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Task for *Collected Poems 1943–1995*

Annotated Poem

Poem	Interpretation
Memento Homo Quia Pulvis Es Genesis iii. 19	Title: Biblical allusion reminding mankind that we all return to dust.
Policeman postman watchman fireman airman madman bird man rubbish man mothers and their gingerbread men children snowmen Gone are gone. Dust without dimension swallows rain and wind and rioting sun. The seas' dense mantle arches, hollows, sinks, forms again on monstrous tides. The last of life: a sack of scars trapped in death's whirlpool shudders, claws light's grey suffusion, till dust hides its freakish agony. Galaxies on fire with irony collide praising with light their final cause.	A list of twelve different ordinary occupations separated by spaces indicating lack of connection. (twelve for the apostles?) Indentation of gone – starting new idea Repetition of gone – as if in disbelief Alliteration of d emphasising the power of Dust (capitalised) which challenges all weather (wind, rain, sun) in the lower case Note the apostrophe - indicating many seas Lists of verbs tracing the movement of the waves from attack (arches) to submission (sinks) reflecting the passage of life Alliteration again (L) (S) suggesting violence (scars) and later agony The struggle of the life force is captured in the verbs – shudders, claws Galaxies on fire is indented as a new point and contrast to the wetness of the images before. On fire with irony may refer to the fact that the stars are dead when we see them (their final cause) and yet they are a promise of life. Light is mentioned again as a contrast to the grey suffusion.

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