

Martin Robertson

A Hoard

Walking in the darkening dusk
I saw the thinnest sliver of a new moon,
a day or two only, tilted on its back,
low down in the quick-faded southern sunset
over the ocean rim. I looked at the moon,
looked up searching stars. And I thought I heard
“Would you like to see the planet Mercury?”
I was tired, jet-lagged, half dreaming. Is it a dream?
I turned and saw a little way off a bench,
a man and a woman sitting on it, elderly,
(my age) and the man again “Would you like to see
the planet Mercury?”
“I would” I said. “I’ve wanted to all my life,
which is quite a long time now.”
“At its brightest this month” he said, and showed me how
working up from the moon, off to the right,
I could find it. I followed him, and made it out.

Six months ago above an Aegean harbour
Jupiter occulted. And above the huge Pacific
Mercury last night.

One long ago summer midnight in the Thames valley
I came on glow-worms. Years earlier still, at dusk,
fireflies flickered beside the Ionian Sea.
In that same far past, a Cambridge winter evening
gave me, amazed, the Aurora Borealis.
Later again, but still a long time ago,
walking home, a long cold walk, past midnight,
I found the whole world round me suddenly whiten.

In memory’s chest a drawer full of certain treasures.