

**Martin Robertson**

## **Fossils**

Here in this rock lie stony semblances  
of shells—here was the sea;  
and in this coal a leaf—this was a tree.  
Leaf and shell  
are with us still  
but delicately other than these;  
a world of life perished and vanished  
taps us these messages.

Hearts flower in words, or works of hand and mind,  
song and colour and stone,  
or in the whispering of two alone;  
melting mist  
or tough to outlast  
their time, their race—perhaps mankind,  
featureless in a swarming desolation  
as light falls on the blind.

Paris loves Helen in all tongues of the world,  
Gorgias Tamynis on a sherd  
in a scratched verse, and A.G. on a wall  
in chalk R.H. On the Roman vault  
Adam is made man in one image, Eve  
in another woman, for love.

Love is the heart's flower  
not only in these lovers'  
cries—in all that sprang  
from Michelangelo's hand or Homer's tongue,  
all craft or thought  
achieves with heart;  
a little known,  
world on world gone.

Spare a small grief  
for lovely shell or leaf  
that loosed or crushed before its hour  
left unfulfilled its being, nor  
vanishing stamped its image on  
the less ephemeral stone.