

CHAMBERS OF THE HEART

Anne Emerson

A coiling many-chambered human heart –
a nautilus – in death it breaks apart;
its form deforming under stilling sand,
unless recaptured by a human hand.

By pearl and silk, or dirt and rags rebuilt,
a shell grants someone brilliance or guilt.
So, was he soaring to creative life;
or shellfish, butchered by convention's knife?

That person whom we loved – a man or saint?
The one derided – villain? Oddly quaint?
What author walks the beach to pick it up –
our spiral shell – and see its heart lit up?

Its owner breathed and moved in sandy bed;
we might have known him there; not raised him, dead.
Let's make him once-more living – give him style –
avoiding hasty judgment without trial.

How lies the light upon the sand today?
Who walks with us, about the salted bay?
Alas, a different shell entices on,
while waves envelop this; its moment gone.