

The Anointing · *Sandra McPherson*

Benedict makes us look bad—
All greased muscle, like a porpoise.
Like the bowl of olives, Benedict
Is oiled holy, green and slippery
In his godfather's arms. He is
Already the man they want,
Handsome and nude, such a man
As desire accepts and accepts.

A lamb has been sacrificed.
Black with coal, white with garlic,
It is seared on flat swords. This too
We accept, we longingly accept.
Green grapes mound high, like fingertips
Of the priest upon the child's body
When the boy's eyes are so
Black, rebellious as they cry
In terror of the chant, the soul-deep water.

All the guests know what it is
To dedicate a life. It's what
May sadden our pianos, or wedge a stop
Beneath words. But in the fresh air
Under the smoke of the offering,
The new man crawls towards us—
Not young, not immature.
Sculptured idol of the eternal,
The holy child crawls across the grass
To kiss our feet.