

## AFTER CHAMBER MUSIC

*(Una serrata musicale alla Villa Fabricotti<sup>1</sup>)*

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. 1991

<sup>1</sup>an historic villa in Florence used for music recitals

## **RAIN IN THE AFTERNOON**

Fit Subject for a Fugue<sup>1</sup>

*("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,