

THE BEAUTIFUL PRIEST

Young, bearded, a leading man
With a turned collar, rings the bells
Swings the smoke of frankincense
From corner to corner of the small chapel
Which is resplendent with icons
Framed in gold, and yellow
Candles, and the domed roof

The Orthodox priest who once
Would have been a half-naked
Avatar of the pagan God
Leading us to the mysteries
Of grape and dark love
In the wild mountain groves --
The priest has been saved.

Why are we -- here today seated
In prayers I do not understand --
All women? Why is every wicker chair
In the glowing chapel
Filled with girl children and grandmothers,
Mothers and sisters with swollen wombs?
Have the new maenads gathered,
Led in prayer by the beautiful priest
To worship another mystery
Another absent god?