

1989

Poems

Riemke Ensing

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi>



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Ensing, Riemke, Poems, *Kunapipi*, 11(2), 1989.

Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol11/iss2/8>

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au

Poems

Abstract

INNER GARDENS (to Zhang Weiping in prison), TAI CHI QUAN

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.

TAI CHI QUAN

If the space where they keep you
the next years is just a little
larger than the length of your outstretched
arms, you will be able to visualize clouds
and move them away
with a slow graceful turn
of your hand should they frown
or darken to form rain. A few movements
will shape you trees to shade your head
and the hard board of your bed
will be earth soft in late spring sprung
bright with flowers and new grass. You
might be tempted to tense a melon
out of the early vapours of air and imagine
oh, imagine that cool caress for breakfast.
These small acts will make you
stronger than *Lapsang Souchong* tea,
subtle as ink bamboo
handscrolled on paper
all those centuries ago. (Li K'an)
Remember the story
told of the woman in prison
She knew Beethoven well. From inside
each day she conducted a quartet. Each part
separately in her head then putting all four
instruments together silently as she sat there
in solitary confinement. It took years
but the music lifted the sky
into that darkness and the sun,
gave back her life.