

To stand  
to dream  
to know –  
three verbs  
like rods in the hand of Israel's God  
no man can break

stasis  
vision  
isolation.

Stasis:

I have stood, sat, squatted, lain;  
shifted my weight from foot to foot, buttock to buttock, side to side;  
endured winter without fire, summer without drink, night without woman,  
the biting of wind and gnat;  
first thistles springing around me, then brush preceding the forest,  
now kudzu choking it;  
I am here, remain, endure, withstand, continue;  
and in my eyes delightful visions play.

Vision:

In the time of the thistles I saw Him nailed to the cross,  
lavender blooms, his blood, strewn thickly across the field –  
the seven churches of Asia, Jerusalem, Italy, Spain  
like thistle plants in the breast of the wicked earth.

Then out of Alexandria and Greece  
wooden soldiers of wooden philosophies  
marched forth – from the forest of despair,  
the forest of earthly delight and original taint,  
brambles and brush, then the martial trees themselves  
blooming with blood and horror, of which the cross was made,  
marching.

But now I see the heavenly green  
fins of Christ's own fish, the school  
of his own winged messengers, whose play  
strangled and felled those warrior trees, delight  
in the warm ruachan sea.

Isolation:

I have stood, first restless, and now like a leeching statue,  
season upon season; I have dreamed  
Christ's foot on a molten sea; and I have learned  
all secrets:

He has made my dull flesh ore, it purified  
to naked element; His mind has cast  
me in his ten commands; His seven fingered  
hand has set me in His winter garden,  
and strung his kudzu runners around my throat.

He who made the mold was wise in all:  
He made me, one eye open, one eye closed  
that I might comprehend both God and man.  
I apprehend you, God and living man –  
I see Him standing in his winter garden,  
right arm raised in curse or benediction,  
the right hand broken off.

# Book of Visions

STANLEY ABSHER