

Gail White

Statues of Antinous

are everywhere and you run into them
in unexpected places -- Amsterdam,
New York, Vienna -- where you recognize
a teenage boy who might have taken off
his clothes to change for soccer, with a mop
of curly hair all brushed one way, a nose
like Nefertiti's, and a sulky mouth --
you'd know him anywhere, as if you'd seen
his photograph, as if he might turn up
delivering a pizza. While you might
walk by Saint Paul and never notice him,
you can't miss young Antinous. And not
because he did a single thing. He simply caught
the emperor's eye. His immortality
was Hadrian's love. With cities, obelisks,
and marble busts, the emperor deified
a face that still lays criticism flat.
Does anyone love you as much as that?