

1994

Poems

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Recommended Citation

Strauss, Jenny, Poems, *Kunapipi*, 16(1), 1994.

Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol16/iss1/33>

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Poems

Abstract

DREAMING OF HELLFIRE AND DAMNATION, THE MELANCHOLIC AT THE DINNER PARTY,
VANISHING SPECIES

Jenny Strauss

DREAMING OF HELLFIRE AND DAMNATION

A T-junction ends the passage
'Choose!' her escort says
'To the left –
 eternal silence
perpetual discourse on the right.'

'Hell à la carte?' she quips
playing for time.

Lesson One:

The Jokes are Only on You.

'You can't decide? Have both.'
The trap-door trick:
 feet-first,
she falls to a room
ablaze with conversation, tongues
of fire, darting flames
 dancing –
in disembodied mouths.

The crossfire rakes her nerves
as droplets
 cool with significance
tantalise
 sizzle
 evaporate...

She will never master the lingo.

In this black Pentecost
the bread of language
will turn on her tongue forever
to bitter stone.

THE MELANCHOLIC AT THE DINNER PARTY

Watching her love in animated talk
she's overcome to see
that glowing territory of otherness
ignite with all
its fiery first attraction;

averts her gaze, as if afraid
a speaking look might cry:
Remember me!
Aquarius the waterbearer,
quencher of flames.

Sadness drags at her spirit's gut,
a menstrual pain
that will not bleed away
but cramps and grinds.
'How long,' she asks impassively, 'can love

survive the dwindling of desire?'
The conversation hiccups,
rejects this tasteless morsel,
flows again. She knows
the answer must be sweated out in silence.

The child
(computer games abandoned)
comes tidily to breakfast
on coffee and croissants,

declines
I didn't much care
for last night's supper
She talked too much

She wouldn't
let me play my video
she didn't read from a book
she talked a story

It was weird -
there was this naughty moan
sent her own little girl out
all by herself, into the woods.

Order's
foundations are shaken
in the mock-shuffle face
a muscle pervers

Daddy
I don't understand:
What are woods? What's a wolf?
What's a riding hood?

What's a teddy?

VANISHING SPECIES

The child
(computer games abandoned)
comes tidily to breakfast
on coffee and croissants,

declares

'I didn't much care
for last night's sitter.
She talked too much.

She wouldn't
let me play my video,
she didn't read from a book,
she talked a story.

It was weird –
there was this naughty mother
sent her own little girl out,
all by herself, into the woods.'

Order's
foundations are shaken:
in the mock-adult face
a muscle quivers.

'Daddy
I don't understand:
What are woods? What's a wolf?
What's a riding hood?
What's a red?'

She will never master the lingo

In this black Pentecost
the breast of language
will turn on her tongue forever
to better state.