

RAINER MARIA RILKE:
THE FLAMINGOS

In mirror images like Fragonard's
Is nothing of their redness nor their whiteness
Beyond what could be given in a likeness,
Saying about a lovely girl: She was

Still soft with sleep. For if, amid the planting,
On coral stems adroitly pivoted,
They stand in clumps, like blossoms in a bed,
They court themselves with courtship more enchanting

Than Phryne's: till their necks reflex to harbor
Their pale eyes in their own sweet feather-arbor,
Where black and apple-red in hiding lies.

A sudden envy shrieks through the partition;
They, having stretched themselves in arch surprise,
Go stalking off into sheer supposition.