

The Party

Martin Robertson

The light falls equally on all; it glances
from brilliant colours and bright faces,
sinks in dark stuffs and secret looks, and shows
the simple to the curious.

And all are here—the easy and the bright,
putting quick words to ready thought;
the slow, the shy, the dull, the worse than dull,
whose laughter like a leper's bell
falls in its own silence; and silent some
whose thought seems strangled in the womb,
whose nails are broken picking at the knot
of Gordian anguish in the heart;
and others in whose silence sounds the roar
of a remote, fanatic fire.

To each a tower: fanatics have their dream
—Utopia or the martyr's palm—
The chatterers have their sound, the beautiful
their coloured-shining, lacquered shell;
even the tongue-tied struggler jealous guards
his refuge of unspoken words.

It takes long plotting or a lucky chance
for two to leave their towers at once.
One, heart in hand, stands at another's door,
but she is busy with her hair.
One at a sill sighs, but the inmate thumbs
absorbed the book of his own dreams.
And, once met, one or both may yet in fear,
or bored, slip in and slam the door,
for we may hate the tower of loneliness
but still cleave to the tower of peace.