

by paddy webb

calf love

it is time now for weaning, my nipples are sore from your sucking and nibbling you need more solid fare it's tempting to roll over and offer my dugs to your warmth your head butts against me - soft and woolly

why don't they take you away so I won't have to send you?

I sense your repressed anger as you find you've sucked me dry

comfort is where you find it: I must rock myself to sleep

letter-poem (i)

"speak louder I cannot hear the words between the sobs" the line's noisy interpolating little crackles and sighs but it is not the words that need hearing tap-tap the heart knocks hoping it's the right door waiting, not knowing but it opens as you say, "shall | come?" half-blind, bewildered brave brown badger nosing out from your den

to meet head-on my stones

ann's funeral

a plea

there are flies in the wine and the sediment floats to the top when lees will not stay dregs how can I drink?

I wear a clean apron and comb my hair back straight, I am floured to the elbow's brown, there's a smell of fresh milk, sometimes I make butter my eyes are grey and clear

I cannot drink this clouded brew stand the scent of wallflowers bear the bee's heaviness

you must know I sleep like a baby untroubled by the language of dreams my fingers - nimble at household tasks have never learned to hold a pen - so cannot scrawl graffiti on your walls or shake the sunshine out of your tree

stop bringing me presents there is nothing to celebrate I did not write this

carpenter, return your craft and dwell on infancy this oblong box is suitable for gun-runners we do not need such shapes but a cradle warmly lined to rock our friend to sleep: arms to gather her, tender and gentle, hewn from some other wood less treacherous than elm for this is a journey of much delicacy we need a vessel can sail after a homing pigeon where are you now, Ann, clad only in courage and straight-dealing? we lower your frail remains into an open sore, yet dug for planting a foundation what will grow from today's seeding we do not know, but pray for a safe trip

and sweet healing