

Excelsior - A Poem in 9 Parts (post 4 of 5)

by Iain James Robb

VI. At Antares Alpha

A pyramid carries four sides: only this one
Is surmounted by a circle, and its cone
Has all of what we claimed within its cargo,
Or that shall never find a plan, or transit now;
Though the sulphur and carmine skies that scour the deserts
Of orange and blue sands beyond would speak delay-
And drought to what we wrought, they filter to us
Though a superscreen surmounting seven colonies,

Each one a country-state; ah, City of cities,
Corbusier would be proud, though not so regular
Are our towers and cells that he'd have wrought, but glimmer
Of a different skyline suits our new mores:
For a multicolour world brings out the bravery
Man is meant to feel, though one millennia
Has passed since our Terranic forebears feet here
Pressed, and marvelled at its raft of second moons.

Your prismatic floats, the lanes glass rivers in a clew of cobalt,
Neon green and red, great shiver of a static god, of the godling-
born, you are;
Waltz off cadenza of your traffic-ramparts to a pinned horizon:
Globe-grounded, shield our spires, be our mid-pole star.
Translucent rainbows after methane floods hit the convex centre,
Our axis of the astrolabe of sigil stars,
But there signals nothing, for no ships of sail thread the
fire—fleshed thruways,

And there is just the circuit, and from base to head

There is no actual pediment, or head, just the wall of rondure:
This our world, not the hub of stallion starlengths, core
Of our selves, made godlike in the seething vertex
Missing us awhile, with bows shot sans of strings-
Light years apart from Jupiter and too-young Triton:
An older planet this, although Titania's mail
Shields us with comet-swallowing, till many trillions
Make her burst in eonly climax as our oncewhile sun:

Like Jupiter, with no more living system
To lead its second sun to where it died in crisis' flail;
Obliteration's renegades by hyperdrive, yearly
We came here carrying all the worlds we know,
With no whole forms to close the show to show light's saviour,
And though man dies, nothing from our own perspective,
To pall the replicas of what would equal time's transcendence,
Evergreen, the end of art's dominion.

And for laser-credit, visit Gaudi's full cathedral,
In Neo-Barcelona, done at last two hundred years
After its bare façade's completion, each high wingtip,
Cupid's trumpet, same in structure as one mote
Is atom's twin of its mute self; man takes the fingers
Of the artist in remaking selves, the galleried moments
Awaiting place some place, by nanobotic dumbness
That merely re-enacts what was, each painter's downstroke:
Many view them now, those thousands but not many
In relation to the works yet left in stasis' view,
Like full-created embryos in their wombly cells.

We recipients of this selfsame amniotic flux,
Are ourselves the sons of artists; this the masterpiece,
Crystal-garden world and zone of all league's quadrants,

At day or nightfall gazing up at divers moons:
Our gods not Molochs; motley-coloured mistress,
Ministress of peacock-dreams, come, flora full,
And shape your dragon-selves in jasper parks by concourse
byways,
Converging our top-towers' steel delirium.

Trans-genetic plants and animals bequeath the same svelte
children,
As words contained with image manifold, Terranic trust,
With no eyes to light their winter yet, in Central Towers-
That seems to almost skim the burgeoned afterbirth,
Marooned in ether's sea; mine is a crystal purview
On a polyhedral axis round the civic stations where
Ah, wonder, come new birds brought back as summer's
neighbours,
That have been trained no need for pilgrimage to long-scoured
seas.

If genesis at first was nuclear, bud the birds, whose burgeons
Prolong the detours of these limits, in our garden-land:
Stamens stretched aspired to high-rise, blood electric thruways,
Immune from clouds that shroud the out, or inside barbican:
And such it seems green berths, of all the moon-fled hourlies,
The stasis, and the regulated shower-shield,
Now we have made our new Atlantis for the greenhouse gardens,
Under skies that never cared much where their buds took birth.

VII. *A Deutoronomy*

1.

Beauty is not just in the beholder's eyes,
Meaning subjective: wrong, it is in the act of eye
Reciprocating truth to the beholding mind
With sense the supervening estuary;
Whenever people bring up the facile idea
Convention — *that* is based on *rationale*
That has no need of interceding thinking;
To behold true beauty is to know oneself
As human, grasping the eternal's voice,
Or what should claim us in infinity.

It is just ugly thinkers who'd voice otherwise,
And Gaudi knew this, with his twelvefold steeples:
He knew the shallows of unhumble minds
That sought to recognise their sense of value
Inhibiting the higher values of
An art that mirrors corporeal beauty;
We have to recognise that both exist:
The grace of body and the grace of art
Subsumed in higherness of deity
Either God's or Man's; each is each other's nearness:
He knew the mysticism of the parabola,
Curves of thighs and flowers that need no boundaries
But only those which give shape to our ideal fullness.
Bernini knew such, fresh from thoughts of fallen towers:
Saint Teresa's ecstasy on falls of liquid lace
Bequeaths to us a sort of Tao; the way is fragrant
With the rules of change, but nothing happens
Without purpose, the divining hand
Is both creator and created. Image fixed
Of Gaudi with a stitched coat filled with nuts,
Imitation of a vagrant by self uncreated,
As though mortification were art's utter will;
But this is not his image; life's the only sound

Transcribed in stone and out of contour rainbowed
Out of a single contour of the bluest light.
And I who write this maladroitness of verses,
I who perform yet this half-doggerel, dancing
Upon my lips only when I choose to speak
(Who have not the wherewithal to lend it credence)
Am pastured sometimes in the same cerulean,
And skip lightfooted in the dots of dream.

And I'd like to go where everything is not a work in progress;
This is not my prison, nor my diocese:
But hydroelectric beasts with jasper eyes
Lend entertainments going out at nights,
Like Christ the coloured panther with his sweetened breath
That leads the lambs in armour to their second sky:
Though my own insight shatters like a varnished glass,
Against the deadening bulwark of this flesh's extancy.

Fell emperor of our dead masques none obituarise,
Who moves through sopping newsprints as our eye-tracks veer,
What aim the ash-trail of your debit enterprise,
What sweetness feeds ambrosiac blood upon your spear?
I have refused to grow wise, I have been ancient and nascent,
Though it is only the artist then who age makes blind
To questions: but our 'questwards' is the only presence:
We do not sense the point we passed, when far behind.

Yet I could have watched before the earthquake that took Rhode's
Colossus,
And fallen prey instead to envy at the temple built
To mocking death with enterprise at Halicarnassus,
Or been a suitor to Love's temple built at Ephesus;
Artemisia's urns stay gilded in the shadowed vessels
That the weeds make in the water of the vanished camps,
Built up against the banks not even Mausolus now thinks of,

But which exist within the shadow of the amaranth.

2.

Pulchritude (if such an ugly word is apt
To indicate reverse of misbegotten meaning)
Is, to the ear, it seems, a papier-mache sculpture
Replica of that grim god that Phidias wrought;
But beauty is: is not a state of mind,
A flux that burgeons past all entropy,
More precious through the fact that one peony withers
As another shoot finds its green genesis.
It is a question not of mind, but eye
Or ear translated to simulacrum
With conscious flow, what we call entity,
Of all the godhead of impermanence
Contained in mind that sees this has no limits,
Yet what dwindles brings into eternity
The forms of angels in a liquid stasis
Of empyrean flesh that makes our lights of lives divine.

No question of taste this is: but how the simply mouthing
Words that forget now what it means to sing,
I leave you judge, of this my affidavit,
For, listen kindly: for I must this while stay plain:
This is not the forging of the current age; I pander
To what I deem shall come, misunderstanding seeks
A way to justify against demise. This does not matter:
Against the picks and trowels of the jackass ruling age, I come-
And bear me witness. If you bear my weight
And share the Atlas-burden of the freewheel cosmos,
Come, and flap your pinions in the wind's noose that nor flags nor
rises,
And ride the pain of grace and glide with me-
For I have crossed from half-light's lands to Ganges,

My heart an arid sparrow crushed, and crushing, flung
The walls of several cities burned and sundered,
Down to rest with all their pasted galleries hung-
Rebirthed the tides and tidal births needs must of suns,
Made harlequins of kings, unfelt my presence
'Midst the tinkers crowned, and beggars left to run
Forever with the gowns of starry essence
Adorned by sequined queens. And does this matter, no?
My life's a broken book that needs just tongues
To speak my name when I'm withdrawn in snow,
And lost with thoughts of lost Elysiums.

So, child, when stranded in another air
Than my language can inhabit, spare away *his* eyes-
Pale prince of manic deadlights none eternalise,
God's twin to testing tricks and mask of man's despair:
And I long gone live now as here against your presence,
On a day when laurels wait the unsoiled brows
Of envied ones: I have been sweated to essence,
And would join the humblest when the gates carouse
Of astral orbs' beams on the night's portcullis,
Parabolic window that engulfs the air:
Child, look for me when others' lamps have left us,
And I shall be waiting there.

