

## Derek Walcott: The Castaway

The starved eye devours the seascape for the morsel  
Of a sail.

The horizon threads it infinitely.

Action breeds frenzy. I lie,  
Sailing the ribbed shadow of a palm,  
Afraid lest my own footprints multiply.

Blowing sand, thin as smoke,  
Bored, shifts its dunes.  
The surf tires of its castles like a child.

The salt green vine with yellow trumpet-flower,  
A net, inches across nothing.  
Nothing: the rage with which the sandfly's head is filled.

Pleasures of an old man:  
Morning: contemplative evacuation, considering  
The dried leaf, nature's plan.

In the sun, the dog's feces  
Crusts, whitens like coral.  
We end in earth, from earth began.  
In our own entrails, genesis.

If I listen I can hear the polyp build,  
The silence thwanged by two waves of the sea.  
Cracking a sea-louse, I make thunder split.

Godlike, annihilating godhead, art  
And self, I abandon  
Dead metaphors: the almond's leaf-like heart,

The ripe brain rotting like a yellow nut  
Hatching  
Its babel of sea-lice, sandfly, and maggot,

That green wine bottle's gospel choked with sand,  
Labelled, a wrecked ship,  
Clenched sea-wood nailed and white as a man's hand.

*From The Castaway and other poems (1965)*