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## **ALBESTONE, 5**

Everything catches up with the white stone.

The stone catches up with nothing.

Not even itself.

It left itself behind long ago.

There is a table

where the stone rests.

A white stone is the well beyond dreaming.

How fast the sea comes in today

skimming towards the shore.

When water stops moving it becomes a stone.

Maybe this one was the Sea of Galilee,

maybe some fine morning I can take

a boat ride into the stone

and listen to the lake,

hear Jesus talking, and Simeon bar Jochai talking

or not talking.

Timeline. Battles of the Great War.  
Passchendaele. Chemin des Dames,  
a quarter million killed to move a hundred yards.

The lines. The names stay,  
My Lai, Nagasaki, after  
a few hundred yards nobody remembers.

Death's diverse livery  
worn in all the alphabets of time  
name me. I was there too,

nowhere, some days  
I can almost remember. In Normandy  
in '54 a tree by a truck stop

some men who looked at me  
across the table soccer game  
as if they'd seen me long before

the way a hand knows the handle of a door.

When will my childhood end?

13 June 2005

## THE FISH ON THE STEEPLE

What is the fish for,  
what is the fish for me.

A morning to think about Freud  
and the striped bass on the steeple of the church

a fish not a cross,  
the Christ not the crucified

instead the Christ always wet with his own oil  
the deep-sea answer

arising, he walks on the waves, walks  
up out of the sea.

Christ is Cthulhu. It was Catholics  
Lovecraft was so afraid of,

because Catholics let the old stuff show through,  
the old gods of Guinea and long gone,

and it was Catholics coming, they beached  
on Narragansett shores

and breached his Deist calm  
with crazy Christ, a suffer god, love god, death god, come again god,

Christ of the mad Azoreans those Africans  
magic Christ of blood-crazed Portuguese

that howling church off Wickenden  
in Fox Point, the Fish on two legs

coming up from the sea,  
coming for me since the catacombs,

why do you think they really drew a Fish  
on the wall, don't believe that acronym for Jesus stuff,

they drew a fish because He was a Fish  
and you know it in your bones

when you look up at this white church  
and see the weathervane Jesus fish on top

pointing usually to the southwest  
as if Africa wasn't bad enough they get

their wind from the Antilles from Indian America  
where in every hillock of corn they planted a fish,

the fish on two legs comes for me,  
gypsy Christ mestizo Christ

and where did a Jew get those sea-green eyes?

All the heavyweight early American Puritans – and many of their Deist successors, stray guilt-ridden novelists – were fleeing not from sin but from Christ. Christ affrighted them because Christ was miracle, magic, power, Christ was sly. So they fled back to the nuance-less Old Testament, the patriarchal Grand Guignol from which Christ tried to distract us, lead us from the harsh desert of the father into the city of brothers and sisters.

Charlotte asked me, What was the Harrowing of Hell? I think the answer, what it means that between Crucifixion and Resurrection he went down into Hell and broke down the gates of the place, and let out the just of all times is that Christ let justice and truth escape from the Old Testament into the new air, rescued holiness from horror. Christ rescued the individual from the tribe, the heart from the brazen altars.

And when Hell Gate fell, there may have escaped from it not only the ancient virtuous but the good people of all times – maybe the gate of hell is really time, and Christ broke time.

Not nailed to the geometric cross with Roman iron nails, Christ is the supple fish, the living silvery presence in the sea of time. No geometry contains him; the tomb is empty. A fine wooden fish, carved by the late Steve Baldwin, quivers in the sea breeze on the steeple of Cuttyhunk church.

14 June 2005

## ALBESTONE, 6

So the *terre sainte* is that land where the white stone is found. Wherever the stone is, that is the holy land.

*Sainte terre.* To it we saunter.

The *disruptions* in the Grail legend narratives are the essentials. The Grail itself is about a radical discontinuity, one that is either built into the world (according to Gnostic speculation) or fallen into it through acts of will or defects of will (according to the drift of narrative invention).

It is when Malory says “Now takyth this tale leave of Sir Bors, and torneth to Sir Gawayne...” that we know we are in the zone of authentic telling.

Because the real story is always incomplete, ruptured, fragmentary, incapable and undesirous of resolution. As Stein said about writing, A story wants to go on.

The Grail itself – a vanished cup that held once the blood of a vanished man. In this double removal, this profound occultation, lies the real significance of the symbol – the magnet to which adventure is drawn. It must always be far away, a gap between it and the quester. The grail found is no grail at all – the heart’s ease is in the seeking.

14 June 2005

## DESPERADO

*aoratos thiasos na perna*

--Cavafy

that hour  
no longer midnight  
sun scale  
on the sea  
and something leaves

is it the God Hercules  
abandoning Antony  
on the night before  
or night before the battle  
or is the god

always leaving  
the invisible throng of him  
passing under the streets  
of every city  
all the time

*with music?*

abandoning me?  
The weather changes

and every difference  
is a judgment

guilty, trembling  
before the thingly world  
that has such solid purpose  
such mighty seeming  
and have I lost

the thing I am?

14 June 2005, Cuttyhunk

## **SNOB**

Only women

Can I talk to

As an equal,

Women, and certain

Kinds of professors,

Women and certain

Artists. Never

Composers – they

Know nothing

About music

About all the things

Concern me,

Women, and talk.

15 June 2005

Cuttyhunk

## **METEOROLOGY**

You can only see where you are  
by being where you're not.

The view from space—  
as if this were not space and we in it.

The view from inside the stone.

Meteorology  
is the secret  
name of poetry

a thing of weathers  
accurately told  
or made,

rain inside the heart.

15 June 2005, Cuttyhunk

## **OTELLO**

When the sky is like a stone  
(fate is like sunlight  
lighting up  
an intolerable, inalterable world)

the earth is like a hand  
holding it.

15 June 2005, Cuttyhunk

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A man who has seen everything  
and can't believe a word of it

can't believe a thing he's seen  
or say a word that says he's seen it

Such a man has no recourse  
but poetry, that ardent silence.

15 June 2005

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Silencing  
each thing  
into music  
bad well  
meaning angel  
Orpheus.

15 VI 05

## *la voix du père*

Something my father used to say suddenly comes into mind:

*Need her on a rainy day.*

He was playing, smiling, with what he had heard, misheard,  
thought the priest was saying in church, when he was a child.

I could hear his voice in my head, but at first only the "...on a rainy day"  
came clear, what were the first words, "eat him?" – no, two days later I wake  
up hearing it correctly: need her, need her on a rainy day.

The rhythm was that of *Libera nos, domine* – o Lord deliver us.

I wonder when little Samuel heard that, heard so strongly that it went in, and  
he remembered it eighty years later. I'm guessing it would have been at the  
funeral of his own father, 1906 – when else would he have been in a Catholic  
church, hearing the litany, the litany that used to be part of the funeral mass.

And the funeral of the father would be such a moment, to hear for the first  
time.

And maybe that day it was raining. It always rained on funeral days when I was  
a child.

To know why it was those English words (the first homeophonic translation in our family) that he heard, rather than some others. Homeophony reveals just as much, perhaps more, of the subject's self as 'intentional' writing does. So we can guess who 'her' might be, who it is the child would need on that rainy day, his father lost from the world. His mother, that strange withdrawn harried Englishwoman I never knew. I did not know the one he needed.

Who is it that knows the woman he needs?

And the last time I was at a Catholic mass was my own father's funeral, September 1990. But, as Beckett said, it was not raining.

15 June 2005, Cuttyhunk

## ALBESTONE, 7

What does this road say,  
the pen found on it  
called "Atlantis," pocket  
clip bent back by nervous  
youth, unbitten, unchewed,  
abandoned near Saturday's dead frog  
old dock pond full of pickerel weed  
and who am I?

A veil over the instrument  
burka on the phallus  
that infidel,  
                  are words  
                  the same as germs  
something you pick up in the street  
bring home

                  ripen there  
where else could they grow  
in your actual body  
veiled from all others  
your dearest opaque skin

do words live in the body  
then go out in the street  
to touch each other and contaminate

a man I knew talked a lot about chreodes  
which I took to mean anything that reaches out

is a word that, from you to me, amoeba arm,  
punch in the mouth,  
something that goes from here to there?

Where you are  
still safe in sleep.

But Atlantis must be part of it too,  
mean something,  
remember the rule: Everything happens to you.

You meet the famous actress  
but she gives you a rose.

You sail to the Cannibal Isles  
but it turns out to be here,  
a word in your ear, a sword  
coming out of the sun,  
pathway down the Nile,  
up the aisle, aorta, apple tree  
further and further,  
it happens to you  
away and away,

who lost this word?  
the builders never listen

they build what they please  
with my money  
the temple rises this way and that  
all round you, a condo here  
a bungalow down there, a lumber yard  
a cat drenched from heavy dew,  
you have to tell me  
who else would know  
is it winter or summer inside the stone?

were you there when the ship went down  
that was an island  
seven smokestacks one by one went out  
the hiss of heat  
that drives my turbines  
foundering, water cold by nature,  
first of things, a cat looking at the sea.

The birds are back  
I grew there too  
what do you make of the rash on my back  
is it what happens when I listen  
or when I turn away from too many,  
and when am I a word anyway,

after long struggle at last to be made out of wood

16 June 2005

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But what do you say  
on the other side of hearing,  
your bronze skin  
oils of your hair?  
Can you breathe a bridge?  
Still bate, the mirror listening.

16 June 2005, Cuttyhunk