

## 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.