WALLED GARDEN

Caught among the wild berries
Ficino begins to question them
lightly, summerly, in his own
native language – the speech
you talk to your mother in,
never quite natural, always
a little bit full of asking –

and why are the leaves of strawberries
*fragole* cast in gold to form the bracket
of a duke’s coronet, or these blue
plebeian huckleberries, what makes them
so good for eyesight? Or is it only
men’s eyes that are made keener?

And his eyes are not blue. Maybe the grey
the Ligurian Sea casts into the pale
farawayness of some eyes. Maybe hazel.
They are looking around now for the gardener
who contrives such riddles for him
out of the simple-seeming earth and
seeds and such – would they germinate
without the mind’s intention? If we were not
here to reap would they still grow?

*Who are the world in me or I in her?*

he dreams to answer.

Now it is sleepy as a bee inside the light,
everything humming, fulfilling its nature
so he supposes these questions are
the fulfillment of human essences
and he has as much right here as the gardener
so –suddenly it seems– even
more right than the raspberry caning
up from sand though it seems even in
Platonism presumptuous to say so.

5 February 2004
The long skull of Thomas Browne
waited in some meadow till
it was pure bone, pure brown bone
and could speak to us of things
the flesh forgets and bone remembers.

I sit across from it now and my
own hard skull begins to feel
the buzz of not so alien vibration.

So I sent the Browne skull on to you.
I don’t want to know yet
what such bones know, have a trip
on me among its visions if you dare.
I am still of meat. And hence
have no wish to remember.

6 February 2004
SKULL

All the mistakes a human makes
go on living in his skull.
Afterwards, the skull is shaped
by such, as well as by his virtues,
but all made abstract and very strong
ineluctable as pale arithmetic
dry and forceful like magnetism
or a light bulb far off in some desert.
That's why a skull becomes a drinking cup
to slake that terrible certainty
we ignorantly share. And if you drink
from it you too will eat those potencies.
Or bang the drum you make from bone
and let the pattern rattle into air.

6 February 2004
Bones in the body
not the information
exchanged
but the exchange of it
the nexus of our needs
spoken, moment
in momentum,
not what we give
each other but that
we have hands.

6 February 2004
I am distracted by what I mean.

6.II.04
You can’t write about me anymore,  
you have drunk the last of my wine  
and I have closed my river.  
My yellow morning fog is not for you  
and I have stuffed cotton  
into the small church bell of my heart  
so you can pull on me all you want  
and you won’t hear any answer  
belling or howling over your valleys,  
nyet. Your sin is inexcusable:  
you live in me as if I were someplace else,  
you use me for what anybody could do—  
friendship, conversation, love.  
There’s much more than that  
to being accurate. Accurate means always,  
means our tongues exchange their mouths,  
means your bones are impatient for my flesh,  
means there must be madness that we risk  
and we fall through each other always  
like sunlight through cathedral windos  
casting magic colors on the dumb stone.
But they keep changing our address
and the house stays where it is
and we stay inside it while the street
changes and the numbers shift
but still the moon the other night
almost full before the snow
knew where to find us,
and the sun has our number
and calls sometimes when she remembers,
for we are the nice old parents of the world.
Everything comes from us and everything leaves home
and some day everything comes back
bringing that strange smile of matter they call a word.

7 February 2004
TWENTY MILLION SOLDIERS

my uniform is pleasing
because of color gold and trim
I sweat profusely
in my tunic
sometimes I die.
I am a colonel I have a piece of paper
to remind me, I have a knife
from Burma stained with gore
but whose blood I forget.
Enemies are so undependable
now white, now yellow.
When I was little I was fond of guns,
later of bows and arrows, I really
liked arrows. Then sticks and staves.
Now words. Receding always
to the simplest weapons, the weakest,
the ones that kill by truth and love
and other feints of feeling
before which even the strongest
men and women falter or actually fall.
SUNT LUMINA

At night to see by only
carrot light or cucumber
glisten in between space
ratcheting deep maybes into
the urn that’s only there for

and who does shove it deeper
–mystery loves trumpery–
but this feels that and know
for all knowing is a sort of feeling

Rahab asks for empathy
beneath the crumbling wall
names that are newish
we also hear in elegant harlotry
ostendebit nemo se in
privilegio balnei aut

motor no turn here no borrow
these poor girls scalced by sorrow
suddenness beneath the sole
hurt whose toe be there there
with your furious sympathy

aubade on such a sandy plain
starsucker she's asking for it

what if one life consists in all
nobody anywhere but her
she was born with the sun
inside her moon her friend
computes her numbers but
light hurries through blue glasses
eliminating algebra forever

let the mind think of something else–
old music but the one
who thought it out is dead
long years the melody breaks
rocks narcissus bulbs forced
among sea pebbles all a
person is is water trapped in air
but what kind of answer is that
politicians wearing flower pots
oniony bases of narcissus bulbs
rest in half an inch of water
before the rocks just keep
drinking like a mountain top
sugar in the jar salt spilled
on your lap they say old pennies
in the water keeps roses longer
that was the Sunday I gave you up
and said goodbye in such a little
voice only the finches heard it
pecking at the thistle seed.

8 February 2004
PROGRESS

Lending things and leaning on bells
then hearing things and wondering
have they come back at last and seeing
nothing but the valley opening when
you open its door you try to begin

Now the doctor asks but who
did you give it to and who do
you think will bring it back
are they the same or if they are not
why do you think one person if
it is a person would perform
the action due from another
person if that person is also a
person or even if not?

It is a hard silence to negotiate
this one you find all around
inside you when a doctor speaks

what an animal I am you think
and try experimentally to say waf or chaf
thinking to sound like a cornered fox

but foxes and such are smarter than you are
when it comes to silences and getting away
this all comes from talking Waf waf
you say and pretend you’re coughing

coughing things out and breathing in quick
then waiting and hoping things take
care of themselves and then things come back
carrying whoever borrowed them on them
the one you’re too frightened to remember.

9 February 2004
for no reason a dove did it
or the friend, the friend
you trusted with your violin

is that what’s called
you hold it to your throat
and press down on it hard

until it sings, the friend
you trusted with your music,
your download queen

your fire escape on August
nights you lived your life
by the light of her moon

which in your vanity you
supposed your own sunlight
basked back at you by her
–basked? agenda? dove?
I think we fool ourselves
again, the moon has set

you never meant it anyhow
love songs were your tools
of non-commitment

a strange little tuneful thing
halfway in between
a skeleton key and a violin.

9 February 2004

*In commento:* Any door is good enough for a skeleton key, which opens any body. What do you do then? Play the violin. Press hard. Do the same thing over and over again. Make cooing sounds. Fly away. The best authorities don’t think bask is used that way.
Nine minutes doing nada.
It was 10:09 then 10:18.
In between I thought
about what *analogy* could really mean.

9 February 2004
Can it release the moment
from holding me?  How could it,
music stammers all alone
over there in the corner of the room,
all it ever does is make sounds
and what good are they?
Can you eat tone?

Too many anyhows, too many precisions.

9 February 2004
Cold grandee afraid of wheat
such principled decides chaparral
then translate by maquis the other
side of Vesta is sumptuous
unpierced not uncaressed her
give the poor thick tragedy to eat
to humiliate the opposition
a tongue licking wounds is too
busy to dissent or advocate revolt
hear a moan it must be wind or
fossil fuel all our wretchedness
was set in place by Rome
but this is comedy a stack
of something elses impersonating men
and some few women too though most
of the women still are women in
this dybbuk travesty religion.

10 February 2004
The accord is waiting for the design. The design is waiting for the little boy with ink in the palm to stop talking to the not so little girl with her mind on something else. Something else is waiting for a clear channel to communicate with Earth. Earth is waiting for a French-speaking Indonesian heart specialist to announce a new use for bitter melons. Bitter melons are waiting for a little man to water them since for several days nothing has been heard from the Rain God. The Rain God is waiting for everybody to be asleep so he can form into mist and settle on the steep golden roof of the tope by the bay. The bay is waiting for nothing, since everything is can imagine is present inside it at this very moment, inside and all around and all above, just like you thinking this but also that, and that, and all those.

10 February 2004