

ANNE PARRATT

IN SWADDLING

Cat's fur teases Persephone, summer stifled
until, although she shouldn't,
she longs for winter
where, under the surface,
guardians, imitating tigers,
let her in.

Grudging the matrixed manacle
all through summer and spring,
Persephone regrets the pomegranate cycle
and would like more often
to slip across the unacceptable Styx
to HIM.

ANNE PARRATT

ON THE DEATH OF A PRIEST

Our Brother died tonight
hallowed receptacle for baubles of gratitude,
smoothing to the end
the marbled home-sorrow
of lost-love and generation schism,
singing the blessed mass to taper
families, into the eternal sepulchre.

Our Brother died tonight
we mourn him.

Midnight at last had quenched
the vain discipline,
the frozen generative begging
not sex
but the manuscript of self
in the cold incense,

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.