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AUSTRALIA

Kunapipi

Volume 11 | Issue 2

Article 7

1989

Poems

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Recommended Citation

Owen, Jan, Poems, *Kunapipi*, 11(2), 1989.

Available at: <http://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol11/iss2/7>

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Poems

Abstract

FORNACE VIVARINI Murano, Venice, HEARTSEASE,

Jan Owen

FORNACE VIVARINI

Murano, Venice

To slay the dragon and become a saint
Donato simply spat
The bare bones of the story lie
in a squat twelfth century church
bleached ribs of a whale
One right turn to the squamous green
of the Angels' Canal
and the steady roar of a glowing cave
where Gino and Dario harpoon heat
with a gob of phlegm
breathe baubles clear as spittle
or twirl blue dolphins airily out of flame
The fiery maw of the furnace smiles
the legend draws you in
At sunset the whole lagoon
remembers dragons
a lazy ripple of red-gold scales

HEARTSEASE

I was blue
and the flowers were black
irresistible
But the plant looked sick
Uneasily I brought it home
(seven crows flapped overhead)
and set it in a white glazed pot
to counterbalance fate
It flourished

From a northerly ledge
the little Africa faces
hungry for light
track east to west across the day
like one slow transit of a cage
They have swallowed the sun
to work this alchemy at the heart
whose flash of gold outstrips
distance and dark
(a panther's eye?
the edge of the eclipse?)
easy as that

Riemke Ensing

INNER GARDENS (to Zhang Weiping in prison)

Nine years is a long time
to keep darkness company
but remember the story of Lan
Xiang Cheng. A wise man. He fell
in love with landscapes and seasons. Spring
was his favourite. All that blossom
and promise. It lasts
only a short while. The wind comes
and the rain and it's gone. He wanted
to hold on to Spring. Keep it about
himself a little longer. So he built a study
in his garden in the mountain and called it
'study containing spring'. That way he kept life
with him for a very long time.