

*Marion Heyn*

## **The Discoverers**

“One doesn’t discover new lands  
without consenting to lose sight of the shore  
for a very long time.” Andre Gide

New lands, the discovery of new lands!  
Weeks on the ocean, the grey-green waves  
And still only the dream, the promise  
Of our new lands, the discovery of new lands.

Setting sail, hoisting the sheets to possibility,  
We left safe haven and home weeks ago.  
Before us the assurance of adventure—  
Eyes on hope, on the new, on the belief  
Of fortunes fulfilled, visions realized,  
Promises kept. Yes, Captain, you, you  
Promised to carry us to Fortune, to Fame,  
To a New Shore...

The women on the shore, wrapped in carmine,  
Saffron, livid green, potent lavender,  
Women of the gauze shawls, they  
Reach for slender fingers of hot peppers.  
*Capsicum annum*, long, fiery threats to sanity,  
*Capsicum frutescens*, the botanist’s term for  
Scorching, burning culinary torment!  
As though they lived and breathed  
This poison, this peril, each and every day,  
Fluttering hands dip into scarlet mountains,  
Play with fire, laughter on the breeze.

In these new lands, on these ancient islands,  
 Palm trees filigree the sun upon the shore,  
 Upon the foreheads, white and brown,  
 Upon the uncomfortable and unaccustomed,  
 Upon the comfortable and accustomed  
 Alike. All is sun and sand-hot wind.

Brown hands, hummingbird-fast, sort  
 The peppers, pluck the strings  
 Under equatorial sun.  
 Beneath tropical moon,  
 Brown hands lift pregnant gourds,  
 Sweet fruit, soft tongues to eager mouths.  
 Brown eyes, furrowed brows, perceive white  
 Hands shake in oppressive heat. Difference.  
 Incomprehensible freedoms.  
 They falter but refuse to fall.

Persistence. Tenacity. The consenting to endure.  
 the insistence on Perseverance: Mother,  
 God and Country. Civilization.

The women on the shore, under palm shade  
 And island rhythm, prestidigitate,  
 Sorting and gleaning, tending and cleaning.  
 Saffron, pomegranate, quince, nightshade  
 Splash of shawls, scent of hours  
 Peppers in baskets, baskets of flowers.  
 The women on the shore; the men lost  
 To their dreams of discovery:  
 New songs, old lamentations.

Losing sight of shore for a very long time,  
 A commerce of storm-green waves,  
 Daily, daily, only the horizon itself.  
 Sailors toward a new world, discover  
 Familiar poses, new configurations:  
 Women on the shore.