

The Muse Says Goodbye to Vicenza

Jacqueline Bishop

Who wouldn't feel malinconia at saying goodbye
to a place where two olive-green rivers meet together?
Who wouldn't feel malinconia over a place
of distant green mountains, pristine white villas,
and thick skinned lemons with glistening
dark leaves growing out of fat red yabbas?
Then there is the way that people here
say Giamaica, Giamaica.
I tell you, it wasn't you, dear reader,
with long sad tears that last day in Vicenza ---
in the studio of Giancarlo
standing before a line of dry-point etchings,
like so many clothes blowing in the wind
of a small district called Nonsuch in Giamaica.
It wasn't you walking around and around,
touching this thing and that thing,
in a workshop that has stood in the same place forever,
passed from father to son,
one generation after another.
It wasn't you, for however many days now,
has been devouring baccala and polenta.
It wasn't you, dear reader,
or even you dear writer, that days before,
on a gondola in Venice, moving
swiftly through those dark waters,
had listened to the rise and fall of a woman's voice,
telling you the story of her grandmother.
And it will not be you, dear reader,
who will have that woman's voice trailing you
to wherever it is you are next headed,
stop for a moment and hear this woman's voice
saying over and over and over again,
sometimes in multiple and conflicting languages:
Venice, Vicenza and my laguna, my laguna.

