

The Cathedral Builders

By John Ormond

They climbed on sketchy ladders towards God,
with winch and pulley hoisted hewn rock into heaven,
inhabited the sky with hammers,
defied gravity,
deified stone,
took up God's house to meet him,
and came down to their suppers
and small beer,
every night slept, lay with their smelly wives,
quarrelled and cuffed the children,
lied, spat, sang, were happy, or unhappy,
and every day took to the ladders again,
impeded the rights of way of another summer's swallows,
grew greyer, shakier,
became less inclined to fix a neighbour's roof of a fine
evening,
saw naves sprout arches, clerestories soar,
cursed the loud fancy glaziers for their luck,

somehow escaped the plague,
got rheumatism,
decided it was time to give it up,
to leave the spire to others,
stood in the crowd, well back from the vestments at the
consecration,
envied the fat bishop his warm boots,
cocked a squint eye aloft,
and said, 'I bloody did that.'