

The Embankment

Martin Robertson

The river to the sea
yields, slides up the stone the insidious tide.
The darkness stirs along its lifting spine
in slight but bitter wind.
Stir the bare trees, and on the benches stir
against the deepened chill the worse than poor,
the driven and lost,
who cast or crushed out of the casual world,
drawn to the river but from it still withheld,
take by its side their rest.

Monks, harnessing the hungers of the flesh
to spiritual flights, less cold, less hard
make their deliberate bed
than those that huddle to the bleak and harsh
night here; whose lives, which life has tried to quench,
seem shrunk now to their end;
who here not even in dreams can reach the fields
of peace and hope,
when up from foot and finger hourly creeps
stronger the tide of cold.