

ALBATROSS



#8

The Anabiosis Press, Inc.
125 Horton Avenue
Englewood, FL 34223

"God save thee, ancient Mariner!
 From the fiends that plague thee thus!—
 Why lookst thou so?" —With my crossbow
 I shot the ALBATROSS.

ALBATROSS

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Editors: Richard Smyth and Richard Brobst
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Special thanks to Roy Parkhurst for the use of his facilities and to the following businesses for in-kind contributions: Target Copy Center, Chesnut Office Equipment Company, Inc.

Cover illustration by Brian Kalt.
Inside art by Mark Neville.

Subscription Rates

One issue for \$3.00
Two issues for \$5.00

Checks payable to ALBATROSS.

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ISSN 0887 4239

The ALBATROSS accepts submissions of original poetry, black-ink drawings, and short interviews with established poets. Please mail all correspondence to ALBATROSS, 125 Horton Avenue, Englewood, FL 34223. We do not appreciate receiving simultaneous submissions and later finding out that poems submitted to us were accepted elsewhere, so please do not do this. Be sure to include a self-addressed, stamped envelope with all correspondence.

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Our gratitude to the following, who have provided our press with financial assistance:

FRIENDS
Stephen Meats, Martin Simpson, Ruth Warat

PATRONS
Wayne James—Central Monogramming

Freda Quenneville

The Blanket

Ravished by decades, threads
thinned or trapezing unmet,
worked all over with worry
like a fine embroidery;
too familiar to cast off
(nested again and again with old comforts);
too artless to mend,
too good for the Salvation.

Off the shelf and on the shelf
it goes, a sprung myth
of seasons, moons and fallen stars
as faded as its family origins.
It will be discarded, finally—
dozed into a landfill
or left moldering in the rain,
the vagrant
gone empty-
handed to the next city.

Freda Quenneville

The Moon

The first dozen or more escaped me;
I recall bars of light in my crib,
but not that cool suffusion.

I knew what the moon was
from Hey Diddle Diddle
and my mother saying,
"If she asked for the moon,
her daddy would get out the ladder."

I learned the verb to moon
watching it scatter
like mercury in the river
when I wished I wasn't alone.

There were moons I mensed with,
made love to, gave birth by:
I've felt their tug
on all the waters of my body.

Each moon hides and seeks,
but always finds me,—
the next memory my new talisman.

Raymond H. Farr

Wilderness with Moon at Dawn

Here the land invades each hard-earned meal.
The grit and dust of centuries grind
Against each bison's thick-set jaw.
And still the moon subdues the morning sky.
Hones each stone the busy sun has warmed.
Here death's echo skims the knifing timber-line.
And moonlight molds the carcass of a deer.
Peaceful in the grass it lies.
Refusing to move or putrify.
An unborn doe still kicking in its womb.

R.L. Richie

Discover the Universe

Understand the glow of the moon mathematically.
Realize ivory-skinned Luna—heavy, rubbing pine trees—
and her fullness mean nothing to your root crops.
She cannot make your liquor more potent
or love more frenzied. Her low belly
will not bring you to deliver early,
(though she will change the riverbank),
just as your oval swelling, high or low,
does not foretell son or daughter. Though your cycle
matches hers, and any other woman sharing your house,
there is no reality to lunacy.
And the myriad patterns of light, bearing ancient names
of gods and beasts, piercing through the pane
on the night your child is born
leave no imprint on his psyche.

Robert J. Oberg

Birth Lights

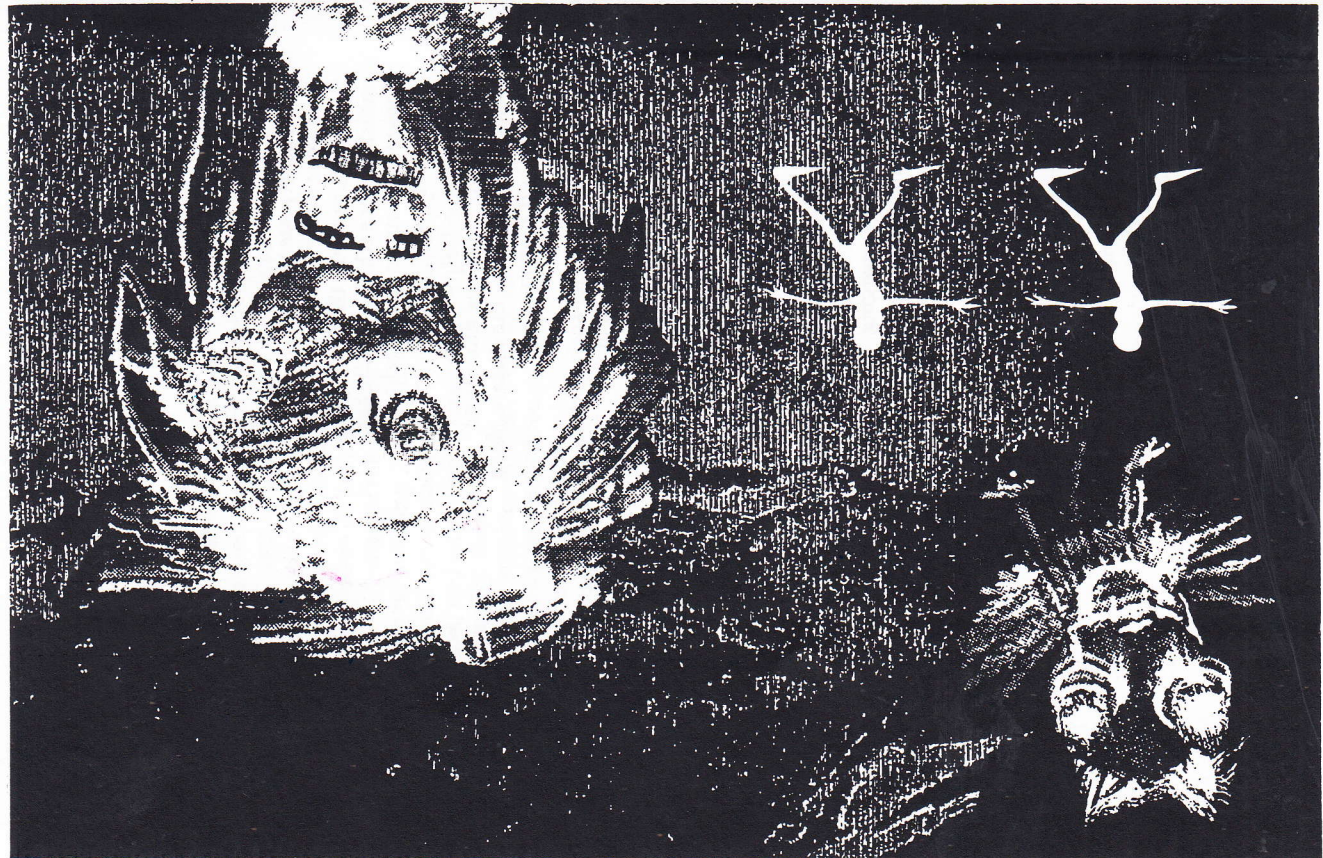
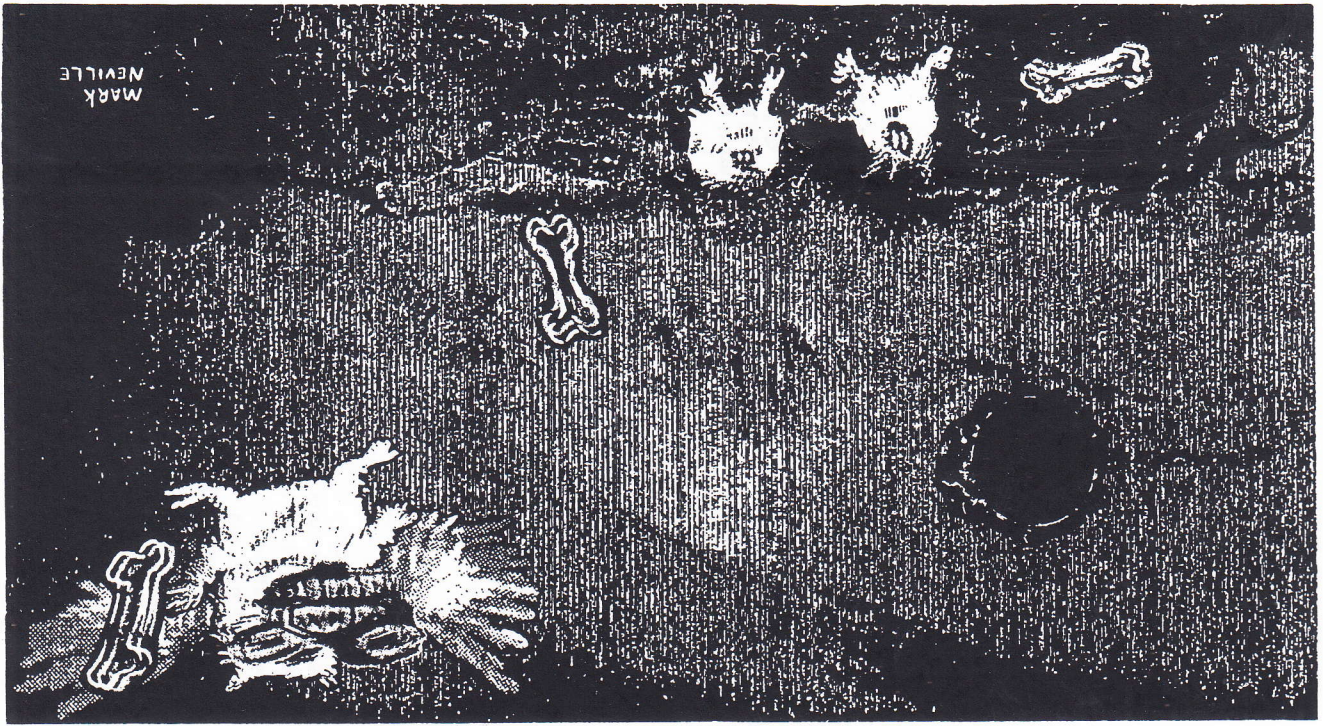
—for William

I can barely see my feet
over your new-born body, curled
and zippered into the belly pack,
invisible beneath my windbreak.
I watch the full orange light
waver and rise
against black pin oaks
and feel you kick one more time
before drifting into the distant sleep
of stars and planets.

You were born under such light
in my dream, moon-flesh
handed out of darkness
near a shadowy pool, me grasping
with awkward arms, whispering
half-forgotten prayers
for fear you'd slip back
into namelessness.

Walking beneath the October moon,
I remember the ripe,
purple bundle emerging
with matted hair, how I was drawn
by the gravity of your filmy eyes,
by the drag and drift
of your finger's grip
into the grammar of your wakening world.

I run my hands
over the soft curve of your back
and feel each moist,
dreamy breath
on the base of my chest,
warming the air as it rises
to my throat,
gracing my lips with the opening of wombs.



Scott Minar

Spring Flood

St. John's, Newfoundland 1989

The brown and gray and clear
water holds submerged
grass impossibly straight, wild

ducks weave through
the newly fattened stream,
new lakes springing

with mazes of grass.
They work hard to cross, seem
about to be carried away, then

fight still
in the rush before moving
straight to the other half

of a drinking field. And farther up the stream,
the unrestraining flood is smooth
over a lip

before a churning storm of water,
as if a hidden wheel turned
so this field could thrive again.

Darrell g.h. Schramm

Eileen Munda

In September when what coursed between us
like a current we were afraid to wade,
the island called to our eyes

from Loch Leven. Its one wall,
broken, motioned from the mound.

We walked on slabs of shoreline slate
to be closer to the sacred grounds
and, across, the water, saw,

angled in grass beneath boughs,
the stones of seventh century graves.

Tombstones and ruins—they pull us
to them as though we hear them cry
to be remembered, the way the hungry
tapeworm heart keeps crying to be loved.

Walking back a different way,
you discovered them, the season's last
blackberries. Our hands packed them
into our mouths as we mumbled and clucked
in gusto. It seemed we had no time
to lose; the distance between us and the fruit
bridged into sweet communion,
applauding our tongues, our hunger to be whole.

Noel Smith

Solitary

This is a walk among oaks
where others have moved on
where there is nothing to love but oaks
and their eared leaves fallen
layered in mud nothing to love
but the rank muck the mix
of acorns and clay this dank
matrix of melancholy.

It is also a walk of the stream
singing my bones into balance
and a song of who walks by my side
who or what and a song
of what is still here.

This may be all
after all. I begin to think
I have been loaned down borrowed
to walk here to connect my foot down
in this matrix laced in leaves
to feel my foot taken lightly in held
to know for the time being
I am of earth
and of the entire.

Errol Miller

In Exile

How I have argued
with myself at times
fraught with implications of "place"
why can't we love the land as much
in life as in death, for
the moveable poet in me I grieve
never at home, deeply fused
with no identity, after listening
to the white-oaks I know
I can't go home again, quietly eloquent
they gave me the rationale of their experience:
a man, too long away, is always lost
living the mystery of the exchange of roots
an intense flood of loneliness sweeps over me
for Calera, obviously, let's be real, let's
change poetry to honest prose, like
Warren's "A Place To Come To" I have
only a place to go to, that
vanquished brushland
below the summer homes of the rich
where estrangement is rather paradoxical
and wisteria-scent is all there is.

Duane Niatum

Raven the Great Toe Word Clacker

The old red cedar speaks
of carnivals and feasts,
birth, death, and laughter.

Each voice of the dream wheel
plays a part in old cedar's song
beating the promise wings

in your age continually cracking,
slipping from eye and mind,
dawn and dusk's blue bruises.

Yet I am your mask master,
irony's gift in your lover's eye,
bringing to the scene tossed light

to warm the shadow drifts
of your death defiant dance.
You witness now and forever

the grave's merry markers, what
shows spikier fictions than those
streaming through the window,

the backward painted stories of stars.
What bird flies over your head
to disappear before the clouds

is not flying for the future,
nor for your tight-jawed past,
but the snow-capped mountain

buried in plastic and chemical mounds.
So follow the wind voices
through the council of yellow leaves,

the gold nights wrapped in your lies.
Remember the child you lost,
the dark peeling you down to your

irascible, unknowing impulses and itches.
Love the blindness you can't name,
the feelings your heart carries,

misplaced, awkward, and as receding
as the day's philosophy of sunlight,
night's cave drawings of feast and famine,

one toe clapping for happy moments,
your undercover sexual frenzy rides,
life in and out of inconstant boxes,

the constant alarm of the open-door
policy of the natural and unnatural breaths,
the winter ceremonies of being what

you dream, the over and under-exposed
photos, looking for their sources
in the drunk-tank of memory.

Further Words in the Spirit of Agnes Whistling Elk

Things aren't ignorant
And you can't keep the world
Without consequence.

Everything is disguised.
You think those brown eyes
See only furniture and stoplights.

Look back of your eyes
When they knew marshes
And nightshades and you were a stone

Instead of sand.
Your father went to his grave afraid.
But your mother has lived enough

To believe women are carriers
Of more than dreams.
They are trees out of saplings

Remembering how sun shines
Close to the nurse log.
Sand remembers itself

A rock growing out of the same ground
And you remember the dark
Before a fire

How sparks looked like stars.
You remember cycles
And wind through the cottonwoods.

Give up those juggling eyes.
Give away what you know.
Choose your ground.

Of Arachnids, Myriapods and Insects I Know This:

Segments unified under a horny
ekoskeleton, these arthropods
know it's too late for butterflies.
In this evolution they're stuck,
remarkably, with what they've got:
legs and a history of their ground.
After the soil has acquiesced
to being turned by the spade,
the bulbs go in, around
their pregnant rounds worms
wriggling up, spiders sashshaying
over the dirt clods, millipedes
moving slow in spite of all their legs,
and my fingers, segmented too,
trying to get a feel of the land
in which I do not,
intimately, live.

Peter Huggins

The Argument of Wasps

The wasps live in the walls
In winter. When they come out,
They strike the windows a hundred times.
The panes shimmer with noise,
The furious room buzzes,
And the wasps rise toward the ceiling.

I open one then another
And another window,
One whole side of light and wind.
The wasps rush down the windows
And cut a parabola of sky
Up and out into the open air.

Their green sounds gone, I lower
The windows. When I get hot,
I prop open the door
To the explosion of birds,
The argument of boys,
Trading their mud and bones.

Lea Aschkenas

Biochemistry Lab #6

On the black lab tables,
wet cat fur peels backwards
leaving naked pink tissue.

At 8:30, the teacher visits each cat,
starting with group 2,
to give the "internal organs tour,"
sticking his ivory gloved hands
below the slickness of the liver to
point to the duodendum, down farther
to pull out the inches of large intestine,
winding the glossy coils around his fingers,
explaining the kinks, and after poking at the stomach
to guess what might lie under the oval pack,
he helps them dissect the esophagus,
showing them how to cut into the chin,
to scrape out the fat.

When he sees the red
staining the esophagus and
dripping towards the heart,
he laughs, explaining how
this must have been one they had
to club.

When group 3 asks for help with
question 5, he shows them
how to crunch the jaw;
and listen
for the breaking sound.

Summertime Reflections—Muir Beach, 1992

The mud blue water of the lake
creases over fallen
dandelion leaves while
in the heathered mountains
a red-winged-blackbird chirps
to a passing kite
and the ocean waves
smack against the sand,
propelling a cold wind through the
sun-heavy sky.

I want to sleep here
and walk along the ocean at sundown
with the wind blowing to the air
pricks of night water
that massage my body,
to wake and bathe
in the mud of
the ocean waves,
to clean my ears
with foptails and
watch the sun rise at 5:47,
to drink fennel tea and
eat the dirt
that yellow wildflowers blossom from,
to climb mountains barefoot
and feel sharp rocks scrape clean
the bottoms of my feet,
the blood running over
years and years of
protected smooth.

I want to grow old here,
to see my face
become thoughtful with wrinkles
in the reflection
of a retreating wave,
to watch my darkened skin
recoil more slowly
from a pinch,
to question less

the irregular patterns
of the wind,
to weave fishing nets
from gray hairs
that no longer
clutter my head.

I want to die here,
to lie face up
in the trampled sand,
to watch the clouds rotate,
to smell the crunch of seaweed,
to see the hawk
dangle its prey above me
as the wind blows
rough sands over
my tough body,
burying me in softness
with the
skeletons of shells.

Kathryn Wilhelm

J-Church

All winter Mother was distant, white as a nun.
She died on a night when the alley behind our house
was ribbed in black ice, and the half moon
blank and pitiless as a skull
hung in the dazed sky.

Later in spring Grandmother and I searched
the creek for pussywillows. The wet snow
squeaked. The iced air stung.
Grandmother never smiled as she severed
branches of pussywillow from the earth.

I went to bed for three years.
New leaves folded like origami.
This was no fairytale sleep,
only nightmares: heart chattering like an agitated bird.
It was a time of blood. Not the blood of birth
but of the assassin's bullet or a war
no one wanted, no one could stop.
For a long time I would wear
only black, not as mourning but because
color stunned my eyes.

The cities I lived in: Chicago, Detroit,
Columbus, St. Louis, London, Toronto,
Vancouver were brash, biblical,
majestic, cold or hot as a cauldron.
How I came to San Francisco: driving south
I ran out of gas. I met a man who had a pale
grey death's head and tender glowing eyes.
He was so delicate and awful.
His fragile whisper cut through stone. At night
I dreamed of knife blades shining.
But I could listen, I mean hear him—not
just the words. Light streamed from him
like liquid grace. His skin dissolved
and he was one with the air.

That summer I wished to be grass, long and sweet
drawn upward, unresisting, or a waterfall
shattered into drops—faceted, perfect—or music,
something by Bach, hard notes broken out of
silence, colliding, re-forming into patterns
visible only to the eye of God.

Today I will run effortlessly
in San Francisco sunshine—two miles, uphill
and down. The air will be easy to swallow.
I will not wonder how I got here, I will not
remember pussywillow. If I look at anything
it will be the J-Church streetcar majestically
cranking its way uphill, or frail houses clinging
to the earth, or I will notice an empty
brick foundation on the west side of Church
and I will wonder not what once stood there
but what can be built.

Lace

When I was a girl, Father
crept into my bed some nights.
In the morning, my flannel pajama top
was glued to my back. The bare black arms
of the Dutch Elm outside my window stretched
toward me at dawn, its roots strangled in snow.

Mother's voice rang up the stairwell:
Rise and shine! The smell of bacon,
the *flick-flock* of the ragman's horse.
At breakfast, I lost myself
in the white lace tablecloth's scrolls.
Father was still asleep, sifting
the scorched remains of night, and I am
the white acetylene angel, purer than death.

This morning the whole San Francisco Bay
shines the blue called *midnight*.
An anorexic moon suspends itself
among a handful of etched stars.
Driving down Highway 101, my Nissan
Sentra surrounds me and I think
sentry: guard.
This is the way the world breaks.

Poems from the Icecream Lady

There was fire
in his eyes,
the one-arm-hooked man.
His hair was wild,
his teeth nicotined,
and he chased us.
He chased us
around the fountain,
through the azaleas,
as we scurried
through brush after brush,
from limb to limb,
moss to moss,
like the squirrels
and pigeons,
beyond his
salivating laughter.
Then, the Icecream Lady
would come
ringing her bell,
and he would escape
once again
beyond the azaleas
and the swans
into the trunk
of his carved-out tree.

Her presence
made the difference.

She was not old,
but we thought she was
because she was older
than we children were.

No matter what
we were doing,
whether on the swings
or monkey bars,
we never forgot

that she would be there
if we needed her,
if we happened

into the one-arm-
hooked man, or fell
into the fountain,
the pond of swans,
winos or bums.

She had a few wrinkles,
and her hair was worn
jagged to the sides,
but her eyes

were so blue
we children thought
she was from the ocean.

Her music was simple,
only the bell,
ringing and ringing
through the magnolias,
azaleas and palms.

We never knew her name,
but we called her
the Icecream Lady,
who gave much more
than she knew she gave.

Somehow I had strayed
from the other children
in the park.

I was playing
on my favorite rocks,
near the fountain,
when my left foot
slipped on the slime
and I fell head forward
into the hard darkneses.

The next light

I remember

was being in her arms,
as she carefully,

ever so gently,

washed my wounds away,
smiling, glistening

in the sunlight,

across the fountain,

over the water lillies,

the golden fish that swam

in their bright

circular motions,

with a silence,

a soft assurance

from those skyblue eyes
that I would be all right.

Then, she gave me

a dip of chocolate,

a dip of vanilla,

and a cherry on top,

my triple cone of life

the Icecream Lady.

As long as I
 have the azaleas,
 I have
 the squirrels, pigeons
 and the oaks.
 As long as I
 have the fountain,
 I have
 the swings, monkey
 bars and the pond.
 As long as I
 have the magnolias
 I have
 the Icecream Lady,
 the Lady
 of the Fountain,
 and the children
 in the fountain
 are not drowning.
 As long as I
 have the Icecream
 Lady, I have
 the white swans
 on the pond,
 the skyblue spumes,
 the glistening mists,
 the lattice of rain,
 the sounds
 of the icecream bells,
 and anything,
 absolutely anything,
 is possible.

Contributors' Notes

Lea Aschkenas is eighteen years old and has just completed his first year at Pomona College in Claremont, California where he is studying anthropology, media studies, and literature. He has published in *THE CITY PAPER*, *LATE KNOCKING*, *ABBEY*, and *THE MARYLAND POETRY REVIEW*.

Lenny Emmanuel has published widely in scientific and literary journals, including *OUTPOSTS* (England), *POETRY REVIEW* (India), *EXQUISITE CORPSE*, *THE CATHARTIC*, and others. He is Fiscal Officer in Pathology at the Indiana University Medical Center in Indianapolis.

Raymond H. Farr III currently resides in Ocala, FL. His poems have been published in *FREE LUNCH*, *ANEMONE*, and *MIDWEST POETRY REVIEW*.

Peter Huggins received a B.A. from the University of the South (Sewanee), a J.D. from the Cumberland School of Law, Samford University, and an M.F.A. from the University of Alabama. He teaches English at Auburn University, where he has been the Director of the Writing Center and Director of Prelaw. His poems appear in more than fifty journals, including *APALACHEE QUARTERLY*, *COLORADO REVIEW*, *SOUTH FLORIDA POETRY REVIEW*, and *THE TEXAS REVIEW*. In 1990 he was a Tennessee Williams Scholar at the Sewanee Writers' Conference and won the *DICKINSON REVIEW Prize for Poetry*.

Brian Kalt is an art student, a drawing major, at the University of Florida. This is his first publication of his artwork.

Susan Landgraf lives in Seattle and has previously published in *ALBATROSS* as well as *PLOUGHSHARES*, *SPOON RIVER QUARTERLY*, *SUN DOG REVIEW*, and others.

Errol Miller lives in Monroe, Louisiana and has previously published in *ALBATROSS*.

Scott Minar has published poetry, essays, and reviews in THE ANTI-TOCH REVIEW, THE GEORGIA REVIEW, THE OHIO REVIEW, and other magazines in the United States and Canada.

Duane Niatum (Klallam Tribe of Washington State) recently published his fifth volume of poetry, DRAWINGS OF THE SONG ANIMALS: NEW AND SELECTED POEMS (Duluth, Minnesota: Holy Cow Press, 1991). He also publishes short fiction and essays which have appeared in magazines and anthologies. He edited CARRIERS OF THE DREAM WHEEL (1975), an anthology of contemporary American Indian poetry, for Harper and Row, and has taught university courses in American, British, and American Indian Literature. Currently, he is a candidate for the Ph.D. in American Studies at the University of Michigan.

Robert J. Oberg has had poetry appear in COMMONWEAL, BLUE UNICORN, WORCESTER REVIEW, and other journals. Other poems are forthcoming in PHOEBE and NEWPORT REVIEW. He won the 1991 Pawtucket Arts Council Poetry Contest and is the founder and director of the Olney Street Group, an independent writer's association established in 1982. He also served as poetry editor for the RHODE ISLAND REVIEW from 1982-1984.

Freda Quenneville has had poems in POETRY NORTHWEST, THE NEW YORKER, PRAIRIE SCHOONER, and other magazines. She is a secretary and completed her B.A. at Antioch University in Seattle.

R.L. Richie is in the Honors program at the University of Florida and has published in university student publications.

Darrell g.h. Schramm has had work appear in CAROLINA QUARTERLY, KANSAS QUARTERLY, MIDWEST QUARTERLY, and a number of others, and has poems forthcoming in ICARUS REVIEW, PITTSBURGH QUARTERLY, and a few others.

Noel Smith has twice been a student at Breadloaf Writer's Conference. Some of her work will be appearing soon in BLUELINE.

Kathryn Wilhelm has recently published poems in EMBERS, THE CAPE ROCK, THE SANTA CLARA REVIEW, and IN PRINT, among others.

And I had done a hellish thing
And it would work 'em woe:

For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.

Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!

—Samuel Taylor Coleridge