

Finis

Martin Robertson

Under the grey sky
he stood by the grey lake
and turned the sword in his hands.
There were gems in the gold hilt, but it was not that
—the work was wonderful, and the much-used blade
marvellously fresh and keen—it was not that,
not that at least chiefly which made him hesitate,
and laying it carefully in the reeds at last, go back
and tell the king he had tossed it in the lake.

But the dying king knew better
and sent him back to the lake.
He turned the sword in his hands.
The king his master was dying, this was his sword,
the sword was beautiful and it was his master's,
his master was dying, the bright circle was broken,
withdrawn all brightness to this brightness of a sword
He laid it among the reeds again, went slowly back
to tell the king he had tossed it in the lake.

The king was not deceived.
Angry? No. Hardly sad.
Beyond sadness and anger,
but still the king, his master to be obeyed.
“Toss it in the lake,” He went back to the lake
and stood and turned the bright sword in his hands
then tossed it flashing towards the middle of the lake.
A hand came up and caught it, swung it, a bright circle
in the last light, before it sank in the lake.