

Umbrian Frescoes

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The walls appeal—those conical breasts
of women offered to Christ-bambini,
and angels swinging with great cheerfulness.

They corner most scenes. Naive wings
worn formally as extra limbs
make you believe in them as facts

you wish could happen now; until that Pietà
and that small angel witnessing, who acts
quite humanly, lifts both hands to his head,

warding off an agonising sound.
You almost hear the long drawn-out Christ,
and feel his white pelt weighing down

the woman's accurate lap. You realise
the helplessness of angels, and that your own
full-grown frightened hands are fluttering

like nervous wings. Should they go or stay?
Bring cups of tea or wipe the sweat away?
Or turn the volume down?