

W E T P A I N T



S T A N L E Y M O S S

1.

Today, my Italian-American electrician
who's never been to Italy
and doesn't want to go
because it's out of his way,
smells the cinnamon in my oatmeal
from across the room,
that I can't smell
holding the hot bowl in my lap.
It's true, I can't see
what's playing on a marquee
half-a-mile away anymore,
that I say, "What's that you said?" quite often,
English mustard and horseradish are less hot,
but I can touch more than I could touch
a little while ago, and more touches me.
I am not lying when I tell you
I touched Courbet's *Origin of the World*
when the paint was wet, the summer of 1866.

I smell a rat, I am too old.
My nose is Roman partisan.
I remember the smell of different ladies,
Lady Cinnamon, Lady Turmeric, Countess of Cloves,
a Saffron ungrammatical companion
who sang, "Is you is or is you ain't my baby?"
Smelling, whispering and wolf-growling,
young me had a den, paper hills, drafts
of poems and books rugged the dirty floor.
They tripped me, I almost broke a leg.

2.

Deaf rivers try to lip-read poetry,
blind rivers read Milton in windy braille.
They do not have diction because they are voiceless.
The riverbanks, I know, are thighs, male and female.
The river tongues, tastes the shallows.
Greetings, my senses, my salutations
are old, not fashionable. I don't kiss hands
as some Italian *signorini* do
wearing a bathing suit at the Lido.
The senses change from season to season.
I love fashionable forests
that change from day to day, season to season.
This is a preamble to my anti-Platonic dialogue
between fashion and Mrs. Death.