

# Calenture

*by* Iain James Robb

## CALENTURE

The horizon is marked with the still sculptures of dead gulls;  
A young man floats off slowly on the ravishing vine,  
Of a cold deep on a fragment of a boat shorn from travels,  
To anywhere more than the last lees of the brine.

The lines of breakers are baying like flogged, hobbled horses:  
Which still I have fresh knowledge of, when their bitter wine  
Plunges through depths of sorrow in their more remote courses,  
To lead my lopped craft to their strands serpentine:

Strands of hair, as the long drifting ropes of the seaweeds  
Cling closer to broken spars and masts, making trees,  
Long cypresses marking the empires of lóst deeds:  
Fling my own rope towards the tall rays of their stays!

I've rowed lame and limbless where stars fall in gold ladders,  
Upon the brinks of meridians marked out in wracked ways.  
Let my hull find its harbour in coves decked with lost rudders,  
Against whipped, yelping vaginas of Virgilian seas.

Upon the broad and barked alleys of shattered ships, azures  
Of dead, singing tropic zones wept from the windlass  
Of skies, circling torched from the points of that arras  
That masked drifting chimeras, straddling sunk stevedores.

I've sailed far from hemispheres, to quays that are ghost-ports,

Where burning fleets threw a blanket in nights of pitch flares,  
Drew past reefs where 'haps blind Polythème still gibbers,  
To reach the charring flotillas, with gales: saw the sports

Made with surfs by vague moon-shadows of dolphins,  
Past the calcified forests, pink as birch-scalloped skin:  
Beyond lone markers of kelp adorned as emerald brooch-pins,  
By the lost fingers of winds, and placid mists grey as tin.

Still I conducted my journey through impassive capes and,  
Under vaults of burnt ozones, rocks where shitty stray feathers  
Made quills, which wrote in muddy ink their 'nothing whatevers',  
Dead epistles that float in zones of soaked and draped sands.

Five miles undertide, are there carved plinths, cased in magma,  
Which house dark gods in their arches, of dead cities, once born  
Where comets weep their methane sperm in worlds of ammonia,  
In galactic arcades millennia from blue eyes, of vaults our own?

I could have drunk myself too deeply down, 'neath lonely quasars,  
Under spheréd flights of seraphs white, in prison-lakes of fire:  
Caged in shadowshow forevers, swept wet-dead in eon-cold  
mirrors,  
Gliding Ferris-wheeled in quivering pools of liquid-cloistered  
choir.

Are there past and sadly ancient songs of nymphs asleep awaking,  
In the waves below these souls that sob, in shut and burning  
bars?  
Above, the twittering kingdoms pulse in distant flutes, in lyres,  
sing  
Or pitch tides' hushed and modal ridings on their glittering  
guitars.

Where the fountains of whale-spouts hail the phantom of Jonah,

Aurora's maid, with her side split, marked her cold Carribean,  
Where gliding scents of late jasmines recreate their corolla,  
That unfolds tiger-tones of garments made once in Midian.

Where clouds hide the faces of pale crucified children,  
Star-strapped to the mainmasts of sun-burned coronas  
Which burst out in golden wounds, of shackled striatas,  
I was lapped by that scaffold where the red sky bursts open

In the tattering slash-tracks of a diamond-marked pen.  
Beneath the violent veneer of the circling billows,  
The keel's drift lifted the skin of the crystallised rainbows,  
Caught in the mirror of mortise-locked diluvian ocean,

That made its beam capsize fragile as a freshly torn wren.  
I heard and saw thunders through the white gems of skylights,  
And tumbled under the cold foam that hurdled and spun,  
And drank the roaming residuum of the menstrual moonlights,

That flooded heavy as breast-milk on the rim of horizons,  
Through obsidian pathways, pitched and silver-laned seas:  
Reflecting skies raped with razors, when the bright births of suns  
Were chased away by their shadows and the frail wings of breeze.

Across the liquid green pearls I saw the dead troops of seagulls,  
Flagellated in trails by those finned things of the deeps,  
Raising their eyes hungrily on slack-wired, cherry virginals,  
Of white coats traced with crimson, where innocence sleeps

On what it was like once to hunt for the fr esh krills,  
To fish on the sheer backs of stalls 'midst the steeps,  
Of swift withering billows: O, whip me with spar-spills!  
Splay my white throat quite open, 'neath the towering heaps

Of the longships sprawl-spraddled on the long backs of water;

Gilled corpse in a halter of planks, have me feel her,  
The bride of grey Neptune held rein by with tow-ropes:  
Flog my locked shanks beside her, let us taste psychotropes,

Of the mixed marks of wind-raddled fermentings of seaweeds:  
Sat in hails - tones of metal 'midst the verdigris gateways,  
Of keels claimed as heirlooms to the 'soddened's and 'sanded's,  
The long flickering tendrils of green terraceways.

Thrash me hard with salt tendons, you naiads, in blue glades:  
Constellations of cuts, preserve your map of passed journeys.  
Strip the flesh into petals that foam forth new Pleiades,  
That are abandoned by starlight, that flays where it fades

Into the skin worn to poppies, tear me deeper and new braids:  
Strip the flesh into petals that foam forth new Pleiades.  
Constellations of cuts, preserve your map of passed journeys,  
That are abandoned by starlight, that flays where it fades.

Oh, I would lay for an age in the deep hanging gardens,  
And sing to the black spiralled winds around vine-trees,  
Father, to drink of different substance than hardened  
A dry soul made a lost child, in the ash-tracks of leas.

I have mastered the art of my travails, so travelled,  
Have crossed pain from pleasure with somnambulant ease:  
Yet now all the rigging's ripped the light is unravelled,  
On the heaving intestines of the storm-porched seas.

I'd rather go away to topaz coasts, where pining dryads roam,  
And play the mates of minotaurs, who send their valiant young  
Safe from the bleaker breath of tsunamis, black currents  
oversprung,  
To bathe their sex in rims of silver shores that sigh so far from  
home.

To snowbound breasts of melting origami, rocks and vapour,  
Let the clefs of distant peeling bells rise up beyond their staves;  
Do faces of drowned gorgons bleed the cliffs of other colour,  
Than the slate that stings a sea-maid's soles in silent coca-eaves?

Past all that sunken spray above there always comes another...  
Ugh! See, mother, now the float's let go, I skip below the waves,  
Once fought before support was spurned, effluvia... ugh! mother,  
Now I ride no plank...of lucent arms when dawn upheaves,

Embracing the oblivious oars of driftwood turned to cinders,  
When the chorus of hushed gongs afar, the songs of dying angels,  
Flit in zephyrs from the palsied lands of pale pubescent martyrs,  
Bound on idols, doomed to bleed and dream, of sunken citadels.

I could have seen those Doric columns, in the cold grip of a fever,  
Now housed by drowning titans, from the starry ways past time,  
Rocked to sleep, so soon forgotten in their deep windless forever,  
Not gashed here, where Poseidon's hand writhes in its rime;

And it's no part of my own interests to bow down here, father,  
To the cold pain of the day's frost when night's preferred: a  
Long patch of light's seizing heat hurts my sight: rather  
The insensitive blankness with its cool tintina-

          bulation when warmer waves lap on the islands,  
Like points made by marbles where the moon makes her aisle,  
Shook with the tinnitus chiming of beckoning headlands,  
When the senses are stretched past their dream infantile-

And freeze with new feelings of floating past meadows,  
In these radial straits that change to visions of green:  
And the tides turn to grass that gulps division and swallows  
Variations through verdance, down to shades of no sheen,

Beyond the colour of our eyes, papa, or that of the vessels  
Of glass that's as dimmed as this dull fluid I'll ride through:  
With sides cut by cravings, when a greener hope travels  
To unseen hills of a fresher shade, set through the blue.

