

the candles' end mirroring
no loin son
of the my, the me,
no seed to fertilize
the maw of flesh,
the burst bud wasted
in its sweating bed.

Our Brother died tonight
saint, celibate,
Holy Mother subsidise
the world's caress.

ROBERT HANDICOTT

AN EARTHEN FLOOR

The roof has gone; the walls and door
Were long since carried off: the floor
Alone remains, a dwindling square,
To echo lives that swept it bare;
A floor of earth — deserted stage
Of pathos, laughter, love, and rage —
Sane dramas of a simpler age.

The bush crowds round; the black goats mill
As if some scene were playing still
Invisible to human eye,
Ungessed by modern passers-by:
As if some curtain needs must part
For creatures of uncluttered heart
On ground where unsung stories start.

The crow, the mocking critic, caws
To dissipate the mute applause;
Arch-realist, he cannot bear
A taste for humpies in the air —
Derides as weakness men's demands
For evidence that something stands
Of all the fabric raised by hands.

Yet granted Life's a play, the Earth
A theatre entered at our birth,
And half our act to sleep and feed —
The candle lit is lit indeed.
Good work, our lives' consuming fire,
Though locked in clay, cannot expire
Until the last leading man retire.

The earthen floor, and bottles, too,
Once placed as markers, smashed and few,
Survive and speak: unlikely cast
They resurrect the sunken past —
Dispelling "news" and "motor cars"
Like campfire smoke, where nothing mars
The pageant of the unageing stars.

STEPHEN ROBERTS

UNWINDING

Day is tuning up in the pit
Doors opened then slammed
Coffee jug is filled
Dogs are scratching
waiting for leads
People move in & out of rooms
like strangers
Soon they'll carry plates cups
turn switches on & off handle brooms

The Maestro makes his conspicuous entry
Sun blinds are unwound to the baton cocked