poems

by paddy webb
calf love

it is time now for weaning,
my nipples are sore from your
sucking and nibbling

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

"shall I come?"

half-blind, bewildered
brave brown badger

out from your den
to meet head-on
my stones
ann's funeral

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

ann's funeral

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