

Rebecca Dempsey

Written upon seeing Milford Sound by James Peele

A window to an illusion.
Trackless impossible immensity
Mountainous mists shrouding eternity.

Glacial cliff shanks
Clothed in shaggy scrub
Sheer to the sky,
where snowed peaks
splinter the clouds.
Then deep and down,
to the surface of the calm bay,
where the fine tracery of flowers
spider the sandy shore

You float past – driftwood
compared to my raw ferocity.
Captured in white clouds
Crowning the static strength
Of slow hewn fjords
And the blushing hints of valleys
Vanishing in the distance.
These broken marbles
of Pacific gods.
These silvered sunlit shoulders
streaming waterfall tears

All these, the artist saw in 1892.
Essence of place distilled
with hand, eye, palette.
Into cracked and flaking oils
darkening into oblivion;
brush strokes
on canvas that will rot
as surely as the sail
of the boat on the bay,
painted by James Peel.

Except – this painting is none of these.
It is the focus of human perception.
It is not responsible

for what you see.
It is silent
It is Milford Sound.

Rebecca Dempsey is a writer, based in Melbourne, Victoria. Her short fiction and poetry has been published around the world. She holds a Master of Writing from Deakin University and can be found at WritingBec.com.