

## Homage to the painter, sculptor and engraver Gaetano Pompa by John Organ

Ghotic heads boxed into the facade of Orbetello cathedral  
With eyes that seem to follow as one walks past, and  
Recall those that gleam inside helmets of armoured men  
In the paintings of Gaetano Pompa.  
Scowling fierce loyal friend, I walk in your world  
Of heraldic beasts, medieval towers and modern violence,  
While the snake with glazed eyes flickers across our path,  
In the ruined temple above your home,  
On the bridge the Etruscans built across the gorge at Vulci,  
Among the whirring paddles of the fish farms at Cosa,  
Or looking down on Dante's world from Saint Catherine's tower.  
Your bronzes bring Orpheus and the myths into landscapes  
That farmers scratch from soil of Southern Tuscany and Upper Lazio,  
Enact those hidden agonies of the Italian past which  
Tortured your Conte Giannetto Borromeo until he killed himself.  
Fierceness is not all, you loved the Italian peasantry;  
And how kindly your ceramics captured those blues and yellows  
We saw it in the little church at Fiora.  
And, later, in your native province of remote Lucania  
I saw those images that burned themselves  
Into your brain as a boy,

Falcons circling forever over a lonely landscape,  
Strange faces carved on the keystones  
Of stone doorways,  
Small mongrel dogs with comic but mean faces  
Patrolling streets of Forenza village where  
You were born in a back room of Zio Luigi's old house,  
And, in adjoining Puglia province,  
Cathedrals prouting dragons, elephants, porcupines and apes,  
Guarded by carved eagles with spread wings,  
Lions with curling hair and staring eyes.