

ON WATTEAU'S *FÊTES GALANTES*

Philip Higson

Under the stately trees of ancient parks
They shimmer in their satins, poised and prim,
Too decorous to chase a reckless whim,
Too stale for bubbles and too dull for sparks.

They voice, in whispers that we need not hear,
Trite sentences that swoon and trail away;
Even their children, solemn at their play,
Seem to have sensed that nemesis is near.

In every scene stares, motionless, ignored,
From lofty plinth a ripe voluptuous nude,
Her potent beauty with more zest endued
Than the whole vacuous crowd of bores and bored:

For, spurned by rich-clad counterfeits' disdain;
Merit waits, naked, to resume her reign.

"On Watteau's *Fêtes Galantes*" © 2006 by Philip Higson

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