

# Excelsior - A Poem in 9 Parts (post 3 of 5)

*by* Iain James Robb

## *IV. From Hoover Dam*

The intent of passive presence wreathes an endless ring,  
Invisible, beyond all thoughts and change to sickness.  
This hour beats sibylline as vacancy, breathing  
Through mouths that do not taste their nothingness.

I do not know where you are; yet you stand in Kansas,  
As faint as flesh can speck, or pulleys plying  
Their phantasmic traffic in a sepia vision-  
A moth halts highwired to the buttresses,

Of Boulder Canyon; things that are no more their own  
Are Nature's; this is Your own mode of owning,  
Claimed by all You bear and take as throne:  
Shieldbright genesis of Your dominion.

And so my daughter dwindles; but I find her skin  
In the contact liquid wills, a virgintillion  
Image-tricks, against the shanks of stone,  
That laze in tensions massed from quietude.

Forgotten phase of makers, just the lights collude,  
Across the States to mark breath shut, to entropy-  
The masques Your osseous entrails seek, similitude:  
No other misereres in mock to misery.  
Blind lengths of birds disguise the deadlights no seer sees:  
Archangels mustered, trumpetless? We set no corners  
To all the dappled beam-beats that the cornflower musters,

That hymn the wind no more than broken rosaries.

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One hundredfold of captives, concrete in your crowning,  
Silhouette the bird-breaks; we can see them flee;  
Eternally, the screech, their second drowning  
Across the clouds that twin your rift, late Salton Sea-  
And Coloradic waltz, of puppet strips the twisters,  
Lift cerulean arm sans tendons - freeze to murmury-  
In amber births your tryst; what rivets spin your sisters?  
Outraise your arcs in water's weight, and skim Infinity.

Far dolmen overthroning flow, of the cliffs and the rifts of spillways-  
Your electric animals enscaffold skies, there are wheels in wheels,  
their pores  
Translate a chimera kiss (I am not among, but there are worlds of  
lovers)  
To who pant and spill their love in lamp-kissed lanes, or lope in the  
rocks and glaze.

Lake Mead your blue gate boy, impounder of the stillborn, stray:  
Closed chrysalid with floor beyond four bournes. You genesis  
In trance of arch-lights under lilac skies, give fame to a dial of  
archers-  
That last as their bowstrings glimpse at sing, or relaxing ply  
The forceps of a blue-born god: from you not the water wounded:  
Sculpture and altar locked in liquid, rocked - rock's motion, torn-  
From what was yet a stilled commotion; men's are the only -  
bounded  
Beneath your flags. On horseback, rock on the migrating dawn,

Grey souls; there are just the lines around, are lifted-  
And the Moebius windings of the stirrups ring-  
Of Akaste's wrath; what glass-blown skies, but no sands are shifted,

And who keeps the kingdom when the flood is king?  
Amniotic halt-box, rampart to a spatter-mass, of skewbald sky-  
Viridian bursts break bonds, as the water walls unbounded flee-  
And a child of birth is death and purpose shut is the relentless die,  
That turns the flame-fleshed current-crests, of faint Eternity.

Eternal whisper to we, nor the blue veined gods  
That make their love the rills that river-shift their fling-  
Not those chords you gladly swallow, on your mad guitars,  
But there seems no end of the continuing.  
And I take a plane-ride westerwards to Wichita:  
Your eyes, my daughter, are my Colorado.  
They only open masks to wanting ghosts arriving;  
They don't sense azure is its own millennium.

But you are almost more than I, bronze-blossom, daughter  
Of the Salton eye. What chandler tracks your flux of thew,  
As still as synergies, between the cliff and altar?  
It is some separate camera-trick that colors you.  
A stopsign noticed through the curlew's crisis,  
Says that I reach here: a speechless madrigal-  
Between the rock and waterfall just silence rises,  
Yet the end of absence is our end of all.

#### *V. The Tesseract*

So this is what begins at thirty? Thirty-five,  
And waiting; those make love with water mildly, they  
That sink and skim the tide's meridian fingers,  
Brown swans that bob the blue orb's plumbing sheer.  
So this has no 'begin'; not their eyes only  
That upraise their gentian forests - allfire arched-  
But to the burnished bellflower bodies turn, red aegis  
That makes the flush moon burn as water swallows sound.

And between, each pussied curve outruns blink sunsets  
That domino flip-dawn, its palsied quistadors' blind play...  
Their compass arch, unchoosers of their quadrants;  
Or not I who choose recall — halt Mnemony,  
Raise the Lazar-seconds from their green-box borders.  
Yellow goddess of stuffed fallen gods, your fauns  
Make hybrid murmurs, blueness blanched in russets,  
That outlast all talk of moons and mocks of dawns.

How strange it is that freeness captures, caught so,  
Not mine; still in mind the Spanish silence, clear  
Of carry-cloud, and a double memory's blindness  
Unknots the cords of its pavilion spring,  
For another month. And, menstruating love-burns  
Of the sun's stigmata, cross these estuaries  
That separate the mind from other self, for not I only  
Am unchosen child to hymn Your finities,

Young Babylon. The terraces forever seem to swing,  
Uphover wingtide of the palmers' sprays,  
That make their flower-pilgrimage, sigh amnesty  
To all such seasons same in open house-  
Such as the beach keeps, same with sands that blink  
Sans water — recall of the eye or ear  
To the greenhouse seasons that engender "Hither":  
Let down your ringlet-wreaths and cover me!

Birthered in the substance of the jewel of walls,  
You plant your treasure red on red, whose stalks  
Are not just those of the Assyrian meadows-  
Transplants from slumberland — but move with ink  
Far darker than the blood of jacarandas...  
The inundators make hydraulic sway  
With loins coquetting eyes amidst the palace flowers...

The glitter slides its sequined mystery

On acquiescent backs; there are no silver spheres  
But those the dusk's run rainbows into runnelled love  
For peacock sylphs, the bells amid the garlands  
Toll a time outlasting words of war.  
Ring vacant warblers out of argent channels,  
O memory my minister; unharvest swells,  
A thousand crested innocents sigh, "Amyitis",  
In a Median empire's second genesis.

Carmine steeds of Fate subsumed in torpor  
Subdued in skies alive at last, shirk place;  
Each tier the higher stadium of its fountain forest  
Plants a land imagine we no doom begins.  
Across the causeway here, reglide your lines,  
Ye swimmers, not the servants, but we find our way  
At last in other eyes of mind, pale hymnody  
That beats a silent courser's wrath in storm's design.

Pale flood in me I turn through coloured doorways,  
Beat me to sleep; eterne, let rainbows reign  
Between the eyelids of a princess who knows salt of semen  
Can engender thoughts - of flowers skip her loneliness-  
Of satins dumb as erstwhiles of her mountain view.  
How strange that freedom's nearness can be bound so bare-  
Collage of twitter-lights in plastic entropy,  
From plants as dumb as towers kill the tongues of timewards,  
Inside the free constraints of the sweeps of me

Towards infinitum, whose deeps are just illusioned lastness,  
As a jacinth flashing on a higher stair:  
Blight sun I move to; but you shine in vastness,  
Prince of the dead masques, grey harlequin, Despair.  
The terraces, pavilions breathe no breath recalls us-

I am drowned out in your utter circuses:  
Manticores among your gardens speak to me, speak sunwards,  
The tongues that my tongue slips towards empasture me.

O blue the hidden blue in me, O Amyitis,  
Your glove glides into swifts of mysteries,  
Your dewbead buds, your scent of capsized nearness-  
Was it your king that claimed you or your paramour? -  
The suspended gardens in retreat from greenness,  
And the liquescent falls between the terraces,  
Bequeath appropriate song for separated Caesars:  
I am the deadlights that engender you.

O heavens palisaded into tiers of eyes  
That serenade us past the tick-tock air:  
Prince of the dead masques none obituarise,  
Kronos makes a loneliness of *l'eau clair*,  
That outsourced itself before this twittered void  
Resumed its place where all the arch of water hies,  
For no-one now; the sweep gives birth to lilies  
More secret than the swimming glyphs who ride

The latticed sprawl of the wide whiter wave  
That outlasts all call of sands and sighs of wilted springs:  
Yet dalliance of the rainbirds in the Winter's weave  
Falls to lovers for a while before the harvestings.  
We the architects of shallows, we forget; turn sunward  
To the West, to other gardens or a sward none slew.  
We do not sense any absence, when left far behind you;  
Yet it's only by your leave we stand in front of you.

