

Wilderness House Literary Review 10/4

Byron Beynon

THE SPANISH STEPS, ROME

i.m. John Keats 1795 – 1821

The afternoon ends,
an open bedroom window
looks down at razor-dressed Italians,
guide book tourists,
a stall ablaze with flowers.
The boat-shaped fountain by Pietro Bernini,
aground near the Spanish Steps
is broken and boarded.
The calm insides of No.26
Piazza di Spagna retain
books of poetry, portraits,
life and death masks,
a letter from a President,
the brief note signed by Thomas Hardy,
each the formal remains of another age
on display.
The fireplace is like ice
in these repaired rooms
where the furniture was taken and burnt,
the walls scraped.
I stand in a small space
where death entered at eleven o'clock,
then leave by the staircase
he painfully climbed.
A life lived for poetry echoes and says
"that which is creative must create itself."

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THE RIVER

Turner's eyes would also
have seen this sliding,
muscular power,
the tumbling of light
onto a brassy,
slap of river.
The old and new converge here,
footholds of history,
the sinking mud and the arresting
work which never ends,
but stretches out
glowing with exhaustion.
A shimmering swell
on a journey of great weight,
the onlooking spiral
giddy with reassuring spirit.

BRACELET BAY

I watch for a curve of lucid sea
with a swell searching incessantly
for a delicate wrist inland.

The shirr of parallel waves
folding like linen onto the shore,
sound and movement

glistening with the blood
burnished by the friction of salt
and innocent air.

Fine features of torn,
the pitch of place,
a cadence free

on a shelf of steady rock,
with a line
unbroken

by an erosion of walkers
on a scar of paths
discovering the way towards home.

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SAMPHIRE

A structure of flowers
living near the sea,

succulent features
with saline flesh,

a moisture of fat leaves
breathing for space in the prevailing air.

Temper of weather,
a tough survivor

opposed to eviction
from its coastal home,

insured by nature,
firm security

versus winter storms.

A head listening

for golden rumours
constructed during summer by the brazen waves

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ADRIFT

The smoke offers itself
slowly to the east,
speculating the dry air
on a such a windless day
the light is never still:
steering near a chart of coastline,
always brooding beneath
the stretched out arms of a soft sky,
the simplest action
appears complete,
a feminine dance in accord
on rising ground,
a full-bodied gesture
beyond the hearing of human roofs.