

Seven Sticks

Lost ghosts on the shore where hollow stemmed bleeders thrive
The flowers spray-blown. They break in waves. They wash and flow
Guided by banks of weed grown stone past farm and wild wood
Where pale hemlock stars ride the foam of a moon-drawn tide.

Between shear cliffs stained with a thousand years
Of moss. Running up from the green ocean,
Sleek torpedoes speed in the free water
Come to breed in the shallows of high hill streams.

Sleeping, the silver bellied eels hidden in the fathoms
Deep, clutched in sticky cradles of mud. In forgetful
Spirals among millennia of rubble they rest
While the shrimp fattened salmon glide on through their dreams

Into the land where the autumn wind winds
Over the rustling willowed banks,
Or bares cold teeth as it rests sly and predatory
Among the wastes where rag worn weeds run wild

Voices echo up from deep dank wells; spirits expelled
From the earth. 'We must pay brass tears from our empty eyes'
They cry out 'take us to the other side, pennies
For Chiron to ferry us from the Severn to the Styx'

On the river bed a Caesar's marble head
Lays fallen from his imperial pinnacle
His eyes worn white, looking to the shimmer
Of the brown waves chasing the racing tide



Oliver Smith 2010