

Martin Robertson

Dinner

A plateful, nice
and plentiful.
I need not measure the amount
this course, next meal. . . The alcohol
I wash it down with warms the soul. . .

Sugar and spice. . .
Shatteringly
clatters back in the bleak wind
an ill-latched shutter of the mind.
I glimpse out there
a swollen belly, hollowed eyes,
blank stare,
where once a day or once perhaps in three
hands of careful kindness count
into the bowl the grains of rice.

Far away, far. . .
But look across
the street, or two or three streets. Know
featureless faces ground by gross
poverty, in common loss
unsingular.
Here a pittance-
pension gives the ailing old
a choice between hunger and cold.
There a child
is cheated of its natural star,
forefailed
through odds of brutal, hopeless circumstance.
But pangs of conscious conscience? Oh
what candyfloss
I know they are.