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The Evangelist of Fish

John Isles

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THE EVANGELIST OF FISH

Furless little animals . . .
your feet, not the hologram limbs
of fantasy and fetish—but bone and flesh
at 35,000 feet, swollen and red like ripeness.

Beneath us, the world was once solid,
rivers and bays so fish-thick
the Indians (legend goes) walked on water.
From here, even the ground is conjecture.

Turning back a page,
everything happened, nothing's true.
If I told you that down there
a musket shot is being fired at a redskin,

that he takes off with a wave of plovers,
would that keep the plane from going down?
Between Paradise and *tabula rasa*,
the ax falls—

Cockles and muscles, alive, alive . . .
If I told you Cibola and El Dorado were gilded
inventions next to mounds of fish, stinking,
would John Smith be as real as you?

And yesterday . . .
through the kitchen window,
the garden frozen in glass, tomatoes heaped,
tomatoes rotting on the vines, the red globe

ruptured when you put it in my mouth.