

*In imitation of Neruda's "Black Pantheress":*  
**Statue**

I haven't forgotten it:  
In Torino: the grey cold  
of midnight  
on the sodden  
cobblestones  
that slide by  
cobweb  
lights hushed  
in the sudden spell  
of pre-day:  
languid people returning  
from the theater  
entranced still by sonorous  
shades and costumes  
bright as blood,  
the moon like inconstant  
wind,  
a wavering pearl above me.

I wandered through passages smothered  
in arias, eyes  
closed  
to see invisible tones  
dance across the street-kissed  
lights and through  
the chocolate petals that fell  
from creaking windows.

And suddenly saw him:  
the white hand not quite  
marble  
next to my hand,  
two circles  
of color,  
two embers  
that forbade movement,  
footsteps  
a  
barbarous intrusion.  
Flickers of daylight  
languished on his  
cloak, a sickly  
opalescent sheen.

Felt  
the resistance of his limbs  
to movement,  
the envy of free  
arms, legs,  
affluent in motion,  
only his coat catching sight –  
light made perfect.  
Then, in the shine of that skin  
a defiant umber  
took form  
like water in a cloud:  
a  
sinuous  
jester  
on  
a box  
halfway  
between the walls  
of the street.

A limb raised  
to spin me around  
as if I were graceful,  
too:  
Then the twitch of a finger,  
perhaps an imagined  
bend of the head,  
and he is a statue again  
to startle  
drunken  
tourists as they stumble  
their way home  
in the life of the night,  
past the frozen man  
on a pedestal,  
too high for  
the rest  
of us to reach.

He stands  
like a warped mountain; and one day he will  
have lingered still for so long that the body inside  
the statue will collapse, fragile as ice, and melt  
into the powerless concrete.