

Landfall

A Novel

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Landfall

And indeed I shall anchor, one day—some summer morning
of sunflowers and bougainvillaea and arid wind—
and smoking a black cigar, one hand on the mast,
turn, and unlade my eyes of all their cargo;
and the parrot will speed from my shoulder, and white yachts glide
welcoming out from the shore on the turquoise tide.

And when they ask me where I have been, I shall say
I do not remember.

And when they ask me what I have seen, I shall say
I remember nothing.

And if they should ever tempt me to speak again,
I shall smile, and refrain.

~ *Randolph Stow*

An Introduction

So many characters in contemporary novels – or so it seems to me – lack conviction. On the other hand, when writers go poking around in the grave yards of the past it often looks as if they've tried to hang enough discrepant body parts on the skeletons they've dug up to bluff an audience into thinking they're human. That doesn't work either: no wonder so many stitched-up specimens turn on their creators in movies. This is different. The main figures in this story are real, have said and done things that can't be ignored, and trying to dress them up differently would only be another kind of grave robbing. Nevertheless, history – even the legacy of their names – has left them with a burden they might not enjoy. You could argue that they deserve some freedom in what is a kind of second chance at life for them. Most of us would jump at the same opportunity.

So this is what I've tried to do.

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