

Feverfew

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Indigo Dreams

'Feverfew' is full of characters that transcend the myths on which they are based, drawing out explorations that offer cutting insights into the ills of our contemporary society. 'Time after Time the Same Bird is Born from the Flame' subtly juxtaposes the mesmeric imagery of a risen-again phoenix bursting back into life with the insidious notions of nepotistic privilege and power, where patterns of expectation, subjugation and birth right are perpetuated because of what the phoenix represents in terms of its lineage and ancestry. There is something of the moment in the lines 'How wrong we are to think that fire/ can cauterise corruption.

The same sense of corrupted power is evident in 'Hades Justifies His Off-Roader' where Hades is depicted as a despotic tyrant who runs roughshod over the world, caring nothing for nature as he 'defends the emissions which plume' or the 'winged martyrs that collide/ with his windscreen'. Here is a man who is above the law, above the authority and morality of anyone's code but his own. Both poems carry with them a searing insight into our contemporary political climate and one cannot help but see in the poems many of the issues and instances that have plagued our own landscapes over the past few years.

'The Wolf Speaks at the Tory Party Conference' is another poem that carries with it these inferences. The wolf in the poem is a sinister character who sets out a manifesto designed to 'seek out those you can overpower' so that, like the phoenix in 'Time after Time...' they can feed their 'blood-line'. This idea of self-serving agendas and clan-preservation is further defined in 'The Benefit Minister's Mythological Creature of Choice' where said minister chooses not to come back as 'Pegasus' 'whose hooves could birth fountains' and be a source of good, but as a harpy - goddesses of the storm winds who are named so because of their ability to snatch what they want. Not qualities you would want from a benefits minister no doubt, but an image that is uncannily apt in terms of its depiction of the current incumbent government's position on such issues.

The whole collection vibrates with these instances and is a masterful portrayal of contemporary issues couched skilfully in the images and myths of antiquity. One can't help feel sorry for Sisyphus who is bereft of meaning without his rock, or see the similarities between the predatory Jupiter and his raft of victims with some of the high-profile celebrity scandals that have come to light in the past few years. It is a collection that fizzles with reference to both the Old World of antiquity and the modern world of politics, society and culture and one can only imagine that the poems will keep reinventing themselves in terms of their relevance in the coming years as, like the phoenix, the ills and vices of the world self-perpetuate.

Colin Bancroft