

**Martin Robertson**

**That Way Madness Lies**

**1**

When first ghosts of our own begetting  
force us back to the precipice  
and empty air sucks suddenly  
under our heels,  
the sharp shock is its own cure, telling  
how vain are our imaginings,  
and soon our feet are travelling  
accustomed streets.

But at the second and the third return  
our jaded souls respond more slowly  
and in the general hurly-burly  
the solid truth no longer stands alone,  
and anyone may one day come  
to see the truth itself in ghostly stuff,  
and then the void beyond the cliff  
will swing him down and swallow him.

**2**

Life narrows down between our closing arms,  
between our hands, between finger and thumb,  
whittles and whittles and there is nothing there.  
The bodily earth about us, loud and lit,  
touches the senses, nothing further; form  
thins into smoke, thence into lightless air;  
the soul in the blackness of uncentred space,  
knowing nothing, sweats with fear.

### 3

Fled are the open sky, the easy slumber.  
Now in a narrowing chamber  
we pace and pace and turn, and pace and turn,  
and turn again.