

# "It's the dead of midnight, and Orion wheels round..."

*by* Iain James Robb

It's the dead of midnight, and Orion wheels round-  
With passing road-streams as its parallax, cars  
More distant from us, as the next one's windows  
Blocks the view of riders free from traffic lanes; I  
Am not your window. As you glide, or go to ground,  
It's not through feigned modesty, at that desire  
Or this I lose now: as your mouth goes round-  
And slopes from what fills out my thoughts with fire.

If you see the stars come out my sweet, they shiver  
For themselves; they were not ever blue with you:  
But white are all the static worlds we leave behind,  
When caught up in swaddlings, when we seek the river...  
At the traffic-juncture we don't notice now,  
As a fly knows nothing of a fall from beauty-  
Nor knowledge, or of life, when there was none to know;  
The ploughman it is only tills, then fears the plough.

No difference whether office block, or sight  
Of broken lot, a lune-fall vow, before a steeple:  
As the roofless lanes are all devoid of running people-  
As the violet ranks of clouds which make their tideless flight  
Our vows. This ever even is the town or city  
That resurrects itself in us a city's paragon...  
In sleep, whose liquid lengths again, my pretty,  
Take your face, with all the naiad-lights that die by dawn.

Though we cannot see these clearly, though a cloud is bright,

And dark in pastel latticings against our stars,  
Above, and whip-scorned, riderless, in firefay flight,  
The constellations hide. There are no gravid bars  
Between them, just the sum of bare uncounted places  
Nearer here, it seems to touch, than our dumb cores-  
Between us, myriad drifts of pale, and fractured, faces...  
Tuned by sightless light that sifts and sides all shores.

We might imagine separate lives, to beat the pabulum;  
Your face I've fractured into rafts of silences  
Brings back their glass of masks. I sense our traffic passers  
Shift along like knives through night, below strange galaxies.  
-Once I had made imagine a pale martyred stripling,  
Nailed with bloodied garlands, to a willow tree,  
That jerks to jellied zephyrs, could have held my features-  
That are turned for due against you, as he shrieks, "Aiee."

We smile thus a while and we consider laughter;  
In their one-way wash of window-scapes the cars lose light.  
A cloud-wrack hangs in ganging flocks of bled magenta-  
And ignores her scarlet lattice in her floodlit flight.  
And there are no wounds our fingers tend, *memento mori*  
Is what I call you - just a smoothness lacking cracks...  
Except the hiss-performing lips we close, behind the doorways-  
That cancel out our kiss, and passing parallax.

*And I once imagined faintly a pale martyred stripling,  
Nailed along with bloodied garlands, to a willow tree,  
That jerks again to zephyrs, could have held my features-  
That are turned anew against you, as he shrieks, "Aiee."*  
Speed well my dareway darling: though the speedwell enters  
Death in den, by Fall, your eyes pass breath their highborn blue...  
There is no other colour the high night remembers;  
It also is outlasted but will fall from you.

