

Colours

He inquires of me one day,
What colour are you?
Pointing to a tall museum pillar
Dressed up in chartreuse green
He says, that's the one.
I glanced at him and compared critically.
Hmm. Yes, bright and vibrant,
And daring to stand out.
Even inside his careful disguises,
That's him.
But what is colour?
Colour in the wider universe
Is what is emitted in photons
Through excitation and energy.
Substances can only emit certain kinds of light
And absorb the same kind back.
But on Earth, things are more complicated.
A pigment colour is determined by
What shade or shades of light it reflects,
While all other are absorbed or scattered.
His yellow-green in the heavens
Is the shade of our mother sun where she radiates most.
Young and life-giving,
And so far, well away from middle age.
How like him to pick
The colour that has the most to give back here.
And what of you? he asks me again.
How can I reply but with black?
As a pigment, it is the best,
And absorbs all the light that strikes it, giving nothing back.
As a feature of space, it is the emptiness,
The vacuum that makes up most of everything.
But in my youth I was turquoise once--
A compromise between my parents--
And shades of blue and purple, too.
A collapsing blue-giant star, I'd say,

Shading through the ultraviolet.
But blue giants have a nasty way of
Doing too much too quickly.
They make grand supernovae
And collapse into black holes
That eat up their companions,
Absorbing more than light, matter, too,
And greedily refusing to give it back.
That's me.
And what are we together?
A passing fling, trapped in each other's gravity.
For now, we spiral closer.
For the first time in my short, lonely life,
I can bask in the glow
Of your main sequence starlight
And wonder what it's like to be like you.
What a change from the harsh x-rays
Of my own accretion disk.
But what of you? Why stay?
Your fate here is only death.
Soon I will begin stealing matter from your surface,
And in the end, swallow you
Into my blackness, too.
I don't want to hurt you,
And I don't want to lose you.
In the end, though, if another brilliant star
Does not shoot by and pass too close,
Disrupting our gravitational spiral,
We will become one body, not two,
And from this embrace,
Neither will escape.
What do you pray for now,
My main sequence companion?
Even if my soul is black
There is more to me than the vacuum.
And without you, I am just another black body,
Slowly dying,
Until I'm as cold as the darkness around me.