Purveyors Of High Class History

The past
is a comfortable city
with typical seasons:
long hot summers
Botticelli springs
Dickensian winters
autumns of nostalgic leaves.

We are rich
yet do not have to work
our ships
continually encounter
Indies.

And we are gentlemen
our women, ladies —
except those midinettes
our mistresses
to whom we ride
in curtained coaches.

There are no poor
only red-faced commoners
with comic phrases
who know their place
and proper distance.

How times have changed . . .

. . . our electricity
constantly imperilled
by distant generators;
one day
a switch will be thrown
and the iron lung
which breathes for us
will cease to breathe.

Anthony Edkins