

Michael Small

## BORROMINI'S DRAGON

Why do you dress me in Borromini's robes?  
Mere geometer of ziggurats, tromperie and mean conceits,  
Whose veined jasper envies my vaulting stone.

After knocking off Bramante, Rome's old chrome dome,  
I, Gianlorenzo Bernini, hammered up Heaven single-fisted, but  
Borromini judged my baldachin twisted with elphantiasis.  
Papal bull! I'd plumbed bronze from the Pantheon's  
Pagan portico to cast the canopy for Maffeo Barberini.  
Borromini went beserk, barberini buzzed, I went for baroque.  
Bragged Baldinucci: what the Barbarians didn't, the Barberini did.

Borromini roasted me when cracks wracked St Peter's basilica.  
My bell-tower fell knelled, like my name. Saint Lawrence  
I'd torched on the gridiron, thrusting my own limb  
Over fire to mirror the pain, my tortured mien.  
I am not Bellini's bridegroom, no longer Borghese's protégé.

Verily, Borromini's brain-pan sourced the Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi,  
But twas my fancy bore the four river figures and grotto,  
Sected the travertine to base the obelisk and armadillo.  
Did you regard the bearded Rio de la Plata? Staring baldly  
At Borromini's Chiesa di Sant' Agnese in Agone?  
Arm aloft, alarmed lest Borromini's apse collapsed.  
Ha! Sweet revenge for my bell-tower clanger!

Would you borrow a second-hand chisel from that meanie?  
I mean, Borromini. Let that bozzetto carve his own niche.  
Huh, mocking in Minerva my jocular tusker backing an obelisk:  
Elfin wink, piping trunk, over-hanged saddle panel.  
Bear in mind, Borromini: brain above brawn.