

## Limbo

I knew I was being held as I fell,  
As if the fire resisted my progress  
I believed I was in the belly of hell

Being burned in order to manifest  
The scars of one-third of understanding self –  
If you have come thus far in a legitimate

Fashion – When implosion and the gravity  
Of motion through atmospheres of fire  
Brought me down to the ground, without levity,

Like an object drawn in to crashing by force,  
Like a wave seeks the shore inevitably,  
I came in with a howling shriek and a fierce

Impact which shattered my eggshell, but left me  
Little traumatized. I was gasping for breath,  
As if what had been taken from me, was bereft me,

Was like the finality of a single death,  
Where the rest of the world kept itself progressing.  
But it was clearly the beginning of a new path,

And as I stood up, the fire was above me,  
Arrayed in the colors of dawn, and my guide  
Returned beside me, offering a love he

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Had not previously shown. He seemed relieved,  
He smiled widely and he reached to hug me.  
I appreciated that he seemed less aggrieved,

But I was still trying to make sense.  
My mind was swollen with images, a river  
Flowing with oceans of sentience

With no means to contain it all in structure  
Like words, or language. My guide, with telling sapience,  
Said: "It is not time for words yet, the scrivener

1263

Awaits." It was all new, but there was a pattern  
Which I felt inclined to follow. We stood on a beach –  
I hadn't noticed – at some distance, a lantern



Line 1263 - "It's not time for words yet, the scrivener awaits."

Burned at the historical site of Fort Phoenix,  
At the north end of Buzzard's Bay. I felt concern  
And familiarity for the light out of reach.

At the north of the harbor, New Bedford  
Lay dimly against the crepuscular night sky  
Before us, a man sat at a desk under the torch.

It was he, sparks flashing from the brow of his eye,  
That we, like a hale father and wary son, approached  
Without words, I knew again that it was not time

To reflect on what had come before or what  
Was to come. My mind was soaked like a sponge,  
With still yet more room to expand, but

Was it all just going to start again, the grunge  
And vomit? I felt like asking if we could cut  
To the important stuff and subsequently expunge,

From so much seeming detritus, the reason  
For walking toward a man writing feverishly  
At a desk on a beach at night, some ease from

The disconnected nature of these dreamishy  
Revelations. I scuffed my feet on the sand and  
The man looked up with eyes deliriously

Aggravated at our appearance. He flared his hands  
And shouted, "How the hell did you get here?!"  
He stood and marched directly at me with menace

Tightening that furious brow. He: "Hey there!"  
Then he stopped. My Uncle stepped in front with feausance:  
"Scribe, pay us the compliment of your grace, where

We are so obviously at your mercy." "I am no scribe,  
Sir, but I shall be at your service if you are  
Indeed who you seem to be. How shall I decide?"

I still could not speak, and did not recognize the man's glare,  
But I nodded earnestly when his eyes met mine.  
"Is he?" the scrivener sighed. "Only he could dare.

But tell me, sir, how have you come to land  
Here at night, alone?" "It is dawn, sir, your lamp  
Will soon be unnecessary." "But there it shall stand,

Until the sun prepares to pitch its camp  
Tonight. None has ever appeared thus on strand.  
I am befuddled. Who is this sorrowful tramp?

1305



Line 1305 - "Who is this sorrowful tramp?"

Did he wash up on the tide, having been cast adrift?  
I have seen the look of men who have battled  
The clenching jaws of death, suspended amidst

The briny, deflecting the sheer teeth of blood-addled  
Sharks, with wooden planks for hours, then lifted  
Into the hold of a buoyant boat, to regain balance,

To regain their lives, but not again in the same manner.  
Such is the look of this newly hatched young man."  
"An adept description. Now we must get to a tanner,

For he is rawhide which requires a tan.  
He needs to stitch an emblem in his banner.  
In this I mean to say that he will not be wan.

There is hope that he will be a good man someday.  
He journeys hither to this noble end."  
"It is no wonder then that you've come a different way."

I cleared my throat. "How do they normally come in?"  
"You are a breather!" He stepped to touch me, "Hooray!  
An interesting morning for me, my friend."

His beard and breath smelled like seaweed and grass.  
His fingers were raw with some dermatitis  
"I will answer your question and also will ask –

They arrive by boat an hour after sunrise.  
How have you been granted this arduous task?"  
"Lilica," I croaked in reply. I caught my guide's eyes.

He spoke eloquently: "Love is the purpose  
Of our motion. This man refuses to relent  
His allotted helix of time, although he curses

The very fate which created his helix.  
We intend to rid him of the curses, of course  
One cannot account for circumstances."

"I see," the sea-man scrivener said deeply.  
He extended his hand to me. "Welcome  
I am Melville. I will be good enough to set thee

On the proper path, for this appearance is so seldom.  
But I must beg you not to linger too sweetly,  
For I am a man with many stories and few words to tell them.

I write their names when they arrive in the boats  
In the day time, and at night I write their stories.  
I am given to ponder greatly upon their coats.

I see them so briefly. They arrive in flurries.  
I remember the coats and envision their whole  
Lives in the threads, their shabby or silken worries."

One flat-bottomed ferry boat emerged from the mist,  
Just as the shadow of my body appeared  
On the sand. Melville looked down and grinned at this.

He rubbed his cheeks, "By the soot in my beard!"  
Mine was the only shadow. My fear increased,  
Like I got on the wrong ride at the fair.

My Uncle touched my shoulder as the shadows disembarked:  
"Do not let fear blind you to what you have done."  
And Melville began repeating this single remark:

"I prefer not to." He went to his desk in the sun,  
And sat and did nothing until it was dark,  
As far as I could tell. I asked my guide, "Does this one

Guard the gate?" "In his manner he is definitive."  
"But the same could be said for all of us."  
"As the guards change at the gate of Perdition,

So they change here. There is no guarantor for us:  
You either make it here on your journey, deliberately,  
Or not. The gate is just what you walk through."

We walked with the last of the shadows and my guide,  
Not presuming the others were on the proper path,  
Asked Melville: "Should we follow the crowd, scribe?"

"I prefer not to." "No, you mean..." and we all laughed.  
Even Melville, who widely grinned and sighed,  
"Yes, just follow the crowd into sackcloth and ash,

Although, I prefer not to." In the dusky gloam  
Of a temperate morning, we walked with the shadows.  
I: "I know this town. My fathers called it their home."

My guide: "I doubt you know it now, but who knows?  
No two occurrences happen in exactly the same poem  
In the same manner, ever. We shall see what comes and goes."

"But if I recognize the town, it is consistent,  
In some regard with some time before."  
"Still, is not the city like a body, persistent

Despite its slow and steady, if not boring,  
Metamorphic and striving development,  
Its self-overcoming and gestational restoring.

Change in infinite repetition and endless  
Variation. Do not think that because it is alike  
Then it is the same. But of course, you know this."

"I think so, sir. The same, but different, like  
Twins, or clones. It makes me doubtful of the essence  
Of my reasoning in my panic-stricken life."

"As well it should, because you are about to atone  
For that self-same dubious essence of reasoning."  
"What?" "This is your journey. The forsaken are alone,

But you are joining with others who are lessening  
The weights they have to carry as they seek Tlön,  
Those who are moving toward releasing

Themselves from themselves as a disciplined attainment."  
"You've been here before?" "My son, this is where I reside.  
I am here for an eternity of atonement."

"But who is Tlön, and how does he decide?"  
"Tlön is what is to come, gravity, light, the attunement  
Of all waves of energy into the spiral, beside

Which, there is nothing." "So we are moving toward it?"  
"As it moves toward us, and goes beyond us.  
Lilica will show you how to regard it

From a better perspective, without the despondence  
Of these weights." "What weights?" At this moment a disabled  
Boy with squinting eyes, drool, and juttred double chins

Approached us, speaking mutely, as if the sound  
Were swirling about in his empty head before  
Coming out as: "Gummawn. Gummawn. Gummawn."

He brought us to the docks, and the boats were ashore. 1411  
Men were unloading a cornucopia of tons  
Of Atlantic cod, salmon, lobster and swordfish.





Line 1411 - He brought us to the docks and the boats were ashore.

The boy/man took up his task with a knife  
And gutted every fish he could get a grip on.  
He sang drunkenly the only song in his life:

"Michael rowed the boat ashore, alleluia," flipping  
The bloody innards wherever they flew off,  
And grabbing the next writhing body for ripping.

He said: "My name is Jack." And then an incongruous  
Man in a tuxedo appeared. He carried a tuna,  
Which could not possibly have been enormous,

And wore the man's stove-pipe hat, singing, "Oh, moon, ahh,  
You are lovely this evening. I am Millard Fillmore."  
"And yet, you are a fish," replied my Uncle.

"We," the tuna continued, "are souls conjoined.  
But soon we will be taking the next step."  
"What is the next step?" I asked in a voice resigned

To incomprehension, as if all language were a trap.  
"I don't know, but it is not down. We have been consigned  
To the dustbin, but at least we have our strap,"

The silent man raised his left hand to reveal  
A leather strap of six-inch length, "So we stay  
Together and connect to Tlön when the wheel

Turns in our favor." "Will you tell us, pray,"  
My guide requested, "For what sin you've been brought to heel?"  
"The same as you, my friend, but different in the way

I manifested it – by supporting an unjust law.  
I could not unite the divided ideal,  
And I sided with compromise – that's the flaw –

Where compromise was just a corrupt deal.  
This so offended my constituency, and Tlön,  
That we never wore Whigs again, and I am here,

Carrying weights over distances of time  
Which the living cannot conceive." The smell  
Was of salt flesh. Jack scrambled gaily to climb

The mountain of fish drowning on air at sea level.  
He came down with a sac of guts, which he cut with his knife  
And a million black eggs poured out on the gravel.