

The Fan-Painter of Florence

Mark Valentine

The fans were full of fauns
Black eyed brown limbed and sly
The sort of boys he saw in alleys
But was too shy to study
Closely. Besides he liked the way
They vanished in the twisting
Passages and left only echoes.

On his frail folding paintings
They seem to be waiting lazily
In the glow of pale street-lamps
Amber pools around their shoes
Or polished hooves, pert, alert,
Brandishing jade-headed canes
Or sleek bat-winged umbrellas.

White shirts like lost ghosts
Cling closely to their forms
Their dark cloaks are palls
Stolen from candlelit chapels,
Tall hats ripple in the light
Like rainwater pools at night
And rakishly reveal curled horns.

But the fluttering of his pictures
By slim and jewelled fingers
For the cooling of flushed flesh
Makes all his figured fauns
Flicker in the scented breeze
As if they are not quite there
And might, with a sigh, —
 disappear.