

Wilderness House Literary Review 9/3

Bob Beagrie

Crusoe Recycled

I left my eyes at the edge of the shore
Strung upon the skyline for any sign
Of help or hindrance or hope and hid
Myself safely within my grand designs
Among the precious salvage of the ship,
Keeping measurements of the weather
Tending my tasks and mechanics
(Bible and journal)
Mindful of my most loyal subjects
And the bare facts of our survival.

Each night the island sings its despair
Over the waves ever the wind
And parrots that call out my name
And the god of the goats dances,
Mortalled on my rum,
Across rocky mountain ledges
Teasing typhoons from clouds
Spinning the thunder of Gomorrah
With nimble fingers and cloven hoofs.

In the morning there are footprints
Everywhere, on the beach, the meadow,
Along the slats of my rope bridges - raw data:
Cannibals, tax inspectors, corrupt politicians
Having searched for me, their sovereign.
Slave I am to sudden bouts of hysteria brought
On by sunstroke, seaweed, a she-goat's smell,
Swarms of flies round the corpse of a gull.

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To soothe my raw nerves I focus on The Job -
The sculptor of rough clay figurines;
Each one of them looks something like me
But a different colour - due to this earth,
I erect fences, cultivate gardens, burn them down
In games of all-out war and contrition.
The flames purify my figurines,
Reduce the contradictions to smudge,
All my dear children I name you Adam.

Some evenings when I roam
I expect to find something remarkable –
A pocket watch on a sand dune,
A black box bobbing in the bay's shallows
A dead i-phone overgrown by rushes
And wonder if I manufactured them myself
In a moment of genius-absent-mindedness
While fidgeting for Friday.

Every Saturday morning I stand
My children along the beach,
We build such marvellous sandcastles,
Palaces, cities inhabited by mermaids,
Springfield complete with a Homer and a Marge
As the high tide rolls in we all hold hands
To sing our hymn, "Castaways all - Get us out of here!"
Until we remember that the show is over,
Pulled mid-season. The celebrities scribbled
Some autographs and left, and we were eventually
Repatriated, although, it's hard to fit back in.
The long isolation is tattooed on my skin.