Reading *Heart of Darkness* in Summer

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Your canvas is thick and dark and beautiful.
Your jungle rivers breathe
and glide in tropical nights, twist and glimmer
with all the beauty of a body dancing
in the moon's full light
that falls on lonely settlements
where white men hide their stolen ivory tusks
in battered crates and sleep to the drum's dark beat,
tossing in fear and disease and doubt
on rickety termite-ridden, make-shift beds,
waiting for the hope of dawn,
the blinding light to arrive.

With you, it's mystery again, life,
Conrad. That slow motion of season
and color and death on this horizon,
these leaves of shadow, these terrible passions,
this glow of the sky.

I hear your steamboats whistle
and the seamen rustle
at the changing of the tides.
And I do not do you justice
or your long experienced life.
But, reading your very careful lines
I jump into a coral sea
and dive, dive, dive
into that which is stately
and worthy and lonely
and alive.