

Eternally Shall Be the Leaves I Rest

by Iain James Robb

All greatest things are tokens of themselves:
They need no tongues to say why they are so,
To say why suns surpass historic gulfs
Or why the rain sheds more tears than the snow:
Yet man must strive to paint what falls beneath
The glance of calms and restless belts of storm-
And lulls in tranquil lands that give due form
To all attires of upland, plain and heath.
It is the poet's duty here to die
In thought, each time they pierce beneath the dream,
Each time emotions there keep company
To all the fresh immensities which teem
In rainbound beads: to find each word a lie
That binds merely to speak of shallow weather,
Making pretty claims that life will bind together
All things, by peace, in time: not such was I.

A poet I was who wrote no flatteries
For serfs who would be kings, who made such lords
Of all those ones whose temporary words
Sought just their time to fill, with draught that dies.
A harsher thing it is that her I followed
(And left the road of, hers set far enough)-
A stranger, painful thing that here I sorrowed
To find the path they've crossed, for her I love.
Though she sees those and no more seeks for me
Than sun ere resurrected dies and grieves
For seasons of the butterfly and bee,
Before it rise back languid for the harvest sheaves,

I'll think of her just once before I pass
And leave my lines beneath no myrtle's leaves:
But 'neath a willow's stark straight shrubbery,
With no-one looking forth to ask me why.

The ghost horizon is my looking glass,
As I walk past these restless lanes of leaves
That still bud thrushes once their summer green
Is lost, though some may find my words and sigh-
And find my future, no fame here to glean
Though fames of theirs will die before I die;
And someday I may die inside my dream,
And realize life of mine was vanity:
My dreams not tendered yet - my life's not been
Since I have lived that life shall cross its swords
To thwart my footsteps always: such I've seen
And here my life I've left, my ghost of words.

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*O that I may sleep an age beneath the rushes,
Beyond all age and ageless as a kingdom's sway-
O lasting yet past stone arcades the future crushes,
With banners that proclaim my prior age still gay.
O Autumn's wards of bronze and all the summer's blushes,
O all of what shall pass just as it comes to stay,
Speak for me dumbly singing underneath the rushes;
I'll have no tongues for other life nor thought to pray.*

Past fashions that will dwindle down and, placid, die
Before my own wrought words face silver times,
There lies a shadow (such a shade was I)
That brightens tidely once it's found its final clime.
No house of straw I think was built to live forever,
Such as these weave who know the courtly praise

That's lost from me, for them retracted never
With ornaments of taste that crown their days;
And so I lay these words down by a river,
Beneath a crooked willow, that my futures flower
My verse to last at length beyond what most remember,
Though the starling's dies at last, from wood to bower.

Though those who spurned my words may hold her heart,
As she rejected mine and found theirs deep
To pulse for her and raise her all their art,
They will fade in play before one child shall sleep
Yet unborn in the shadowed wastes of Time;
And her I loved, though all the pens of men
Race onward to engrave her in their page,
She too will pass whose eyes I trace in rhyme,
And fall for courts of loves in other age:
Supplanted where she stands, and feels no pen,
Her ghost disclosed by no horizon-line-
That paints in rain and mist the present lovers
Men may recall when lone, where night recovers
To cast them worlds of words; they will be mine.

*O mine alone, for all, for once and always,
For a page shaped here to fashion out my sphere and throne:
For a scepter cast Aurora-like by Arctic moonrays,
Something I'd not owned here still and yet may call my own.
I may yet grow beyond the farthest star's horizons,
Past the point not touched yet by a dead man's rhyme:
O to find a guide of words past all the passed assizings,
Guide stricken past the stricken shapes that waste with time.*

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The clock's hand yet spells out these errant seconds present:
It does not spell those years past this my earth's deep cage;

I have lain these lines at last beneath some floral crescent
That their ink not dry if blood will dry and die with age:
And I have lain them there as foresters in Willow-Wood,
By some fresh Nature's fledgeling-tended riverside;
With Nature all men's lines lie where they should,
With all those things that pass and are beside
The monuments that dwell with Her as sons forever,
As though man was made to dwell with Her for living life-
As, mortal, *he* could claim himself with gods.
Yet here *he'll* move as one at one, with odds
That smart me where I'm passed: by man's regards
I shall not hope to outwear sheaves of strife
As though the robes of pain could cross me never:
Yet still I sense, beyond one moment's words
Eternity shall have Her glance of them.
She gives Her laurel-shrouded diadem
To fools and wise men equally though these
Are equal fools and wise who seek to tie
Their unwise glance to meet posterity,
Across the world's stark paths and dimming seas.

*O for a crown that's gilded of a million laurels,
Comet-born, to last beyond the highest tiers of tears-
O to catch a glance far past my time of antic sorrows,
Catching better stars to hide, in what strange planispheres?
There is a place I know not where the comets wander*

*Beyond the risen souls of those past daylight's keep:
O for a soul crowned there to own, though here I squander
Dreams where I'm new riven, in the bounds of sleep.*

*O to lift a flowing robe of silver myrtle:
O to raise a gliding staff of pouring flame,
To cast me out my rank before the dead stars' crystals
Lighting up our path here where I have no name.*

*At some point men may know me as the futures follow
Hard on tracks they've lost along with Love's waste breath.
The keeper of their names will meet us all tomorrow
To send and end posterities, whose name is Death.*

And down beside a riverside, in Willow-Wood I've wandered;
Now my dreams are left if light lives, though has lost its way,
Now light in dark seems merest light self-squandered,
As a bird's voice as it dies within its roundelay;
With all of this I'd leave now, though my sense should perish,
With love for her I'd lose though she'd make Time her thrall,
With all that mocks me here that eons far may relish,
Since their ears would be in answer, to her softer call:
For the years will be in love with her though she may dwindle,
In her age, to something less than future flowered months
Where grass may pass, before the coat of amaranths
My verse will make, to praise her where all roses dwell.

Yet you, for whose not lonely sake I'm singing,
When you yourself feel beauty's supple burden bringing
No new fruits to nurse itself, no summer swinging
The old blush to your blood, none then I'll serve to bring-
Yet let your face be something as it was
In prior times when still I felt your youth
Would grow forever new, since daylight has
Eternal ways to state its new dawn's truth
Upon the speckled dawning of the dew.
In years of yours I shall not see I rue
No sustenance of your face to feed the flame
Of words that outlive yours: since over you
All lives must leave, and none with twofold name,
Such as my own and all my words must make
To cast my uncaught face, with doubled deity-
My face unseen through stranded wastes of Time.
To the reading eyes that sense my paradigm

Of wasted love and life may be their own,
Be still my love, and their love's cause for rhyme:
No hurts of mine their fresh hurts will disown.
Upon the velvet raiments of a throne
Kept fanned by palace waifs for Persian king,
Might not there breathe some strain not quite so soft
As I could breathe, for much of anything
That strains my art to break now, for some thing
My love would cut me by, through years that oft
Bequeath to me, as minstrel musics bring
The words to tune, to pain's sweet mandolin-
And flutes that tune to some strange wizardry;
Though death shall meet me there, I shall not die.

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Though sight of her may languish ere there render
Single song of mine to fill her throat and tend
Upon her charms, come tell me what more tender
Than those undisclosed, that all lost moments rend.
If you may find these words who live this moment
Where I do, and see her, where she will stray,
Then say I followed her, and laid this portent
In the leaves, to roost past her fair destiny,
To seek new ears of lovers when we're gone:
Yet tell her these were wrote before her glory
In her light could fade, and since it sometime shone
And yet could wane, when unrevealed the story
Of their flight by one more year's dull monochrome-
When locks of gilded embers paled by sadness,
And left one strand of colour standing lone,
As even embers leave their past hearth's gladness-
And leave just ash to mark our passage, where we're gone.

Still, future ears, to free me, if you see her

Imagined steps recaptured in your days
That last beyond my own, in fairness' favour
That plants itself in new frames, feel in praise:
And if you see her set upon her way,
Within the steps of others who will pass
Their faces on to others, let her stay
A while as they will, just as shafts of grass
Obey the winds that change them, though the same
Frail beauty marks all fresh forms that will follow
Beyond the point when bitter seasons harp and harrow
The soil which bursts its flowers without blame:
In gentler seasons where all flowers thrive.

Though she be gone in time, she may yet live
A moment on a page whose straitless course
Belongs to no eyes as these times divorce;
You'll find her form in others, she will be
The same as all the others, though she's gone.
Beneath the night's stilled diamonds, maybe she
Will make reminder of some paragon
Of beauty whose shed sight you shall not see,
And though my words skip through the valiant vales of life,
Here with no eyes to see them, still, with me
There lies no place for faith, for things, yet I believe.

*O gilded shrines that no dark starkly harrows,
Bright straying beacons of Pleiadic skies,
O dawns of twilight cast as waifs to half-sought channels
The tides passed, ever static, with their lullabies;
From break of days where wind would list-wise winnow
The chaff of man, where turns the chaff the tide
At night, by moonlight's misted meadow,
My soul coasts, ever lowly, where the night-birds ride.*

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*O sunsets drawn upward by a flock of sorrels
Panting through the ether ever at the doors of gloom-
O nightfalls, shining strangers, at the future's gallows,
Where the stars are hung and clad as wights in argent doom,
I will lay my words down underneath the willows,
O my hearts, who'll know me wightly, though I no more ache:
O dead in newer days beneath a star-beam's arrows,
To find new life, as storm burns where the alders break.*

I believe that man's cast garments are as all his closes,
As the soul below shall flourish though the flesh is best,
Can pass beyond all walks there are of prick-thorned roses:
Eternally shall be the living leaves I rest
By grass that never lasts beyond its pasture's grasses,
If ink itself shall burn and turn to other forms
Than cast on yellowed page grows dim and wanes and passes
As the sun turns still, past all its prior cruciforms.
Yes, I believe I may have died before existence
Will take me where some phoenix fire breathes me and teems
Eternally, with me, a sprite without subsistence
Down here where I'm mocked, with only jaded dreams.
Yet if you chance to read this at some stage
Beyond that point when perish elder pens,
Or those which, still to come, bequeath to age
No monuments immortal, such as tens
Through thousands find new will to call
The moments man finds as one moment's thrall,
Then do not grieve for me. I will be gone
Yet live past fledgling ages, shed from shame
For all the times I strived but failed in name,
As winter sun may cast a shadow where it's shone:
And mine may shine more brightly than there be
A light shed on a dark-surrounded sea,
By fortune's still or shifting plenilune.

Between another sundown and the noon
May come the sunrise of my name for me,
As sempiternal as the tide's soft chime
Upon the beaten breakers of a bay:
For I have seen what only dead men see-
Those moments they will fall from enmity
Of seasons that reaped no wreaths for their rhyme:
All suns that burst through cavalcades of Day,
Beyond the dying leaves and winds of Time.

