

The Relationship

My skin is almost as black as the toast
we made yesterday morning.
Once we spread the red jam, the sharp taste disappeared
just as my skin disappeared.

This morning I wait under the table.
This evening I wait under the bed with the low-spined cat.

So you cruise down the Danube,
watching children stuff rocks in their mouths
and women wash sagging breasts.
A young man throws himself into the river
from a strange height.
What are you thinking
as your cells skate across a pink landscape
and the waters even?

My skin walks through the forest without me.
I pay a man sixty dollars for a big pair of shoes
to catch all the blood.
I place an ad.

So you slide down the Thames,
waiting for them to cook your breakfast,
paying large sums of money for the quiet ride,
and time to chew your bacon right.

It seems a shame to waste your time.
“Great passions seek release.”
“Great passions must not create tension.”

My skin, a symphony of sudden twists of color,
will not wait.

This must be a dream.

It is not a circus.

It is not a cave.

Upon Reading Thomas Mann's *Death In Venice*

"Solitude gives birth to the original in us, to beauty unfamiliar and perilous - to poetry."

Old Aschenbach kept to his llama walk. Steady.
The orchestra had given out an hour ago inside his head,
and he continued, unsure of the arrangement of his toes
on the pavement - their exact size and dimension.

He thought for sure the boy stored several mountains of gold
in one eye.
The left eye, overwrought with blue shapes, drifted easily.

Aschenbach wondered if the world cared that his shirts were
clean,
spotless, starched and heavy as sleep.
He never wore jewelry, his wrists too wide,
and his fingers so sensitive, he left them in his pockets on bright
days.

Aschenbach took his meals by himself in a room
where he thought only of cliff formations,
the smell of coffee,
the Polish boy who had come with his family.
Sitting always at the window, so the sea could watch him,
Aschenbach allowed four raspberries to rest on his tongue
for five minutes.
He allowed himself a look at the boy,
Then allowed himself a cigarette.

He had forgotten smoke,
but now he was tempted.
Now he needed the full gray suit worn on the inside of the body.
It made him cough,
forcing water from his eyes.
The boy lay in the sand.
The sea in Venice transformed into smoke.

The boy pressed his lips against another boy's neck,
but this meant nothing.

Aschenbach laughed to himself as a dog drifted by and licked his
face.

Only the orange flags caught his eye, and the eyes of the boy
and the dog.

If he died, the world would notice for more than an hour,
but the boy would never come that close.

The boy, soft as Aschenbach's favorite luggage,
was afraid.

Aschenbach stayed and stayed and stayed
until the steam between buildings in the early morning
moved into his bed.

Aschenbach cried as the beach took the boy,
or the boy took himself away.