

Beneath the Rise and Murmur of Your Voice

by Iain James Robb

Beneath the rise and murmur of your voice

there lies a hush more rapid than the silence
meets within your eyes; the ghosts of cloudfall
also meet them there. Your tongue has murmurs
more than I can hear just now, for here
my ears are met with something else, the rush
and flutter of the waves that touch the surf
that sides the shore, that other sound of something
silenced thoughts reflect. Tonight, today
I listen to those cadences the air
breathes back upon itself, away from you
who I don't touch or listen to, not now.
My ears are tuned to some place that seems nearer,
the plash of shadowed sands upon the shingle
breathing outward with the waves from westerly,
a glimpse of winging wind that cuts their crescents
as they pass and die and rise reborn with water-
the sounds that will die out before tomorrow
once we've both gone. All gulls have gone, as shawls
of seaweed's fallen fingers on the spray,
save one, that loops and echoes with the eddies
and also veers from calling out your name.
I ride with it and plot its course to nowhere
as I lose myself, fixed by this promenade,
with wind's tongues that outstrip your tongue for murmurs,
with the wraiths that beat and breathe, upon the bay.

Beneath the humming words that throng your voice,
there is a sound of something I'd have owned once
if my prior time with you had held you to me
but I felt this end, and held myself from love.
Beyond the falling thrushes of your tongue
are deaths of many words of many lovers,
from foreign courts and streets and bygone limits
yesterday forgot, before, past yesterday.
We'll leave these cliffs that front the sheltered sea
where shadows from the rocks have cast their darkness:
yet it is not dark tonight. Come, turn my way
for we will leave for somewhere not remembered
in our joined and our previous jaunts, both lone.
In some place else our memories grant us pardon
from remembering, where none granted to regain,
and so we won't feel tears swell, though these harden,
within the narrowed vault of those emotions
we restrained from then: but which those weltered rocks,
and waters we knew, might recall, to chafe us-
though long before you knew me I stood here-
to list long to these sea-strung flutes and cymbals
(and many voices for those softened cymbals),
to watch the white wind-wake's grey oriflammes.
Remembering what we're destined to leave here,
our past foreshadows nights we fear, alone there,
yet too soon past lovers' grief to feel achievement
in the things we've passed on some have felt before us:
as we leave this night, for pangs that pass all ardour,
in our grief for leaving things which never were.

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This day is not yet passed, yet now the station
that waits a little distance from the pier
is parted from the crowds that gathered whether

they wished to course the roads life takes them to.
This hour waits just for us, though still the flicker
of the constellated spheres that track the skies
is mute for you, for I, and speaks out only
in the indirect reflection of their tangents,
in the way the streetlights cadence in your eyes.
Their fluid form seems sculpted out of water;
there are many voices there, too many glances
for the words imprisoned there to ever utter
as your glances free themselves and mate with air.
Beneath the convex curtains of your eyes,
there lies a self that too perhaps will filter
out its sound from sparrows chanting in the darkness,
as it listens to their faintly fingered flutes.
Inside the orbits that you take away now,
in looks askance to somewhere I won't see,
(as though hushed light had made its madrigal
in singing sighted eyes yours which conceal you),
how the last light caught within two stars arrives there,
lost as darker sparks within their midmost moons-
inside a place my words may never enter,
within the azure silence of your eyes.

I don't remember I've known paradise
but I believe it could be like the knowledge
of what one fleeting look of yours might mean here,
a deciphered path through which there are no words;
beyond the range and track of any language
there is just the blue you wear there, and a shadow
of inside white you harness past my language
to a soul that wanders light, then joins the glare.
If I could see myself by what you see through,
if I could fill my striving glance with thoughts of yours,
then what exactly would I see in my own face there?
What would I find and think in looking there?

My outward vision fills you and infolds you,
yet I do not now become you or trace inward
what I have meant to you or mean right now
between your unheard thoughts and where I'm stationed,
I do not then see myself there in your eyes.
I know that in the things we've lived and witnessed
in our separate roads, here one, we're too familiar
in our flaws to see ourselves there in our mirrored
sight. We won't decode the flaws which bind us
and which cut us soon to leave for separate shores.

And a peridot of light sinks down and lingers
upon your iris' bright and guarded harbour,
cast upon its garden-land; with dual voice
it grows and utters, "Leave me now" and "Love".
And our roads will veer to others, though I love you
in the way the gull and breeze both love the sea.
Both play and graze, and leave, and also leave you.
There's nothing more for us, us two, to see.

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Depart from me this night, but for this moment
let us breathe awhile and dream that we have been
both one in some lost lore: apart we've moved here:
Avert your eyes, depart, but be with me.
Cast off your eyes from mine: I'll also lose you
in my range of sight but backwards watch you move.
Cast off your glance, depart, but leave a shadow
of yourself in some shed smile I'll own, though I forget
the captured starlings cast within your language,
by which my words would move where I lack words.
Farewell: the world has far too many travels
to ensnare us here, to hold to your mouth's music;
for you my tongue won't speak. We will be leaving

beyond this present place, past touch and sight,
past thoughts of us, and dreams that go undreamed, dear;
our course was as some star that dies in night.
The love we feigned was as one straying sea-mew
that whoops and plays, then veers away from view.

Past any sense of permanence and hearing,
our lives' unsounded waves will shape elsewhere
than then they joined in us, and lost volition
to move encaged in trust, as who could cage the air?
Beyond the fallen throngs that call in murmurs,
behind the throbbing thrushes of your throat,
there's places that will too depart with silence
that dull the page with names to count them by.
Go back one lone; for us no sea is striking
the bell-toned burden of its fleeing flights
upon the shore, that washes forth the footmarks
that others left, though we might hear in it
a sinking sound that lasts for one swift moment
detaining us, before we pass to dream.
We sleep, perhaps, to keep us from our grieving:
in sleep no dreams of loves we'll never mourn.

