

Martin Robertson

Night

Between Orion and the Bear
the buoy-lights of the planets float
marking the charted darkness where
(a channel for the silver boat,
the golden boat) the Zodiac
threads the constellated black.

These sparks, I know, are world or sun
varyingly vast and from a vast
difference of age and distance spun
out of the chasm of depth and past—
but surely no less truthfully
age-traced patterns on a domed sky?

A heavier darkness, dull as felt,
creeps up across the pattern, damps
then blots the sword, the studded belt,
Betelgeuse and the clear lamps.
Suns burn, worlds spin unhindered on.
This veiling is our earth's alone,

The cloud is climbing on my sky.
Star after loved star vanishes,
and these no breeze shall by and by
uncertain unchanged to my gaze,
since they are dead and I am old.

The night is trackless, deep and cold.