

xii. *Peggy.*

(Jackson Pollock, *Eyes in the Heat.*)



The day I first met Peggy Guggenheim  
near her palazzo on the Grand Canal,  
the vaparettos' friendly sound  
under a brooding sky  
brought intimations of that distant time -  
melancholy, almost incorporeal -  
when I first found  
this waterlogged location.

A overly familiar cry  
made me turn with scornful irritation  
and an aggrieved stare  
to see, beneath a large rococo pair  
of spectacles, her frown, playful and grim,  
and, balanced dextrously along one arm,  
her faithful companion in pampered bliss:

*Do take my darling Capucino for a swim  
and he'll give you one big wet woofy kiss!*

Beyond that crazy masque of wayward charm  
I see the light of sympathy  
reaching out with nonchalance  
to quietly caress and calmly praise.

She has invited me to dance  
with all the proud agility  
of Mr Pollock's masterful displays,  
where looping light and shadow wildly fling.  
She allows no wavering.

I move across the canvass gingerly  
feeling ill at ease and out of place,  
but when I turn and see what has been done  
in unlikely loops of tangled grace,  
a new chapter has begun  
in my long odyssey.

My creation is triumphantly  
unfurled and the medium is red  
and lavishly applied - shed,  
spattered, splashed and swirled.

The ancient masters, with due deference,  
are solemnly agreed  
that this artist has indeed  
achieved a work of wild exuberance.