

Anna Nickerson

[The room was plainness and preparedness]

The room was plainness and preparedness:
The private put away, the volumes shelved,
Her thoughts, like chairs drawn out from table's edge,
Awaited those who knew how to be guests.
The page, like linen freshly laid for tea,
Bid hieratic welcome to those gods,
Or ghosts, or guessed-at others who—she'd heard—
Patrolled the streets of late modernity.

None came. Time passed. She left the door ajar—
She thought she'd heard the breath of the unknown—
But through the door there only swept a gust
Of fumes and dust and waste, and she was left a-
mid the disappointing debris of the world:
Its fag ends and canisters of laughing gas.