

**Martin Robertson**

## **John Ruskin's Wedding Night**

Quick to beauty more than is common  
but reared in rigid abstinence,  
children's light voices and cool hands  
were all he dared to dream in woman.

The statue underneath the stays  
waited in marble innocence:  
a light such as in Paradise  
flowed from the smile of Beatrice  
should fuse them in its white embrace.

The temple-veil rent from his error  
revealed the body's subtleties  
flushed from the warm blood's quickening.  
The yielding and the stiffening,  
the wooded clefts and the hot spring,  
chilled him with horror and with terror.