Martin Robertson

Parenthood

Husk flakes from the seed
and nothing in plant or tree
cares if it sprout or wither.
Nestling and cub go free
of the uncaring father,
the season-sloughing mother.

Child of man and woman,
slow from the womb coming,
sleeping curled up long,
awake netted in human
care, lingers among
down, under spread wing;

growing, never grows
wholly away, stays
linked still to parents
by fibres, filaments
charged with subtle currents.
which must flow on to others.

Must we then, human, envy
beast and flower? netted,
knitted into this knot,
envy beings empty
of memory and thought,
of threaded mind and heart?

No. Knowledge of self
compels knowledge of others.
Knowledge compels love.
Love makes us.
Yet endeavour
to loosen the child's tether
and to leave soon enough.

This poem is reprinted from Now and Then, the website devoted to the poetry of Martin Robertson, at http://rtnl.org.uk/now_and_then/