

## Appendix B Poem: “With Mercy for the Greedy” by Anne Sexton<sup>4</sup>

Concerning your letter in which you ask  
me to call a priest and in which you ask  
me to wear The Cross that you enclose;  
your own cross,  
your dog-bitten cross,  
no larger than a thumb,  
small and wooden, no thorns, this rose -

I pray to its shadow,  
that gray place  
where it lies on your letter... deep, deep.  
I detest my sins and I try to believe  
in The Cross. I touch its tender hips, its dark jawed face,  
its solid neck, its brown sleep.

True. There is  
a beautiful Jesus.  
He is frozen to his bones like a chunk of beef.  
How desperately he wanted to pull his arms in!  
How desperately I touch his vertical and horizontal axes!  
But I can't. Need is not quite belief.

All morning long  
I have worn  
your cross, hung with package string around my throat.  
It tapped me lightly as a child's heart might,  
tapping secondhand, softly waiting to be born.  
Ruth, I cherish the letter you wrote.

My friend, my friend, I was born  
doing reference work in sin, and born  
confessing it. This is what poems are:  
with mercy  
for the greedy,  
they are the tongue's wrangle,  
the world's pottage, the rat's star.

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<sup>4</sup> Sexton, Anne. “With Mercy for the Greedy.” *The Complete Poems*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981. Reprinted by permission of SLL/Sterling Lord Literistic, Inc. Copyright by Linda Gray Sexton