

Charles Fisk

SEA MOSSING AT MILK ISLAND

Milk Island, milk of the sea
Goatsherd apocalypse, wading out to me.
Thrust to thine hands, O God,
Trust and thrust to thee alone
Seagull's maneuver, straws down wind,
Rockweed nest by rounded stone.

Once was boy with rake so square,
Racked against rock your seaweed hair;
Heisted high and into the hold,
Glove on rake, glove on rake,
Multiplying there the take
Of weed to make his own kill-bone.

When black wind at sunset blew,
Stood he then his dory to,

Leaned to sky, to old gull's cry,
Sea-harvest gleaned, his rake astrew--
And suddenly knew, and suddenly knew
It was the God-wind there that blew.

CHARLES FISK *January 1969*

Note: Charles Fisk spent the summers of his childhood in Rockport, on Cape Ann, to which he later returned in adult life. As a teenager, he earned money during the summer by harvesting sea moss on the rocky islands off the Rockport shore. Milk Island was one of these, used at one time to pasture goats and other livestock during the summer months, but now inhabited only by gulls. Charles Fisk always loved the seacoast, and the powerful impression made on his youthful mind by his close and solitary contact with it on Milk Island prompted the writing of this poem many years later. Barbara Owen.