

**Martin Robertson**

**For Rachel**

Above the sea and the wide sand gulls fly calling  
or walk far out by the ripples' edge, where children  
paddle and shout. The waves rustle. Yet silence  
encloses all in crystal. This is an empty  
world, where bird and child exist like water  
and today is yesterday and is tomorrow.

Unaware, at least, as birds of the past or morrow,  
at work alone on a sand-castle, or calling  
another to see some trove dredged from the water,  
unaware as waves almost, the sanded children  
dot like sea-birds, sea-shells, the beach, that empty  
accepts their cries into its crystal silence.

You, though, reader, must watch outside the silence  
with me, since after-knowledge sets tomorrow  
to mirror yesterday—images which empty  
the moment's brimming being. Not us they're calling  
but others within the crystal, child to children  
as gull to gull across the sand and water.

Look, on the sand a small way from the water  
a child is building, wrapped in private silence,  
small crystal world within the world of children,  
a castle that waves (we know) before tomorrow  
will smooth back into beach-sand; as shrill calling  
of child or bird leaves the next moment empty.

Look on the walls, lofty and from no empty  
moat upmounting, but straight from shining water  
bravely bridged—flagged battlements recalling  
story and dream. . . A sadness in your silence  
recalls me to mounded sand. A windy morrow  
shakes the crystal bubble about the children.

Light slopes, lengthens the shadows of the children  
parting, gathering, trailing across the empty  
sand, in evening's awareness of tomorrow.  
Brief wind ruckles gulls' feathers, wrinkles water,  
drops, still. Break from above into this silence  
out of the outer world loud voices calling.

Authority breaks, calling, the world of children.  
Gone the seagulls, silence. The beach is empty,  
and water, advancing, renews it for tomorrow.