

DESERT SOLSTICE

TRINA GAYNON

—*St. Jerome Reading*
Giovanni Bellini
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

Once again you've read
through the dinner hour,
not much in your larder

anyway. Your supply
of candles runs low.
Stacks of books never will.

Just another page,
a few more minutes
in the sun—the stone bench

you sit on still warm,
your bare feet stretched out
to soak up heat from sand.

The lectern your book
rests on tilts to keep
pages free from shadows.

The cave that shelters
you while you sleep stays
cool, inhospitable

to old bones and lean
flesh. Closed, that book will
will be a banked fire, hold

back the chill. Eyes tired,
your lion never
strays far, remains on guard.