At an Adelaide book launching

The grand refurbished staircase spirals slow,
Deep carpet muffles each ambitious tread;
Rich timber, rich brass fittings catch the glow
Of that sweet light diffused from overhead.

Advanced upon the rise, coiffured and tanned,
Nonchalant against the balustrade,
The famous poet languid flaps his hand
And wafts aloft a sprightly rodomontade.

We're full of envy, admiration too,
We acolytes who throng the entrance hall,
Where brazen urns reflect on who is who
And ancient charts project from every wall;

When soft - surreal with virtual coincides!
As from the Fellows' Gallery higher up
A portly daughter of Parnassus glides
In plaid and twinset, bearing Hebe's cup

Or something like - a heavy hemisphere
Or nardoo stone, an Island anchor weight,
A granite wheel unbalanced ... Weird draws near,
Portentous, enigmatic as blind fate!

The poet hesitates; the press gone speechless, parts.
The stately figure sweeps across the floor
Beneath the sign, "The Institute of Arts"
Etched back to front in glass above the door,
Adriall Mitchell: At an Adelaide book launching

And out into the world of common clay.
Amazed, his flights of fancy miss their mark;
Transfixed, it seems there's nothing he can say,
His fizzing wit gone whistling in the dark.

What did it mean? What might she signify?
Her arcane meaning endlessly deferred -
The first cast stone, well-aimed, wants no reply ...
The art of sinking waits upon a word.

Adrian Mitchell