, crowding yet in thy womb, and killing thee, Old woman—Mother who must die with us—,
All we, thy weeping waiting murderers in suicide
Wallow and wail in the gloom of our doing.

But thou, great brave old silly, again though in vain art bright be-decked,
Lilting back a million murderous years to dress again in frills of green lace and perfume.
Still thou, in thy flirting spring frock, dying Mother art laughing—
Art hiding thy cancerous children, and childish coquetting with death.

. . . Pete Cooper