1998

The Flower Called I Want

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Recommended Citation
Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.4999

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"L’herbe Voglio non cresce mai nel giardino del Re"

The flower called I Want blooms not
within the gardens of Paradise,
nor do its roots number here
among Purgatory’s narrow beds
where the soul descended
cleanses itself with soil and a rake.

To accompany his loneliness,
one newcomer sings lullabies
until stilled by the lettuces’
indifference to song.

The flower called I Want blooms not . . .
These phrases of his mother
carried over the water
wither, so he buries them
beside the onion. The onion,

whose single word is a copper bolt
demanding tears. In this middle world,
day is ever day without change,
night is ever night. What he feels
lisping as time is his tongue
returning its verbs.

Across the mullioned greenhouse
walls, his image flashes
and he perceives he’s slow
becoming a creature
    half-man, half-wheelbarrow—
the better half of each.

    The better half of man
is silent, and the barrow
    bears his load. Without voice,

he grows a purer ear
    for the thorns’ cry, bind me.
Within, his last worldly

    solace of poise
is torn—Human, weep—
    by the onion’s plangent command.