AFTER CHAMBER MUSIC
(Una serrata musicale alla Villa Fabricotti)

In a summer’s garden long ago,
(lute cradled by a handsome youth)
young girls gathered all aglow
wanting to sing to their hearts’ loves there
in this villa garden; the flow
of floral life frozen in frescoed art
(even terracotta of the Duomo)
all in a Tuscan summer’s blaze of light.

And we, stumbled out into night
on this winter evening, in topcoats, scarves
around our throats held tight,
inhaling, exhaling the same crisp air
as had trembled there in flute’s slight
shaft; as had sprung from well-bowed strings,
as had made clear harmonies in flight
through that throng in the frescoed room.

Fog crept up from the city’s womb
in narrow streets and sculpted squares,
from Arno’s dark, past tower and tomb;
its whiteness touched our faces, lit
by the risen moon’s burning bloom
and met our outward breathing steam;
so down we went in garden’s gloom
by step and stair with that music’s air.
Though still the late trains clashed below  
our faces coursed with blood, alight,  
and music wove us in its loom.  

1 an historic villa in Florence used for music recitals  

1991

RAIN IN THE AFTERNOON
Fit Subject for a Fugue1

(“I have loved truth...where can I find it?”

Le Rouge et le Noir)

Tamarisk, your fine dark winter webs
are waving softly against a cold grey sky;
idly the large wet drops are flicking down
roughly pasting concrete flags with carmine leaves.
Across the dumbly waiting lines of scrub
ragged shadows of drenching showers march
in; darkening the boughs and boles and bowing
the over-burdened shrubbery to homage.

In gathering evening of early winter
the hearth fire intrudes the coil of thoughts
as arching canes of glory vine suspend their
red papery leaves against palings dark with rain.

Across the attitudinising shuffle of years,
taken back to the sap-strong struggle of youth,
I remember us standing with heaving lungs,