

## A Long Interrogation

Anne Connolly

*"I've always understood that faith needs no proof, so the Shroud of Turin has been a fascination since I first encountered its existence many years ago. Regardless of the Shroud's authenticity or not, this piece of ancient linen is a powerful and deeply spiritual focus on the humanity and sacrifice of Jesus. My poetry collection, 'A Ravel of Yarns,' explores the significance of wool, cotton and linen in various ways. During my childhood the pungent smell of retting flax was commonplace and fine linen was manufactured widely in Northern Ireland so the scientific investigations alongside my Catholic beliefs were a compelling inspiration for this poem."*

Three inches added.  
Stitches well worked,  
not in the middle years  
of European craft  
but common to the Jews  
who held the doom  
of fortified Masada.

It bears the charring  
of a medieval fire.  
Backed with reverence  
and care by Holland cloth  
it witnesses the diligence  
of women. Nuns  
who sewed it fragile  
on their knees  
and thought  
of crucifixion.

Flagrum.  
Plumbatae.  
Measurements  
of Roman power.  
The ordered pattern  
of a get-out clause  
Barabbas!

Microscopic.  
Spectrometric.  
Vanillin kinetics.  
AB blood.  
AD cloth.  
All so scientific.

Pollen grains remain.  
The humming burden  
of the bees that bears  
new life. Sweet bunches  
of chrysanthemum  
and rock rose to fill  
the chasm of goodbye.

Bean caper clings on  
for dear death,  
crowned they say  
with thorny  
tumbleweed.

---

From 'A Ravel of Yarns', a collection of poems by Anne Connolly, published by Red Squirrel Press (2015). This is now out of print but her most recent collection, 'Once Upon a Quark', also published by Red Squirrel Press, is available at £10.