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## As Aschenbach ('Who setting out to voyage must have imagined which shores to avoid')

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*As Aschenbach*

1

Who setting out to voyage must have imagined which shores to avoid; get out.

Whose violence unto himself when he turns away from any man or moves toward him with ill-disguised tenderness is enjoyed, whose body asks to be safely overwhelmed by pleasure. Whose fingers, even on an impersonal basis an enhancement of life, make manifest a nervous curiosity generated by a lifetime of envy for extravagant passion.

Who, years past ripe, gapes open, whose nearness to ruin adds an occasional beauty, discernable only when bent down, nape exposed. Shorter than average height, clean-shaven, whose head is too large for his once-dainty body, hair brushed back, thinning at the crown.

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Whose method of dealing with the boredom of having outgrown libertinism and assuming the courtliness of solitude is consistent self-mockery. Either it's a well-oiled universe or a chaos huddled together; still he's a womanish character, unanimal, counterfeit, scurrilous.

Who freely divulges the secrets of those he feels no loyalty for,

whose moral determination bypasses learning, thus strengthening a tendency toward evil. Having slingshot an invective toward the dead priest who bore the god's stigmata, only to fall to the ground in a fit of uncontained repentance, how brightly does sorry aureole his trembling body, sweaty and resentful of the fervor of crowds, who mistakes his unswerving caprice for childlike profundity.

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Whose technique consists of flashing eyes, a punctual grin, and a barrage of unwelcome questions: How frequently do you follow yourself, Why do you not share.

Who pours cold water on himself, shrieking as he does, and turns over, but with some show of modesty that used to be very provocative. Who watches through his fingers the heroes of his age come and go, Mahler's Fifth Symphony in the air, redundant as an overcast sky.

Whose elegant self-control conceals the mundane ugliness of one whose narrative of rejection has transformed his desire to be stripped of yearning into a source of authority. Who nurses his one cocktail as everybody else starts building their dioramas of suffering, who grows in and out of a deception.

