

# Silent Now, Against the Wash of Time

*by* Iain James Robb

Let us both stand steep, alone, this night; the tide  
Lies, hastening to us: and, far away,  
I hear the sea gulls sweep, through the divide  
That shapes drear skies, between dead lights of day.  
What worth was love? Man severs all he is,  
To make one death's remembrance of today-  
With one who knew once what the lotus was,  
That charmed one both, to yearn in yesterday.

The sea heaves forth; the mist-enfolded rays,  
Of twilight's final stand upon the shore,  
Know nothing of the secret roundelays  
That made the breasts of us, one singled core.  
We may not make it back to close a door,  
Before we part for good, without the praise  
Of sentient sunlight: gracious as before  
To light the soil lanced sweeps where lovers láze.

Your hair, now gold as autumn orchards are,  
Will someday pale, but here, below the moon,  
It reels in light. A sea-mew, from afar,  
Mocks both of us, for now, the tideless June  
Of our strained sweet cast stranded by the way  
Stands still with we; for calms of restless boon,  
Man strives upon his passions: shall you stay...  
Shall twilight times reserve their plenilúne?

What lived in you: did liquid paths of sun  
Stream bossed threads through your radiance of days,

At times, your moonlight's courtesies to shun?  
Was the night too bold for all your rounderies?  
(Her hair glides glossed, and glories in the shower  
That crystalline dominions worked above  
Arrange, with shine and shun, to shed her dower,  
Within the flood-marks of their looking love.)

If someday perfect music makes the sea  
Rejoice in us, then purple headed May  
Might throw us better flowers, maybe we  
Would tame ourselves, wreathed rest in destiny:  
But no, our voyage won't rejoin; the clime  
Of night insults us with its passive haste.  
Still, strain a Soon for us, O soil washed Time;  
Fast diamond stars: O cloud-occluded waste,

What could there be to trouble us, unless  
Advancing years we sleep through, cast afloat,  
Come over you at once: for time to gloat  
On all the things it hoards, from life's redress:  
On what it steals past scope of eyes I taught  
To turn through you? Once shuddered into sighs,  
I catch your pink and pale reflexive throat  
Refrain from sound, to split this emptiness.

A boat trails past upon some ancient line,  
That served the course of sailors, from afar:  
Before they fell through many-trembled Time,  
Like mariners who'd lost their ancient star.  
"Ahoy" breaks out in silence and "On go";  
Perhaps, caressed elsewhere by dawn's design,  
Another couple waits their twilight's show,  
Who know of nothing now of what we are.

If you watch with me, then let us mark the way

The surface of the sea-reeds' dunnish feathers  
Point out, as from the surface of the spray,  
Refractions of our eyes. The writhing tethers  
Like us, it seems, will always look away,  
Like us cast out against their vacant measures.  
There seems more point in gently dying heathers,  
Than the swift shared things that passed apart, today.

I've never lived before a life, that's travelled  
As least as far as merchant sailors may;  
Our love is soon enough ás júst a leave unravelled:  
Yet lounge with me without this wend of day.  
Departing soon to ride some sharper stár our  
Wakened fancy fairways, for some unknown face  
Will maybe leave us both one brightened trace...  
Of each our hours, new strangers that we are.

I knew that we could never be, in love, dear,  
Because it seemed too fleet, for even loss to last.  
We looked away from each our eyes. Above, hear,  
A sea-stray sways. Our laughter, sweet, has passed.  
It's now the time, to wait and watch the way  
The flowing fields, that flood their radial trough,  
Appear to trade their frames, and dance as we,  
Once held by wind, had held it long enough-

Yet though I know that we alone can never  
Become á dual projection of one soul,  
I lean to you, as to some shade-land lover,  
Though you long became as to a phantom goal  
My footsteps here are stilled a while by: gall, though...  
That I'd know you thus, when we run grave and grey;  
Yes, my lady's frame will still be all tomorrow-  
No hands can strive to frame her face, today.

What is crossed man but tossed by spiring sorrows?  
Man is no fixed star and, aimless, you have strayed,  
Upon my thought with thoughts of hiding hollows,  
That my fingers touched, but hungered as they played.  
The wheels of seas will shield a wreath the shallows  
Break to spray that fails to mouth word's wait, "Goodbye":  
Before the lights bound sounds of summer injured swallows:  
Ah, throng of Love, grey cavalcade of sky...

*And surging to its upwardness a skying sea-mew  
That veers itself to ways a weight away, from we,  
From top of rocks and top of topmost tree-view;  
Here lies the land, my sweet, and lies the sea.  
And we won't go where the great waves wallow...  
But sail our eyes at last, 'Ahoy there', 'Ho',  
Towards that ghost of outer paths, whose inmost preview  
Has galvanised your path apart, away from me.*

*If she were like the flower that escapes its hollow,  
In the drift of drowning winds, that crown its prison flight,  
Then let her stay the one that all the seasons follow:  
With their memories that come of her, to flood the night.  
Let the waves that stroke the shore sing out and last, "Neigh-Ho",  
In undertides above, where all the foam floods flow:  
To mark their tears that pass, as undine nymphs may call, oh-  
In the path not ours at last, but where a tide shines white.*

*Oh, along the salt-sea spume and rays of tarnished azure,  
At the start, your lips were close at last, to close to mine:  
And your eyes were deep amid the dells of throated blather,  
Of the coastal birds that say they'll reave not leave this brine...  
But neither of our eyes will add unto its lather,  
Since the tears won't eddy over to its store, but go:  
And we leave here ever sweetness and we leave together...*

*Like the first beads in the wetness of the weaves of snow.*

\* \* \*      \* \* \*      \* \* \*

Now are we far as near: but near to you I followed,  
In my own range way, the grace that you had erewhile thrown.  
It was a merest touch from you that I had borrowed:  
As a sea-mew scores the lilac night, and rides alone.  
Above me now a solar dart has danced and arrowed,  
In its destined place for us, to catch a dance above:  
But I knew that we would watch it both by either barrowed.  
We were each unworthy, nearness, of each other's love.

And if I could cross above this leaden sea-sphere,  
Ah, my 'love' (the word returns such mocking voice),  
Could I transcend these déadening symmetries clear-  
That life weaves, too far past me, to rejoice?  
I like the way your forehead straight and fairing,  
Your eyes, limbs, lips, your white and gold-rose thighs,  
Gleamed up against me, in your stance of staring-  
Like spring time joys that hall your stranding eyes:

And if my pale music, scorn that galls your lips,  
Is not the float at sail of othered song,  
It still whispers you a word: it sings "Belong"-  
Your own weft weaves to me, although your hips  
Are beckoning aside your side from me,  
Majestic as storm's first and ravished swan:  
Or temptress-dove amidst one ravaged throng,  
As ravishing as this, our severing sea.

The storm that floods the outer gates of ocean,  
On the floodlit plains across the whistling scree,  
Says there's someone there beside us who is no-one,  
That the storm will likewise sever 'I' from 'we'.

A seagull curves and scuffs, and cries no pity;  
The final flower of Fall, through fall, won't hold  
The whispering ways of her hair's chanced hold-  
That should sweep the feet of bronze eternity.

Time wrecks its wraith on me, this twilight hour;  
It shall not touch me; eyes of open fold  
Entrench me in the depths of you, my flower:  
That shall raise you up above the marigold.  
Your lips, soft sin, have given me a dower  
More fine than final draughts the sere's last wine-  
To rebraid your face at last: though still this power  
Fades with parts at last, at middle-August's prime.

And so, surrendered into August's thronging,  
I sit, and think of how her song at cross belongs,  
In pastured shadows lulled with reins at longing,  
From all this light's retreat - the burnished gongs  
Of tree-beats life retreats, when dower is donewards:  
Then till age may take all lustre from the sun  
(And down and up, no orbit placing sunwards,  
Lose their place with us who left before this run),  
Her prisoned wings of silken copper liewards,  
On man's mind, through each 'glimpse' unsought for sky-  
When I torment in me, remembering, whywards,  
Her face detains the day, to sound out, "Sigh."

