

Excelsior - A Poem in 9 Parts (post 2 of 5)

by Iain James Robb

II. *ByCoalport*

Your hair streams minarets across a bridge,
The bridge you turn to seven hours to sunset;
And it cups the gold that pirouettes your fingers
Into lilies for me, or strange chlorophylls,
That turn from what their *seeking mistress* harbours
In day-sentence for them. They won't supplicate;
They are not fingers that can love their *sun-*
Hermaphroditic drop and waterfall
Bleak eons will bring to blast our parks and bays.

You were *its* hidden love and worship once
And will be always if my eyes will shy
(From visions of her wrecked against all meadows,
Like all soft presents that futurities
Uproot) like hair that glides against the glass,
And convex derricks of the arch and sky
We cannot see through, far, beyond the blueness
That both swathes and blanks the bare meridians.

My fingers cling against her thighs and pass
To pastured heartfleets that her sighs unclasp;
This day the sands that swam and are our neighbours
Are draughts that perish in their motes and glance:
Mortality stretched out to a boundless moment-
The paired flesh replica of violet masques
At twilights: tower of its own fixed convex
Bow that arches past the mire of chance,

And the registers of space to limit nowness:
The temporal become the monumental,
As the stream pairs minnow-lights beyond our bridge.

Dewsift yourself across my limbs. I cross to
Touch the twins of them in arms that chance
To switch their marbles, in the chattelled shadows,
As my own enclose them in their sparrowfall.
There is a statue that your own parts dance to,
Fixed or gliding, here or there, in absent part-
As the motes that stamen hair in harvest, stammered
In eternal end, beneath the parrot day.

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Your hair streams, minarets across a bridge,
The bridge you turn to, seven hours to sunset,
And it cups the gold - that pirouettes your fingers
Into parrots for me, of strange waterfalls,
That turn from what their seeking mistress harbours;
In day-sentence for them, they won't supplicate;
They are not fingers that can love their *sun*,
Hermaphroditic flood of marigold
Black eons will bring, to blast our paths and days,

Beyond this static length of Sussex bank,
A mile from all the sleeping stoves of stony Coalport.
They once lit up when men could still see stars
Their hills of cinders, like a lighthouse prism,
Refracted outwards on night-frozen char,
Beyond the river, past the Coalport bridge;
I have a forefather who worked there — since,
The engines are made silent as the gates of fires
That passed in granite prisons that they worshipped once.
O take my hand, my child, for we are made of cinders:
Yet of glass, we shiver when I cup your star.

It is a moving photograph I choose to look at;
The sensurround of image-wheels your nearer neighbours-
No mymidons, but mites the blow will break
That stirs across these comet-tails, the Milky Way.
The breath of trees bears to their polonaise
The arms of dust. Like pollen moths in crosshatch,
The skiffs sail southward to the seas, to the seas,
But you are leaning here away from me, though
Not posted missing, in the moths of days.

The sky is blanketed two hours past sunset,
With swathes of cirrus; "Let their dray delay us?"
No, your motion's not my own; I break
And stir your trail in grass with hands that skirmish,
Receiving no trust from their pasturage.
Your touch not dust, but we were caught in crosshatch
With skiffs come southward to the face of the bays-
But you were walking there away from me, though
I count your footsteps, in the rosaries

Of white-tipped nightfall. In the Shropshire ghostyards,
They come alone, in pairs, and they take photographs;
And we have no further need now for the stones and dooryards:
Now they take care of all your needs by satellite.
Where the footsteps fall aslant in the cold roads you glowed of,
They stand blank by the squeezebox of the keening eve, those
Courts. My feet turn, shadowed in my sympathy for
Stone. I'd also go where all is not a work in progress:
For a phantom are no other parts: *those only* mourn.

III. *On Architects and Music*

Gaudi, I have focussed, by and by,
Upon those towers you constructed out of sound,

Those lunar lovelies carved in wheels of nightfall,
For it seems like music in me to explore:
And forgive me for not offering clodding psalms
To that which seems apparent. I perceive
That the subjective just can make a mimic
For a poetry composed itself in stone.
I perceive no sound existent in the wake
Of cameras, for your lovers are the palms-
Their polyphonic whisperings light the silence
With tangibilities that transcend touch,
The way that love is motion, liquid, silkness;
The softness of the windows of your nave
Are underwater blankets for the archers
That project their bows of trumpets past all dawns,
And sing broad hymnals.

Silence is their score,
The openness wherein all thought is sounded
In the notes that met great Ludwig in his chamber,
Cut off in freedom caged in open drowning,
In the liberty of thought between the spheres-
In notes that glowed in greens beyond the spectrum;
I still dwell on that static modal 'Only',
Of the 1st and 3rd of the 14th and the 15th.
In a delirium I once saw in bed as well as heard
The former, and it filled the wide void spaces
With a form that let the universe it breathed in
Fill the cage of me and brought me to a standstill
With the timelessness of life that lives in colours,
Beyond the forms I couldn't touch, there, in the rustlings
Of the ward. Cut bridge through walls, it made me witness
To no loneliness existent in the shapes
Of wheels, kaleidoscopes beyond all futures;
It was the ideation of futurities.

But back! In Barcelona, once I saw

(A family vacation, back in Zero Eight)
The angels painted in their three dimensions
On the balconies confront their reader with a world
Untainted by a sound that was not music;
In my loneliness a fracture without borders
Through which there sprang the whiteness beyond speech.
The brokenness in the sick-ward tears my corners,
Dulled beyond this void of books and cigarettes.

“Once Gothicism had become the norm,
But I choose to deck my church in fruits and flowers;
When I walk outdoors I'm wary often
Of the magnetic ventures of the paths of trams.
How ironic when they call me Gaudi
It sounds like gaudy. They were handsome once,
Those buildings that they venerate me by I'm bored by.
You have become my fantasy, Neo-Gothic towers.
There are twelve steeples that are kissed by flowers,
And God is a reflection of my sainting self.
We are here for always, who become all others;
Yet the sacrosanct is not Jerusalem.
Love itself is a kingdom enclosed in the heart
Of a snowdrop weeping always for its clarity's muteness,
But we are here snowdrops that have sunlight for tongues.
I have lost my hair now, but seek a higher corona;
Whisper this: to we who raise, there are at last the skies,
Disguised as bordered grapes against my topmost tower:
The ideation of our own eternities.”

