

ALEXANDRIA

You'd passed out, mate - you missed it. Round midnight
this pageant blared past, maenads and music, funeral, festival,
banging through the city. But when we staggered out, we saw
just the square in moonlight. The unseen carnival
paraded to the gate - then rising, trailed to the fiery stars.

Bloody Dionysos again. He's leaving Antony
who leads the rite, aping the god in fetching panther skins
and sucking the queen's tits as psalms of public praise.
He's quit him and gone home. He's sick of Parthias
and Actiums, and this, the final fuckup.

Look up there - Antony watches Octavian
and the thousand braziers where the legions camp;
watches his wine-cup drain and Cleopatra wangle;
watches the dark that comes for his name, his children;
watches the taut bums of the passing slaves.

Duncan McIntyre