

Four Prospects from a Spanish Garden

by Iain James Robb

(For Dancer and Guitar)

*Between moments are no doors closed, as their mirrors move;
The Vega with its pageantry of thoughtless plains
Reflects the space behind my window. Only I reprove
The correlations of the silence: mortal time has reins-
Still the inanimate has life. And yet I find my zone
Way past the point that memories, of hands, refuse;
It seems like sacrament these days to be alone,
Naked in a world that sheds its subterfuge.
As thoughts which vanish, sanded, in a stranded sky,
We weave still in the contours of the colourbox,
That heaves beyond the dockyards to the rageless rocks,
That know no more than I of drowned antiquity-
But this we yet have knowledge of: the years won't try
Us more than we ourselves, our blanks their pageantry.*

I.

Magenta falls upon the orange orchards,
Like a sundress thrown onto the clockwork clowns
Of jacarandas, in the windbreak tremors
That escape the coast, like ghosts of thistledowns:
Or in my courtyard hosts, that make my tired seraglio,
Retreating lines drawn 'gainst a shelving shore-
Ring your rosaries, stillness, as I have before,
And make your voiceless passage my simpatico.

On the latticed wall-top come with liquid garlands;

I could have been a mote within your metronome,
And note no rite of colour in my parrot gardens
Which repeat a gaze I glanced when I was twenty-one:
Reimbursed, my own? My dear, do you remember
Dances in the shadows? Now the shade is gain-
Its loss, that merely life is what two wraiths engender,
Our ends the merest entry we mistake for pain.

Not a warning hoofbeat this, and not a warring shadow
Years weave, just sea-whispers breathed behind a sigh.
I can see my own mosaic in the whitewashed gallery,
In the grain below the lacquer of the parquetry.
Like a peacock squalling forth upon the lawn,
The cradled ones face echoes, but the dew's wet drum
Bequeaths no tears for gratitude; no drummers come
To scare away my blankness, in the double-dawn.

Yet the vision dips in birth again into its womb,
Whose voice box halts before its buttresses,
As shafts of dew in their ball-bearing bloom,
Which spoke in other climes of other entrances.
By the parrot-yards moored languidly upon the rocks,
I decide, O muse, to give your inches no more wing
Than has, at my retiring, what the noontide docks
Descent; I'm tired to sickness of your wittering.

II.

Love, if you see or hear all burst in chorus,
Imagine sure the mouth will not be mine;
It is not my own salt's call that falls before us,
And whispers to your own across soft brine.
In the daze of days I met a blonde girl once
Perhaps a span of miles south of here, and sounding
A loss I never felt qualm's loss, for rending:

Or the cruciform of its impermanence.

She left her lover dead within a forest:
A broken pact? By either's act they parted;
She lives by faith that passed, as it enacted,
In severed wrists, all darkness and its rest:
And the lesions left with redder thoughts commune
With dreams the orchids breathe, of paths surrounding
The sapphire storm-gates of the stars, in rounding
The circumflex of their own plenilune.

What could she leave here where the hours beat dry
Their postmark sentry, of her own defense
To time of faces locked on empty stairways,
Here where blue beats cross each other's corridors-
Like eyes on eyes? I saw a postcard once
That showed a girl caught within the clear
Of a lost palace garden, and the legend writ
In lilac script, "You would have liked it here."

There's a high wire masking the cicada's crow
Abroad the hill where I still hear you breathing;
Not any wonder I yet see you leaving:
Time, make of me at length a bending bough.
The straight branch shards at last; another instance
Carves its top to always till it cuts through sun;
We are torn to wholes now in the jaws of difference-
In which separation we are merged as one.

III. *Aeolus*

At twilight when I sense the west'ring breath
That rakes the coastals, and the shorebirds shoring,
(Sweep off across to me and drown me down,
And in your pasturing be my Miranda);

Too steep to feel, and yet I sense you tremor,
Strewing godspeeds and dawn entrances,
Like sailors lured upon their shills of stone
By cold voices warmer than all waters are.

The tidal hallways sleep and dumb their drums,
But waft across your path, and tighten, tighten:
Outpace the lost men's slow encomiums-
Ride and stride our way, and be my Triton.
Let bare ambitions close before the doors,
That nail the nightscape to its astral billion,
So interchange can let the floodlights in
Of shade and whole in my own aggregate.

Commingle through me, for I supplicate
For nothing more than just to hear your breathing,
Aeolus, over broad unblinking plains,
Across the swallowed dead of Ithaca.
Too deep to feel you, still give weight to weightless
Spears of light to give remembrances,
For faces bleached now beyond shape of bone,
Till dusk drains dead waves of their marigolds.

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The coins upon them make a cross, atoss
Where I play Pontus; come, and light benighten;
So meet Miranda where the currents wash,
And make her dreams less white, and be her titan.
No shadow beats atop your lower floors,
But bring her things, my oceanic daughters,
Her keep may keep beside the skylight's altars-
Sleep, less callow hands to nurse her cold?

"Reach out away from me, my hands enfold
Your touch". So turn as such, my sweet lord Triton;
Dress your buds from birth and watch them whiten:

My own spare flowerbeds are in your hold.
These fleets, blue seasons' sweep upon the halters
Reined with us, we guests of deaths that die,
Chimeras wept our way, across the waters:
And drown us out, and play my Lorelei.

Red aegis, rest within this dark park's harem,
Whose virgin empresses spill out a million
Skirts they bear for suitors, as they drip vermilion-
As Helios garb-down in my garden's den.
Dress the jesters red again and still their quivers;
I know there is a faintness yet that flails all things,
The way an auditorium of eagles whispers
Of where dull bitterns pick the caps of kings.

IV.

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The night is almost destitute of sound,
Like a stylus moving through a dusty groove
Or negative which leaves no ghost behind;
The tattered edges of the photograph
I kept supported once upon a day
When, still, your scent could yet support itself
Reclines behind the latticed hands of palms,
Which raise their homage to blue absences.

I have a courtyard sightless as the plains
That raise their lashes like the irises
Refracted sometimes, through a sepia swing
Before the gallows of a half-dark's essence.
I know this other views through different glass
Some other garden, and counts silences.
Her own are separate from the void of presence
Before the static heartbeat of the phonograph.

When light shall strike the suncrown from your hair,
Your face the shadow of its shaded star,
Will men remember when your grace weighs vair,
What age may take from now how gold you are?
The trees hold candled arcs beyond the panes
To snows that mirror those of either eye:
Your ermined rainbows arid now of rains,
Your whiteness, now their own sarcophagi.

The mantel's stand for me no more discloses
What I have tortured from its right of tone:
The tint that bleeds the juice from paper roses,
And spears of straw resigned to monochrome-
Now mown to murmurs that the Vega voices;
The pendulum seems like the ghost of chimes,
Beside this park where green or black rejoices,
And seem content each either's concubines.

