

THOSE OF THE HOUSE OF COLONNA

You far-off men, who stand now so motionless
in portraits, you sat at ease on horseback
and impatiently you strode through the hall;
like a great dog, with that same gesture
your hands now rest beside you.

Your face is so filled with gazing,
because for you the world was picture and picture;
out of armor, flags, ripe fruit, and women
welled for you that great confidence
that everything *is* and *counts*.

But back then when you were still too young
to lead your forces in the great battles,
too young to wear the robes of papal crimson,
not always favored in riding and hunting,
boys still, who forswore the charms of women,
have you from all those boyhood days
not one, not a single memory?

Have you forgotten how life felt back then?

Back then the altar, with its painting
on which Mary gave birth, was tucked away
in the solitary side aisle.
You were enthralled
by a flower tendril;
the thought
that the fountain all alone
outside in the garden bathed in moonlight
cast its water skyward
was like a world.

The window opened right up to your feet like a door;
and all was park with lawns and paths:
strangely near and yet so far away,
strangely bright and yet as if concealed,
and the springs had voices like rain,
and it was as if no morning came
to meet that long night
which stood with all its stars.

Back then, boys, your hands *grew*,
and were warm. (But you didn't know it.)
Back then your faces burgeoned wide.