

Sapphics

by Iain James Robb

Sapphics

Slumber comes too late to scare awakening;
I know, before, there was a life to bind me.
I cross the streets instead and watch the rainfall
Murmur without ears.

It can know no sound but seems intent on hearing
What it has to say, or what it breathes in being
To my ear that hears not, to myself is listening,
Too restrained for tears.

There lies no mirror of my outward motion
(To lose myself in rarely traveled byways)
In my eyes, turned inward on the crooked highways
Of my downward mind.

Drifting through unstartled streets sans sunlight,
Lost to all those ones I'd shed behind me,
I wish there was a place where none might find me,
Wingless, under ground.

There is one place I know, that no roads lead to,
I go to now, towards which shards of moonlight
Shine, from saffron fields of star-blanching concrete,
Cancelling the stars.

The faces there are as the winds behind her,
Distant yet, and too remote to view her:
But if all seemed right, and if they only knew her
Would they mourn that, now?

Though her eyes shed violets under lands of azure,
Though they laughed at blessing or, at rest, an hour,
Would the almsless flowers not redeem their power
At the gates of care?

I do not know how he could conspire her capture:
For it seemed my sense was more attuned, in doses
Of her starless guile, to lips that mocked all roses,
Cinnabars and myrrh.

At a glance I died, before some strained adonic
Could find its place in words I feel deceive me:
Chanelled at the eye of thought to limp out sapphics
In pursuit of you.

It was a blessing beyond benediction,
Some antic state that made me dream I'd hold you;
And so my gait drifts in a barren country
Measureless, unblessed.

In the deads of darkening I failed to find you;
And the streetlights, vacant as the starry eyeballs
They cast askance, were as the light that, restless,
Infiltrates my rest.

I can just see darkness where that light is resting;
It is all of yours, and where its lamp is looking
It divides the eye and thought in stormy waters
Too constrained to weep.

Yet within this night none of their faces falling
Were yours; they seemed too cast from stormless waters
To sympathise with mine or all that falters
Cradled into sleep.

There is a wind that drifts against a broken window,
In a room adjacent from the one I drown in,
Every night recalling how my infant fingers
Sifted through the shore:

And thought each grain of sand contained an island
Borne up against this world of petty borders,
But each is gone; I hear the wind retreating
Say, "I leave you now."

Shall I sleep, or care enough to leave a relic
Of the daze I dream awake, in ink that whitens,
To expend myself again, at last, in sapphics,
Now, again once more?

I leave you also; now my eyes are bleeding
The face my fancy caught from wakeful minutes
That are lost as sand, that veers in windy motion,
That which holds you now.

