

# ALBATROSS



#9

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# ALBATROSS

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

---

Kim Tobias

*The Divorce*

Acres standing green and gold  
before the harvest, all of this you say  
is what you've planted and planted,  
seasons of earth worshipping,  
promises wrestled from the grounds,  
from the gods, from each other.  
And all of this—these crops, these fields,  
this home site—you've held sacred and  
done damage for, all of these years  
of careful seeding fallen now to fodder,  
to old arguments and broken bonds,  
the future trampled to humus under your feet  
while the silos lie stocked and ready for war,  
for famine, for anything, their centers  
damp and rotting, and for what?  
For what you sought so relentlessly,  
an unyielding thirst parched and brutal,  
the food of hunger and abundance, full and yet,  
so empty, so wanting for more than  
one woman, one man, one union can bear.

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ALBATROSS  
#9

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Dawn Corrigan

*On Sanibel*

to L.S.

You take me to Sanibel and I discover hunting  
delights me when humans aren't the hunters.  
Pelicans fly in formations of four to six  
like army jets I would be angry to see flying  
over our town, but here I laugh  
and wait for the moment they divebomb down  
to the water and stab their beaks in.  
I laugh loudest at the one bird  
who each time comes up with nothing,  
shaking his big head, confused and hungry.

You told me Sanibel is known for its shells,  
people make a living collecting shells here.  
But I know what will happen if I try to take  
beautiful ones home from the beach, how  
disappointing they will look in a glass jar  
in the bathroom. I vow to take only those  
that aren't pretty, not whole but broken  
and somehow defined by the breaks.

You stop me as I am bent close to the sand,  
listening to waves slide through shells back to the sea.  
Look, you say, pointing at the water  
where a school of rays is making its way  
along the shore just feet from our feet.  
One turns from his course toward us, stops inches  
from shore. His fins flap softly like wings.  
This close we can see his eyes and he looks  
back at ours, seems to know what they're for.  
The way we look at each other: quiet,  
appraising, neither one wanting to change places.

---

William Virgil Davis

*Moles*

Sometimes across flat  
acres of open fields  
without a recent fell  
of rain, you can see  
them, the small pushed  
up traces of trails  
meandering in  
awkward rhythms all  
their own.

Underground,  
patiently pushing  
out paths among rocks  
and roots, like water  
seeking its own level,  
they track their lonely  
trails beneath our feet,  
going their own slow  
ways, as we go ours.

*Slow Bird*

On fevered tar  
softening like licorice  
lay a dying robin,  
sunset colored breast  
rising and falling so fast  
that it seemed  
all heart.  
Nervous twitch of a broken wing,  
eyes glossy black  
with blue specks of sky  
forever lodged in them,  
focused unblinking  
on the close August sun.  
We folded him  
under the marigold's shade  
at the edge of the lot.  
I imagined the robin thinking  
it was presumed dead  
and wanting to call us back  
to witness  
a heart still alive  
and violently beating.

*Eagle*

I am not concerned that you have me by my brow; you  
carry me  
in the course of your shadow, and I  
do not feel a thing.  
My scalp can become a nest for your talons and I will not  
care.  
I have waited for this forever,  
gazing up  
from the top of the old hill  
longing  
to be the bait in your winter escape from the gun  
of the falconer.  
I adore these wounds in the sky;  
the shrapnel of some  
bloody mind below has reached me, and in its fatal quest  
I fly  
to your unconfined and endless aviary.  
You are safe now beneath the pinions of the night. For you  
I would be food for sparrows;  
let them hurry to the place below my wings  
and cry for joy.

Kim Tobias

---

*Spring Thaw*

Above the tree line  
the highest point  
ten thousand feet and more.  
Energy at this altitude  
is a breath burning  
at the back of the throat,  
a white slashed avalanche  
of earth and sky and light  
pressed to blindness,  
it warms as it falls  
to lowlands  
to mudslides  
to swollen streams  
lapping at our ankles  
we dip below the surface  
fishing the river for  
nothing less than stars,  
a smooth, slippery handful  
of objects once circled in space  
and pulled to the Earth  
we hold like daybreak,  
like new grass  
thick and cool in our fingers.

Julie Niven

---

*Pinnacle*

This place is quiet.  
Lined in low grass, it does not whisper  
like the long tongues of hay on its south and southwest perimeter  
where stalk bends to touch stalk  
and soon the whole field is singing.

A cascade of rock forms the mountainside behind me.  
Huge muscles of stone bulge among the dead leaves and ivy.  
Sunlight flickers over the rocks  
and lizards twitch, jumping from boulder to boulder.

Between breezes there is a silence  
solid as trees rooted in the earth,  
fragile as webs stretched between stones.

There is time enough for everything.  
Wildflowers are taking the fields.

*Rain in the Desert*

I.

In this dry land  
the mind can go a year between thoughts.  
There is only the mastering of legends.  
A jackrabbit bolts from a shallow resting pit,  
fear and the red fruit of prickly pear cactus  
the same haze.

The tongue-sampled air  
is the same as yesterday  
and last month.  
The buzz of a rattlesnake  
the bray of wild burros  
wear out the morning.  
Ants cart off cactus seeds.  
The bird eggs are broken  
by teeth sudsy with venom,  
sun pounding the clay,  
the Gila monster a beaded purse  
snatched from an old woman's hand.

Here you must sleep without dreams,  
childhood furniture bleeding  
from being hurled against the thorns  
of cholla, the holy doors,  
the high plateau,  
eroded hope,  
the bobcat batting the bones of a peccary,  
the cactus wren watching.

At the dry waterhole  
are the ladders of grief,  
spinning cones of wind,  
the songs of endurance.  
A packrat takes your unkempt promises  
and puts them deep in its den.

Brittlebush and poppies  
grow on graves.  
A ground squirrel eats mesquite beans.  
The blindfolded fox in the salt flat  
bumps against your baby carriage,  
a horned lizard smirking.

Here in the latitudes of suffering  
sounds carry for miles,  
and the dunes are like the face  
of an old man.

The scorpion's sting  
renames the stars,  
droplets of venom  
bright pennies in the pocket  
of miserly nerves.

Below tangles of blue-gray clouds  
a vulture floats,  
locked in a long glide without the slightest  
flap of wings,  
its red head and black feathers  
turning silver in the sunshaft.

II.

The lightning appears like blackmail,  
the pasted letters crooked, untraceable,  
a past that must be purchased.  
Wind snaps off the leaves  
of hackberry and greasewood bushes,  
moves sand away from roots.

A tarantula slips  
under a rock.  
The clap of thunder  
is a bookmark  
dividing the dead  
from those gathered around them.  
And the sky opens.

Thrashers drop into a cluster  
of primrose seedlings  
to wait out the storm,  
their eyes like dots on dice.  
Streamlets and rills  
take the runoff from hard clay.  
A pinacate beetle is swept away.

*Moon of the Falling Leaves*

We cannot choose carefully enough  
the colours that reflect against us.

Tonight in this full moonlight  
the leaves converse with angels

and we have come outside to eavesdrop  
to listen to the undisputed eloquence

of rust and ochre, their whispered descent  
as forgiving as any season's warm rain.

Purple martins join the thrashers  
in the primrose.  
Weary of eternity,  
paunchy boulders step  
into the water gushing  
down the canyon.

In the distance a dust storm  
becomes a mud storm,  
returns the frayed earth,  
demonstrating, like circus clowns,  
the absurdity of change.

The body dies,  
this much we know.  
But there are moments of secondhand grace,  
the blue sparks of healing,  
breath condensing on a cold mirror,  
what is given without return.  
This pain is for the boy on the pony,  
the unknown future  
that we will never see.

The storm slackens,  
a voice hurrying back  
into a mouth.  
The rain stops  
and the drought begins.



Ann Newell

*Chiming Bells*

We started out on a long path  
the forest is so glorious in the morning,  
a finger pressed against the lips of  
every small thing.  
We took hands and smiled  
but the lies were terrible,  
we told each other torn flesh  
didn't hurt.

Every morning after that  
we were still alive  
and imagined what a small brown bird  
believed he was.  
We wanted to jump into this fire.

We wanted to love  
the watery sunset, the flame of morning,  
the face of a wand lily,  
the perfect love of a black bear  
padding out of his old cave.

Years later, climbing a canyon  
a hawk came down,  
we heard breath of elk sucked in, touched  
the silky ear of a quivering deer mouse,  
lay down in grass soft as far-off music,  
buried our hands in the black earth  
in the body of each other.

Simon Perchik

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And from this clock its tears  
can't fall fast enough, off  
for roadways, depots.

I remember when stones, now  
they're chimes and lingering  
and I lean

as if the wall will rise forever  
setting fire, throwing rocks  
—there must be a waterfall

a birthplace! carried  
and where your name has gone.

---

Michael McMahon

*A Memory of Light for Each Finger of My Right Hand*

i saw pale light as if light  
could tire  
spinning  
the bright cord it descends  
to be near us

a winter light shakers drank  
hands cupped  
—so clear  
it was not there  
an adam's ale of the air

sunday morning coming out  
of the skin  
of the woman still sleeping  
as her hair dreamed  
secrets before she left

a one bulb noon in the manger  
of childhood  
birth blood steaming  
on the straw as the black mare  
exhaled pain and angels

and in them all the one  
light  
which is like a face  
with more disguises  
than there will be sunsets

*Fall Wind Ghosts Speaking*

frost blackened this burst  
milkweed pod  
of its legions of angels  
no word

tonight  
torn leaves  
and crow feathers  
float down dark waters  
to join us  
in the remembering

the december night  
an eon long  
moonlight encased in ice

a black mouth spoke faces  
the places we were  
the round dark

Errol Miller

*Seven Are Her Sisters*

"Seven are her sisters . . ."  
—The Prophet

In the depth  
of lush transcendental nights  
who do you turn to  
desires, blossoming like pale roses  
from West Virginia homesteads  
upon the hill tonight  
a virgin  
is singing in her house, and yours and mine  
and we shall answer her  
in a succession of fine lives  
unfolding  
gently at first, then cascading  
through the marketplace of change  
an eye that sees everything hovering  
high above offending spirits of darkness  
until we at last lie down  
among seven sweet sisters of beauty  
who comfort us  
strumming the harp of our souls  
gathering the dew  
of morning like honey.

*The Captain Of The Ship*

Gazing now  
the captain of the ship  
does not see well, for a moment  
he rested on the nautical wind  
then he reached into the sea, casting  
ship to shore and body down to deep  
in another dream he rests  
our hands touch and he  
identifies himself as Father  
I too awaken but cannot reach him  
I am the silent one, the sun  
he shall never see.

William Miller

*"A Poor Man Eats Mud Turtles"*

He baits with chicken necks,  
pulls them thrashing  
from the shallow, muddy stream.

The biggest ones will feed  
his children for a week,  
the shells stop his wife's  
brown spit or prop  
the kitchen door in summer.

And the crack is loud, so loud  
of stone on round back:  
scarred feet push out  
and churn the air,  
the small head twists forward.

He thinks, despite himself,  
of a gray sack, burlap  
tied with string,  
and a small boy who cut  
with a filet knife  
the careful knot.

They ran beneath the house,  
were caught, though one  
was said to live,  
grow big and restless  
in the dark:  
*It'll bust through one day . . .*

Even now, he cooks  
the first meat himself,  
lights a quick fire beneath  
an old coffee can.

It's easier this way,  
tearing out the tender skin  
with ruined teeth,  
tasting the pull of brown water  
before he wades  
too far out again,  
forgets how to swim.

Katherine Cottle

*Jasper*

The end of the world seemed unimportant  
when my grandfather returned home  
baked with layers of coal dust,  
deep scent of earth mineral  
covering his human sweat.  
How slow his blood pumped  
next to the exhausted narrow shafts,  
lungs pressed tight like  
ancient hollow drums.  
How can the trees be anything  
but deception to a man  
who has lived inside the earth,  
who has seen the first painful incision?  
For forty three years he lived  
without the sun,  
without the air,  
choked until the black lung  
filled him with the same earth  
he worshipped,  
leaving the thin shell  
of an empty world.

Mary-Beth O'Shea-Noonan

*Native American Craft Fair*

My grandpa was still hungry in Ireland  
when your people were shoved off the land,  
but I still feel guilt handling your silver  
and blue-green stones,  
feathers knotted into leather, offerings.  
I do not buy, embarrassed.

You catch me admiring your braid, steel gray  
and your face,  
bones etched in taut skin.

I would like to touch your palm,  
rub my fingers on muscles ropy under buckskin,  
find within you a tap root,  
survival.

Grace Bauer

---

*Nocturne*

The moon rises, a sliver  
sickling light into summer sky.

It feels more like fall.  
The chill that definite.

And I sit. Alone. Bored  
enough to waste time

admiring my nails glowing  
faint as pearls with cheap polish.

My hands, I think, are  
the only part of myself

I have always felt  
at home with. Despite

their callouses, their scars  
they have often done

their work well, have held  
pens, tools, hands

other flesh too tender  
to mention. And in this

they are beautiful. I have learned  
a type of contentment.

To take pleasure in little  
things. Tonight this pleasure

is in my hands and the way  
they lie empty.

---

Duncan Zenobia Saffir

*Mountain Ghost*

for Li Jing

She became a sorrow  
deep and drinking  
late into night.

Weeping and remembering;  
pagodas of open wind,  
the caress, now a thief,  
and our souls tumbling  
like diamonds  
lit from across a river.  
Water, itself tumbling  
inside a hungry dance.

She, being hunger, feeds.

Christian Knoeller

*September*

in memory of William Stafford

After seasons of waiting, following autumn rains,  
mushrooms burst forth from the forest floor,  
a barrage of fugitive tombstones.

Such days the wind has a life of its own,  
chasing itself through the oaks, shaking  
late blossoms from melon vines.

Bees that visit the garden have begun to lose  
their way home. In the old maple,  
a woodpecker drones on late

into the afternoon, its hollow drumbeat echoing  
across the hills. The bitter  
skins of wild plums

finally give way to sweetness, surrounding  
a seed the shape and weight  
of rocks that have lived in rivers.

Take your pick. Wherever you turn the story  
remains the same: this season of departures  
has begun to learn every one of our names.

Lyn Lifshin

*Mint Leaves at Yaddo*

In frosty glasses of tea as light went  
tangerine. Here, iced tea is what we make  
waiting for death with this machine  
my mother wanted. Not knowing if she'd be here

for her birthday, we still shopped wildly,  
brought her this present. For twenty days  
my mother shows only luke warm interest in tea,  
vomits even water. Soon the light will go

she says, the days get shorter. I can't bear,  
she murmurs, another winter in Stowe and I  
think how different this isolation is,  
this iced tea, this time that

stretches where little grows  
as it did, green as that  
mint, except my mother,  
smaller, more distant, gaunt.

William Virgil Davis

*A Windy Evening in Crete*

After dinner in the open air,  
we walked the beach. The wind's  
rough hands passed over the water.

Women, before their open doors,  
watched us shyly. Goats and children  
came and went as they wanted.

We walked down the narrow beach  
and back, watching the water  
eating the water, eating the sand.

The water seemed to be saying  
*the wind is nothing, the wind,  
like you, will be gone tomorrow.*

CB Follett

*The Secret of Bones*

lie in the narrative of their cracks,  
telling carbon tales  
for which we have few clues,  
bones scraped and dusted *in situ*,  
laid out like fileted trout,  
plain as the dirt that stains its sockets,  
its too-thin ulna,

or some animal bone  
found along a trail of my own devising,  
a scatter of bones  
nuzzled apart from their muscled linkage  
by some predator—wolf, coyote,  
even the dry wind that takes away water.

Small bones chewed into shards,  
bald-headed hip joints licked clean,  
a sweep of vertebrae and finally  
the bleached boat of horns, twin flanges  
of moose-rack.

Here, in the beauty of his sweep,  
are delicate mosaics of his disunity,  
the intricate tracery lining his leg bones.

And what of my bones,  
still working their vital steppings,  
the willing bend and arch of my spine,  
the curved wings of scapula, ivoryed  
catwalk of clavicles.

Should I meet, one day, with more sun than water  
and lay out my bones along the sand  
what would be made of my disconnections,  
scattered metatarsals, curled phalanges,  
would some stranger walking loosely  
on earth's non-paths stop to consider  
the secrets of my bones? Would they admire  
the curves and connections of my elbows,  
the interlockings of knee and ankle,  
wonder what brought me here and no farther.

Carole Stedronsky

*In the Dark Wood Room*

Owls and hawks perch on the back of every chair.  
They speak in low voices.

But the only words we hear are our own.  
We talk so loudly, the walls crumble and fall,  
the raptors feather away.

Then we are silent. There is wind in the room  
and we notice the sucking hole in the sky.





**Grace Bauer** won the 1993 Annual Anabiosis Press Chapbook Contest with the chapbook *THE HOUSE WHERE I'VE NEVER LIVED*.

**Dawn Corrigan** is working on a Ph.D. in creative writing at the University of Utah. She has published poems in the *DICKINSON REVIEW*, *RESURGENS*, and *UNTITLED*.

**Katherine Cottle** is an English major at Goucher College in Baltimore, Maryland and has previously published in *THE MARYLAND POETRY REVIEW*, *THE BALTIMORE SUN*, *THE BALTIMORE CITY PAPER*, *LATE KNOCKING*, and other small press magazines.

**William Virgil Davis** has published poetry, fiction, and criticism in a wide variety of books and journals. He has published three books of poetry: *ONE WAY TO RECONSTRUCT THE SCENE* (Yale, 1980), winner of the Yale Series of Younger Poets' Award for 1979; *THE DARK HOURS* (Calliope, 1984), winner of the Calliope Press Chapbook Prize; and *WINTER LIGHT* (North Texas, 1990). He is Professor of English and Writer-in-Residence at Baylor University.

**Corrine DeWinter** is the author of "Influenza" (1992, C&L Publishers) and plans to release another collection of prose and poetry in 1993 titled "The Lightning Speech of Birds." Her work has appeared in such publications as *ABERRATIONS*, *THE PINEHURST JOURNAL*, *PLAIN-SONGS*, *RIVERRUN*, and *THE NEW AUTHOR'S JOURNAL*.

**Angelin Donohue** was recently published in *POET LORE* and has other poems appearing in *THE CHATTAHOOCHEE REVIEW*, the *AGNES SCOTT WRITERS' FESTIVAL MAGAZINE*, and a Toronto-based journal called *WAVES*. She lives in Silver Spring, Maryland.

**CB Follett** has had poems accepted by *CALYX*, *SOUTH COAST POETRY REVIEW*, *SNOWY EGRET*, *BLACK BEAR REVIEW*, *THE IOWA WOMAN*, *THE TAOS REVIEW*, among others, and has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize XVIII.

**Christian Knoeller** is a student in the English department at the University of Wisconsin in Eau Claire.

**Lyn Lifshin** has published a million poems in hundreds of journals. She has previously published in *ALBATROSS* also.

**James Magorian** has published nine books of poetry, most recently *BORDERLANDS* (1992) and *THE HIDEOUT OF THE SIGMUND FREUD GANG* (1987). He has also published children's books and the satirical novels *AMERICA FIRST* (1992) and *THE MAN WHO WORE LAYERS OF CLOTHING IN THE WINTER* (1994). His poems have appeared in over a hundred literary magazines including *SOUTHERN POETRY REVIEW*, *THE SEWANEE REVIEW* and *KANSAS QUARTERLY*.

**Michael McMahon** lives and writes in West Springfield, New Hampshire, where he farms, sells antiques, teaches, and works as a general laborer.

**Errol Miller** has published poems in *VERSE*, *UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR REVIEW*, *ONIONHEAD*, *TAMPA BAY REVIEW*, and others. He has work forthcoming in *RHINO*, *LAUREL REVIEW*, *PUERTO DEL SOL*, *CIMARRON REVIEW*, *SLIPSTREAM*, *THE MIDWEST QUARTERLY*, *THE CENTENNIAL REVIEW*, and many others. He has previously published in *ALBATROSS*.

**William Miller** is a 1989 graduate of the doctoral program in English and Creative Writing at SUNY Binghamton and is currently an Assistant Professor of English and Creative Writing at York College of Pennsylvania. He has published two full-length collections of poetry: *OLD FAITH* (Mellen Poetry Press) and *BREATHED ON GLASS* (Druid Press). His chapbook, *THE TREES ARE MENDEED*, was published by Northwoods Press of Maine in 1987. He has also published individual poems in such publications as *THE SOUTHERN REVIEW*, *THE SOUTHERN POETRY REVIEW*, *THE WISCONSIN REVIEW*, *ZONE THREE*, *CAESURA*, and many others. He has previously published in *ALBATROSS*.

**Ann Newell** lives in Blue Valley, Colorado, 9500 feet up, tucked between shelves of books, her writings and others, and forests and meadows. And writes—she has previously published in *ALBATROSS*.

**Julie Niven** finds the bulk of her work inspired by nature. Nature has been the one constant in her life where she has always been able to renew herself in this often too crazy world.

**Mary-Beth O'Shea-Noonan** lived for many years in Ireland, returning to the U.S. in 1985 where she now lives in the Berkshires with her husband and daughter. She teaches third and fourth grade, raises ducks and chickens, and grows her own vegetables.

**Simon Perchik** is an attorney by profession who has published numerous books of poetry, most recently *THE GANDOLPH POEMS* (White Pine Press, 1987), and *WHO CAN TOUCH THESE KNOTS, NEW & SELECTED POEMS* (The Scarecrow Press, 1985). He has also published in many magazines including *POETRY*, *THE NATION*, *PARTISAN REVIEW*, *APR*, *BELOIT*, and *THE NEW YORKER*. He has previously published in *ALBATROSS*.

**Duncan Z. Saffir** majored in English and East Asian Studies, becoming a micro brewer for four years. He is now a poet, sculptor, and ex-micro brewer. He has previously published in *THE LEWIS AND CLAR LITERARY REVIEW*, *PLAZM*, and *MUDVEIN*.

---

**Mary Rudbeck Stanko** is a U.S. citizen and native of Minnesota who now lives in London, Ontario with her husband and their two daughters. She is employed as a professional clown, florist, and manager of a home renovation/furniture restoration business. Her poetry has appeared in *COMMONWEAL*, *PACIFIC REVIEW*, *CRUCIBLE*, *NASSAU REVIEW*, *POETRY NIPPON*, and many other periodicals in Australia, England, France, Ireland, Canada, Japan, Scotland, and the United States. A Pushcart nominee, in 1993 she was awarded the Nassau Review Poetry Prize, the Humanitas International Poetry Prize, and Expressions Forum Poetry Prize. Her recent chapbook, *EAVESDROPPINGS*, was published by Nightshade Press.

**Carole Stedronsky** lives in Davis, California, where she writes magical realism poetry and fiction. *WOLF DREAM* was published by the Anabiosis Press as the 1991 winner of their chapbook contest. She is currently working on a book of poetry and children's picture book manuscripts.

**Kim Tobias** is a native of Ohio's farmlands and industrial cross-cultures. She now lives in South Florida and writes primarily for business organizations. Her work has appeared in *CLIFTON*, *SOUTH FLORIDA POETRY ANTHOLOGY*, and in business and trade publications. Most recently, her poetry has been accepted by *SALON POST-ALE*, *PROLIFIC WRITER'S JOURNAL*, and *Pirate Writings Publishing*.

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