

Euphony and Fugue

by Iain James Robb

Each memory of Fall reminds me of the harvest;
Surely this is not a thought to turn the thought of dying.
Black the turning point, there is a glint at the tip of the wing:
Perhaps it rises from its cinders as I wish when I was waning,
And I could refuse to care.
If it is a kind of love which drags me to the stranger,
Then the stranger love it is to see no similar, if strange,
Within those knowing as we know them: as we stood
In the hall while they entered: yet they know us,
They looked at us and knew we were alone.
We even should refuse to care.

Beside the life that we lived from second to second, there is
A second form made from our source, no nuclei of going breath:
So catch it at the hand. If the elder breathes
Upon the child it is not essence that is waning:
The legend of the pelican which wilts on its red young.
Each memory of Fall reminds me of the harvest;
It is the dream of the phoenix dancing in the mirror of its fire.

It is the figure of a coil of string that doubles at the edges,
A reclining glaze of moonlight on the terrace of the tower,
A long lullaby to meet the queen inside her pillowed journey,
To remembrance of a pearled smile: it fills the flag of truce
The waxen night leaves on the surface of my window.
Turning to the glass that is transparent as the skin I can't
Perceive, and find a sort of peace inside its sleek osmosis;
We could chase through mazes in those deep and voiceless rays.

Beside the lives I've lived from one second there secondly is
A source we won't know, the nucleus of one thing out of one-ness:

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I'll try my best to catch it at the hand. If they should breathe
Will their breaths cross out the kingdom I've constructed,
From the particles of sunstruck dust under the corner curtain?
In this fluid fix of the surface pane, filled with a gilding,
Is the lone dream of the firebird from its pillow of desire.

Every time I say hello I'm really looking backwards
(And each one of these poems is in essence a farewell),
To all the effigies of past façades that can't even cut crystal.
This young knight has crowned himself in pity's own perversion,
Masked behind a tapestry made faint with pastel fires:
Just a poor and ill-starred child, slicing the rind off a melon;
Every time they say goodbye we'll drown in their desires-
 As I sit behind a painted screen or sat on empty tracks,
 To wait where ivy flounders, picturing the vapid backs
 Of drying brooks distilling flutes of yew and rotting lilacs.

Yet there comes in the darkness of unbridled hours the footsteps
of something approaching, something that's coming, and not yet
half-absent for being half-near. If it were a man, if it were a mortal, if
we were intransigent and vain, it could be taken as our mirror, it
could be the apotheosis of what someone stated else in words
claimed as our own. If we were made immaculate and pure, were
nurtured in a robe of frozen flame, if we walked on black gases, if
we were immortal, apparelled in ardours...Oh, it would be deeper
than the seat of seven seas. Andromeda, you would have died for
your art, the sculptor's pen that phrased your locks and made you
look so radiantly mournful on the rockface: in your perfect flesh a
figurehead, not doomed for a Titan's feast. Rise, morning star: how
golden you are. The pen holds the rest of the essent green earth and
the sum of the world, apart and caressed, is a part of its richness of
ink which spreads music, of infinite chord-lengths, through the
waters that nurture the wavelengths of innocence, waves of Elysian
dreams. Bow down for the maker, you who were made to make
nothing whatever, descend as you may. The glistening chalice where

fusions shall mingle shall reap out the chaff of your contentious clay. So, hark, for the sound of a bell is approaching, here by the window where seasons have sheltered and seeds, which shall propagate phantasmic plants, have woven their filial burial grounds. One dies and gives birth to the other, proceeds in a perfume to stay on the page, where it makes itself a nest and an altar, where I have cried and have buried myself in the hearth of my hands: the artist stands.

His are the graces that germinate entrance, the gestures the rain makes and those are his daughters, the smallest of orchids: here are the masks and the lanterns of festival-season, those moths of dishevelled ways, and a chorus of streams. His is the face on which the zephyr displays its clearest soft gauze upon the arcs and the rays of the cheekbones, the zephyr itself, as obtuse and as clear as ice-floes on the Northern and Southern extremes. His breath is the voice on which a thousand million motes of sprinkled sands light with the glow of intangible amber, the liquid pulse of a Catherine wheel alive against the strange stagnated grey of February skies. The birth of a young hind asleep on itself in the faraway parks is likewise the sense of his essence; down the stream where his reveries had rested and lingered in sledges of ice, float the white souls of wild swans.

The trillings of crickets that nimbus the cross of a windmill wreath peacock-parades in colours of light, that assert themselves decked in the shape of a sunset. The hands of the artist play like pale sails on the rim of the brook where ferns are a harp, play like sails of soft marble set down by the Hyaline grass. It is the artist's hand, directed by diamonds, those ones of the mattress of ivory-black directing our footsteps above, which unfold the route of the stars to all maidens and men. The statues of heroes and idols line all the lost hallways where ivory masks and laurels abound, for those cast out in flesh turned to substance of marbled mien. By the column where a vision brought news of a birth where a god slept comes high by the hand of a dusk the red message of wrens. They fly off beyond

the whiteness of weather like blood where it first fills the body, the art in the infant, the prologue of possible laws.

The hands of the artist, the artist's hands, are in aspect the king of enigmas; black clovers shall hide in their lines and turn them palm upwards to ace cards arisen on horses of air. It is maybe the contour of one index finger at rest in its junction that flutters in me and makes me write haiku. Perhaps it is a mystical lily, made out of man by a rainbow, that turns its watered gauze into an opal chalice, out of which the ferns grow. It was brought to the world for wounded children to taste its fluid flesh and drown themselves delivered; it may make us cry sky-blue. Each memory of something else reminds me that there's nothing that my tears can't produce from barren ground, that fails to describe the soul's most tender tempest. Each memory of Fall reminds me of the harvest: it is the image of the bird that writhes in fire which creates it from its ashes, that shall burn above to greet us from the calm hearth of its lyre.

Arietta

Speak without talking.
Smile, if Summer is dying:
It filled us with love.

The frost on the thorns
Is the crown of the forest,
Exhaling green wreaths

With beckoning breaths.
Night's golden lamps are fallen,
To evergreen rests.

They leave at day's end
The pitch sea of the ether,
To don silver sleeps.

The slate on the roof of a derelict house of the evening,
The twigs of the bracken's shadow, a colour of dry and broken
bones-

Those words that through much overuse have lost their value,
None of these, among much more, resemble anything whatever
Except slate, or broken branches, in the bedrock of the heart.

Hold me, for I was lost, naked with wanting:
Hold me in gowns of your essenceless nights.
Robe me with rubies that grant in an asking:
Clothe me, enrobed in your guileless flights.

The presence of life
In a season that's swimming,
Moults without melting.

The forests are fawns,
That drift by without wilting,
Through ageless refrain.

Down ivory streams,
On wan garlands of thorns go
The white souls of swans.

Distilling in stillness,
On dark mirrors they glide by,
Dreaming of Spring rain.

If I could somehow find a way I could communicate in colour,
Without contours or the boundaries of line, I could commune
With sleeping shadows, could assume a true communion,
Past an empty page and even blanker pen: I could assume
A wonderment that merely comes from knowing not to know.

asking:

Hold me, for I was lost, naked with wanting:
Hold me in cloaks of your essenceless flights.
Robe me with rubies that grant in an

Clothe me, enrobed in your guileless nights.

Snow shining strangely,
In evening-tide a-sleeping,
Reminds me of light.

It dances through fire:
That touches it from sunlets
Impressed in its hearth.

The white grass is blank,
Except when it shows up blue,
Where the sky sees its face,

and

I know only this;
Deeper than any blue rose,
It grows from silence.

