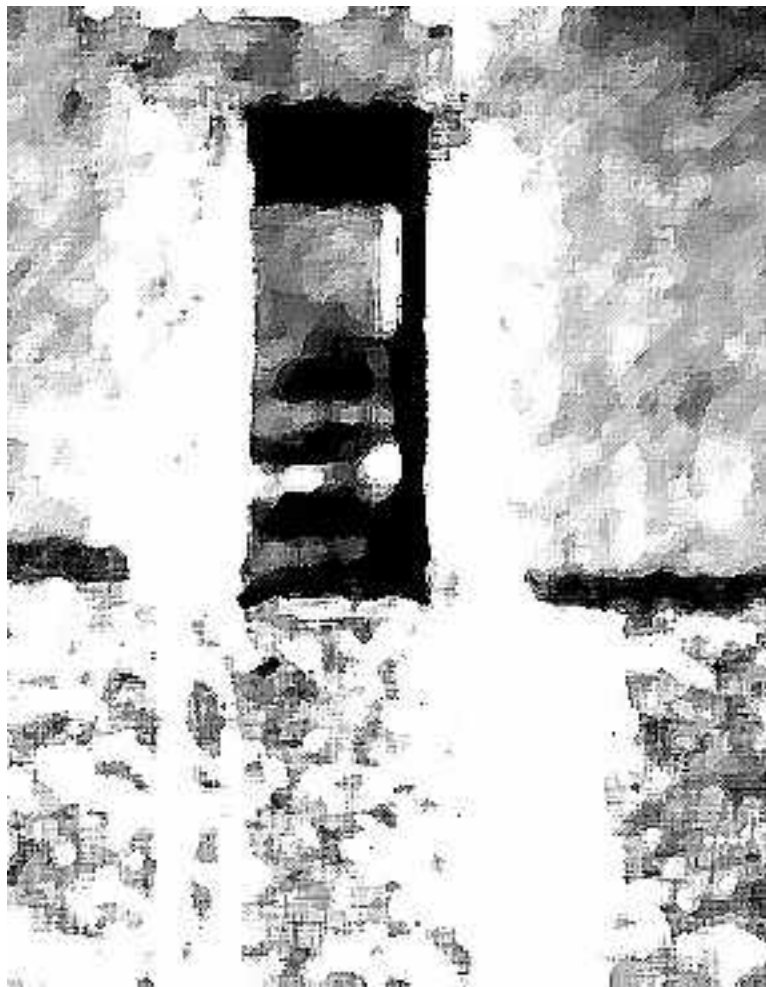


# ALBATROSS



#11

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

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# ALBATROSS

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# ALBATROSS

## #11

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*Vigil*

To be still,  
to sit patient  
as trees  
to watch a bobcat cross the path  
not by chance, but  
design.

To know  
what the willow  
knows:  
the haunt of quail  
the matings of deer.

These are times, a moment's gift:  
when the turtle  
slips from  
rock,  
traps the  
eye,  
when light  
shatters  
on iridescent shell  
and bends  
the  
holy.

*Turn of Hand*

The perfume of Carolina Jessamine  
wafting through drawn shades on a still summer  
afternoon  
is the same scent  
my grandmother admired,  
worked her hands in earth  
as I do.  
The light, the feel  
of moist black dirt  
moves behind drawn years  
and the sorrow is  
a fragile bond so fine  
I can reach out and touch my grandmother's hands  
lined, caked with mud thick beneath torn nails  
yellowed as her braids,  
hear still  
the crack of hard-shelled cucumber beetles  
she crushed between thumb and index finger.

My grandmother is  
hot earth,  
the blood of offending beetles  
and Carolina Jessamine so abundant  
it lingers on air so thick  
I wear it,  
become my grandmother working soil,  
tugging at roots  
so embedded  
they stretch beyond  
California clay  
all the way to my grandmother's home  
three thousand miles, three thousand sorrows  
and a childhood away.

Ruba Nadda

---

*my mamma's course hands*

i'm sad  
sitting on the subway  
heading to christie

there is an old  
man who reminds  
me of my father

he sits having a  
conversation with  
himself and

he smiles at me  
and i smile back  
turn my headset

off my drug is ready  
the doors opening  
i get up to leave

pushing my hands in  
my coat and it feels  
the way it felt when

i touched my mamma's  
coarse hands lines  
runnin everywhere

blood not concerning her  
shruggin it off and  
sayin cooking and

doing the dishes  
i feel like a mistake  
tonight entering my

empty apartment with  
the thought of my  
daddy sitting staring

desperately at the  
blaring talk show  
while mamma washes

the dishes from the night before





*Your Hands*

The emptiness of your hands, lost  
without a glass or cigarette or match  
burning down. Not even the silver  
of a ring to disrupt them. Not even the rain,  
once, under an umbrella. It was May  
and when the sun came out  
you twirled your umbrella like a walking  
stick, talking about flowers—*The daffodils  
are out, bright as trumpets.* Not even  
an umbrella, or glass or cigarette.  
No matches to burn the air between us.  
When you stepped over a puddle  
I thought, *This is the thing which cannot  
be said.* I am trying to say it now.  
Your hands, the bend of knuckle,  
of bone. Drawing a strand of dark hair  
behind your ear. The shy way you  
raise them to cover your mouth.  
That emptiness I cannot fill, which I  
would fill with the music of this  
single daffodil, its almost silent song.

*Loss*

Quick as my hand was I rarely caught one.  
Even when I timed my strike just perfect,  
plowed my hand three or four inches ahead  
and cupped the sand where I guessed they'd be,  
their furious legs raced on, their soft-shelled  
bodies squirting out my fingers as I stretched  
to hold them. But what a wonder when I did,  
when I felt one's spindly legs tickling my skin  
as he burrowed on, digging thru a fistful  
of sand. I'd put my palms together as if I'd won  
water or a flame and wait till he stopped moving,  
faking dead, before opening my hands. Still,  
there were times when he'd just sit there, dazed  
from being free or fear frozen, till I nudged him,  
and he dove back under sand while I ran toward  
the quonsets to beat the wave. What a strange  
predator I was, capturing for the adventure, not  
even a nibble on his shell, and then sad to see him  
gone—to return these many years later and find  
only black holes filled with shadows in the sand,  
morning's blue cupping me as a stranger now,  
among the condos, no past to bring me home.

*Magpies 7*

The girl with magpie hands  
Made a nest of my blonde hair.

She gathered it from my closed doorways,  
The carpet of thieves,  
The corpse of a young woman in Arkansas.

She has gathered her nest from the ceiling  
Where I once lived with the mask  
Of a long-dead Shogun.

Her nest has yielded demi-gods and  
Beheaded doves.

Terry Ann Thaxton

---

*Sign Language*

to my son at sixteen

Fish crows open the sky, and today, again  
I practice you leaving. The emptiness  
in the backyard, I divide  
between mockingbirds that remind me of water and clouds  
and you covered in mud and gone. Now you are learning  
to speak to the deaf, and yesterday,  
when you came home from school, you showed me a new  
sign, motioning to your heart,  
pulling your arms toward your chest, then lifting  
one hand and tipping it over your mouth. Not understanding,  
I saw: your infant hands clinging  
to my breasts, anhingas  
lifting from the lake, and rain. Coming down in circles.  
And I remembered the lake, the runway of the anhinga,  
how sometimes the bird does not need the lake.  
Someday I will be too old to be your mother,  
too young to tell you what I mean, but I will hold onto your  
dampness even after you stop crying for me.

*Sign language is a foreign language,  
you told me yesterday, a new structure, with different signs for past tense.  
Again, you signed your desire  
for a glass of water. Then you left  
to look for a deaf child who, the street sign says, lives  
around the corner. Houses heard you  
coming. Other boys your age, on skateboards, ignored you.  
You knocked on all the doors, and you discovered that the deaf child  
had moved out years ago. Oh Adam, I don't know how  
to be a lake. In your room, on the shelf: a basilisk, rocks, feathers,  
a banded water snake, and the shell  
that once, on a beach, you lifted from the sand  
and gave to me. Here, you had said, it looks like the moon,  
but yesterday after you returned home, not able to find a child  
to speak with you in sign language, you held on to silence,  
and closed the door to your room.*

*Whiskey*

3 fingers of Seagrams, please.  
At twelve, I was already tipping the gallon bottle.  
Not bothering with a shot glass, I tried to guess  
how wide his fingers were so as not to short change him.  
Saturdays we drove to the package store,  
bourbon, whiskey, gin in brown bags  
and a case of beer loaded into the trunk of the old Chevy.  
At home, I'd stack bottles of Black Label  
into the basement fridge and all weekend  
skip downstairs and up, clutching the cold bottles to my chest,  
one for him, another for my mother, one for the parish priest.  
All those years admiring his broad smile,  
the way he tipped back his glass.

My father lived a long time.  
At eighty, he could barely walk.  
He hid his bottles behind his chair,  
called the package store, slipped the delivery boy  
a five, and drank until he staggered off to bed,  
or fell, his breath soured, beard grown out,  
his clothes smelling of urine.  
I never saw him cry.

I was afraid to be like him,  
but I wished for the courage  
to lift the glass, sit alone and let iced  
bourbon burn its way down my throat  
until my heart went numb or  
the booze broke down the wall  
tears gather behind. Maybe then  
I could scream him back,  
sober, handsome.

*Unshuttered*

Unshutter the tower-block,  
the shell, digital cell,  
unidimensional, unseal  
car's metal clam, letting

the tight-curved fern-frond  
self unfurl into light,  
the cramped colt shake out  
his painful limbs and feed

on unvirtual hills, moors,  
where peregrine falcon  
winnows and glides,  
riding the arc of the wind.

Let us harvest the solitude  
of windswept places,  
the rills dancing through rowan  
and heather, cranesbill

waving bright flags.

*Snow Leopard*

You search for days  
for disturbances in snow,  
claw-prints bigger than hands,  
a sinuous body  
slinking towards you.

Its face will startle you,  
eyes like jewels,  
features whetted and honed.

Myth-bringer, it bears  
the flame of its being  
with feral grace

treading delicately  
above the snowline,  
soul's country,  
its numbers dwindling.

Something in us  
dying with its legends  
walks the high peaks,  
elated, alone.

*Animals*

The animals taught us  
how to be better than our machines;  
they added to our sense  
of whichever emotion we lacked,  
and sang back at us our own blues.  
We wanted to be complete,  
to burst from cold pods and grow.  
The animals, with their cool skins,  
sleek horns, padded paws and  
spiked teeth, led us there

and they were loyal. Obedient. Kind.  
We played hide-n-seek in the trees  
and exchanged music.  
When their beds were dusty,  
we took out brooms  
and swept with a precision we rarely  
used in our own homes.  
We mended their hurt bodies,  
stashed the bones of the dead  
in hidden places, and purred like humans  
when they licked us clean,  
forgave us our sins.





## Hannah Ackerman

---

### *Snares*

(a found poem)

Dr. O.T. Martin has divided traps into three divisions:  
Enclosing traps imprison without injury;  
arresting traps seize the victim without killing it;  
killing traps crush, pierce, or cut to death.

Among cage-traps may be mentioned bird-cones  
filled with corn and smeared with lime  
which adheres to the bird's head  
blinding it—  
or coop-traps, exemplified by turkey traps.  
Grains of corn lead the bird into a roofed ditch;  
the bird, instead of retracing its steps,  
always seeks to escape upward  
and remains cooped.

Knives and spears are affixed at the bottom of pitfalls.  
Fish are caught by the gills, in gill-nets.

The noose-trap class, including door-traps and box-traps,  
is very extensive. The simplest examples are  
the common slip-noose of twine, wire, or horsehair  
set for birds or small animals on their feeding grounds  
or runways. The victim is caught by the neck, body, or foot  
as it tries to push through the noose. Other devices are  
clutch-traps, jaw- and clap-traps, clap-nets, and  
steel-traps—with or without teeth.

During recent years many traps designed to reduce suffering  
have been put out but are not yet in general use.

The oldest form of steel-trap is the man-trap  
first used against poachers.  
One man-trap, the spring-gun,  
belongs to the category of killing trap.

Sable, marten, mink, otter, and beaver are enticed to traps  
by castoreum, musk, asafoetida oil, anise, and common fish oil.

One kind of dead-fall, the mouse-trap,  
kills by a blow or strangulation.

Of point-traps are the impaling and missile classes.  
The harpoon or down-fall is used for the hippopotamus.  
Passing beneath, large game breaks a cord

---

and precipitates the harpoon upon itself.  
Another example of impalement is the hawk-trap,  
in the center of which a live fowl is placed.  
A bird of prey attempting to secure the fowl  
is impaled upon sharp wires.

Spring-bows and spring-guns are missile-traps.  
An animal pressing the strings pulls the trigger,  
discharges the piece into its own body.  
Sticks holding bait in front of the muzzle  
sometimes substitute for string.

Of edge-traps a curious example is the wolf-knife,  
a very sharp blade embedded in frozen fat.  
One wolf, licking the fat, cuts its tongue,  
and a flow of blood ensues;  
the wolf and its companions  
become infuriated by the smell and taste;  
the wounded beast and the others  
are killed and devoured.

For large game, a knife trap, a heavy blade attached  
to a lever, is released by the animal biting the bait,  
killing the victim.

Traps for animals are of great antiquity,  
and no savage people has ever been discovered  
that did not possess some variety of snare.

Shadow

Every night I sleep with my arms  
around my shadow.

I dream about the old ways when sparrows were abundant,  
took baths in the sand.

I also dream about ropes, chains, traps, shackles,  
sentences from human voices.

My shadow complains  
that I twist too much in bed.

I hold my shadow closer, but my shadow's shoulders,  
my shadow's breasts have no flesh.

I learned last night that my shadow  
does not even know my name.

*In These Desperate Times*

Dear Alice a note of optimism and then despair  
as I stand among sunbeams dreams of Key Largo  
salvation isn't in the cards today divided Sunday  
the exact time of our demise too vague to comprehend  
outside our door a cunning beast manifests his message  
and we adapt ourselves to pout among the backyard roses  
if it pleases the landlord we may sell our country place  
Alexander the fetus tucked away in back rooms of night  
tragic this scene of innocent lambs stoned on sin  
once you were a flapper and I loved you  
breathing out of flashing neon sad cafes  
soon it was dark and cold in the Aircastle  
you rose from the bed before I was finished  
whispered derelict words that froze like frost  
in blue windows shimmering under the moon  
on the horizon a car in flames  
plunged over the edge of the earth  
and I was afraid for us  
afraid for us tomorrow  
when the young girl in you would move out  
and strike up conversations with one-armed men  
thundering beside me my heart could not stand  
the process of giving my lady away  
yet this is the planet of desire  
with swollen animals in the living room  
I cannot change the direction or duration  
for I am bitter and old  
fingering the spears in my body  
searching for some message from the gods  
profound and worthy of thinking over  
in the silence that remains.

*Directions*

something  
is humping  
its mother  
in the woods

her only seeds  
are stones  
released  
in a black lava

listen

to where  
we are going:

a geology  
of dark birth

*rooted*

I crawl into your belly button  
there's enough dust here to grow carrots  
orange root hairs will penetrate your belly  
wiggle past connective tissue and fat tissue  
creep into lacteals and villi  
enter goblet cells to infiltrate your gut lumen  
excite bacteria, persuade them to vitamin D  
                  overdose you  
as I spill the tangerine blood of your secret lover

*Reminiscence*

I thought of you  
in the rains,  
under the shelter  
of thick maple trees  
holding back  
the spillover of water  
you for so long  
dreamed of speaking  
from your unparted lips.

You held out to me  
in those heavy rains  
a stone you kept dry  
in your hip pocket  
a stone whose mouthful of songs  
were still silenced  
by the same dark body  
you more than once  
chose for your very own.

Part of the sky,  
part of the cloudy sky,  
you were cherished for the way  
that you looked:

Not a leaf out of place.

Not a raindrop  
hidden in full sun or small moonlight.

Not your rain voice  
heard where the wind's finally still.

Not your face or the rain  
any different.



*Love Poem*

A person can pick black raspberries forever  
along the Morris Bean private railroad  
right-of-way in Ohio and never  
find the proper audience. Years of work,  
hard preparation at Maine low-bush  
blueberries won't due. Raking's an art a child's  
paid fifteen cents a pound for. And high-bush,  
though it's by hand, can't match the dangerous thorns  
of the wild raspberries, whose dark eyes glow  
in the hot July, daring you to pull  
them from the green sockets without squeezing  
the blood in a stream along your arm. Speed,  
we see, is second to gentleness and  
simple persistence. Long pants and long sleeves  
help too. While you work the outer fringes  
in your shorts, you notice him disappear  
into the underbrush. The crackling sound  
of encounter muffles. The birds twitter and stop.  
An hour later, he surfaces with two pots  
full, breathing hard.

*Luca*

before you were born  
I was an ocean of salt  
waiting for water

I was a dry beach  
an empty desert  
waiting for you

you come like the rain

like a new young life  
a sister  
in a world of only children

a morning light  
in a world of winter

an iris in a  
garden of ferns

a willow in a valley of oaks

*A Day in the Wind*

April comes  
with its green  
palette.

The wind  
is everywhere  
delicious.

I can hear it  
sprinkle through  
the trees

calling them  
to new magic.  
I've been out

dancing  
in this wind  
since dawn.

It called my name.  
It was full of names.  
The trees know.

Even the mosses  
and thirsty twigs  
have noticed.

*Early Snow*

Winter bends the birch over itself,  
making it bow away from the wind

down into the river, the still green leaves  
turning to ice and reminding the woody trunk

of the gravities of its life. It moves slowly  
and the birds one by one open into the words  
of their flight. They might move south,

but instead stay to live on what lasts, berries,  
a few nuts, the frozen message of a worm.

I want to look away from the severity of this,  
the white blanket of snow, the hunger,  
the angry branches tearing open clouds.

I want to look away, but instead lie down  
into the cold, into the whole body  
of what is here. I fall into the crisp slivers  
of the goldenrod, and sink with the weight

of winter, the weight of my life, deeper  
and deeper toward the center of things.

4 AM

I sit on the dock with a thin glass  
of wine, its red life turning gray  
in the moonlight.

The morning's mist fades  
the lines between sky and water.  
Bullfrogs call from somewhere  
in between.

I cannot help stepping on the lake,  
testing whether I might walk on this  
surface to where the darkness opens  
around stars, then further up  
the light's million miles of past.



*To Know As We Are*

Step by step it tries to veil these moments thinly,  
Concentrically, one within mysterious other,  
Yet the system suddenly mutates near the south facade.

It connects with the sea when put into words,  
Where balustrades sport channels carved with shells.  
Their scalloped edges catch rings of water and open

A sequence of rhythmic doorways, which in turn  
Provide clues to the nature of the sensation.  
To know as we are: an accretion of ocean terraces,

Moon begun and given over to dense chordal pleasure,  
A black ribbon that becomes the color of writing,  
Blind as ink, felt like speaking in order to breathe.

*Making Peace*

Come Sunday we'll walk west of town, careful  
to hold our hats against the wind that blows  
free across this flat brown land. We'll walk  
hand in hand, while wild things pass and groan

in knowing wherever our four feet walk,  
a small part of eternity is gone.  
I'll hand my black hat down to them, the beasts,  
steaming from heat, seeking shadows beneath

your black dress. Inside our clothes we hold  
our forgiveness—the green things these creatures  
miss. The seeds of trees, the roots of August.  
And in the end, the leafy things and shade,

the water cascading from our lips, rivers  
of rich soil. We will walk slowly and pray  
for them. We will say, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry"  
and move into the dust our footsteps left.

So gather your dress, and I'll get my hat.  
Come Sunday, the rest must come. We'll furnish  
this world again. We'll make peace with the beasts  
we left behind. Silence in style again,

with footsteps we'll find the dust and rest.



## Contributor's Notes

---

**Hannah Ackerman** has published many poems in California publications such as *BERKELEY MONTHLY*, *POETRY L/A*, *CQ*, and others.

**R. G. Cantalupo** has recent pubs in *RATTLE*, *THE WINDSOR REVIEW*, *THE SQUAW REVIEW*, and others. He is a graduate in Creative Writing and American Lit from UC at Santa Cruz.

**Daniel Comiskey** has published poems in *BLACK MOON* and has previously published in *ALBATROSS*. His chapbook, *OUT ALONG THE STARLIT ROADS*, is forthcoming from *THE ANABIOSIS PRESS*.

**Anne Coray** has poetry in recent issues of *NIMROD*, *HAWAII REVIEW* and *NEXUS*, among others. She received her MFA from the University of Alaska at Anchorage.

**Christine Delea** has poems in *NORTH DAKOTA QUARTERLY*, *MIDWEST QUARTERLY*, and *THE COE REVIEW* and has forthcoming poems in *NEW YORK QUARTERLY* and *RE:AL*.

**Robert Dunn** has work published in *SNOWY EGRET*, *AVOCET*, *MUSE OF FIRE*, and others. He works as a tropical ecologist.

**Lynne Elson** was born in the Fens in England and now lives and works in Oxfordshire. She has worked in nature conservation and archaeology, and her nature poetry appears in a range of UK journals.

**Eric R. Hoffman** has work published in *NEWSLETTER INAGO*, *ILYA'S HONEY*, *VOICES INTERNATIONAL*, *BLUE UNICORN*, and others.

**Eric Horsting** was poetry editor of *THE ANTIOCH REVIEW* for five years, and has poems recently appearing in *POETRY EAST*, *THE LITERARY REVIEW*, and *PRESS*.

**Lea Littlewolfe** of Onion Lake has work in *PRISM*, *WASCANAREVIEW*, *CORMORANT*, *OTHER VOICES*, and many others. Her new book, *THE UNWILLING BESTIARY*, is from Turnstone Press. Her tribal affiliations are Odawa and Abenaki.

**Duane Locke** is the father of the Immanentist Movement in poetry and has recently returned to the Immanentist style of late, publishing many poems in such publications as *THE BITTER OLEANDER*, *BLACK MOON*, and others. He has previously published in *ALBATROSS*.

**Susan Herport Methvin** teaches English and Creative Writing at Jacksonville State University in Jacksonville, Alabama. Her poems have appeared in *NEGATIVE CAPABILITY*, *SOUTHERN POETRY REVIEW*, *POETRY NORTHWEST*, *BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL*, and others.

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**Errol Miller** has had recent work in AMERICAN POETRY REVIEW, BLACK MOON, THE PANNUS INDEX, THE BITTER OLEANDER, RHINO, GREENSBORO REVIEW, and has published two new collections: DOWNWARD GLIDE and FOREVER BEYOND US. He has previously published in ALBATROSS.

**Harvey Molloy** is a writer/artist living in New Zealand. His web site is <http://www.glyph.co.nz/molloy>

**Ruba Nadda** is an Arab-Canadian woman living in Toronto who has published short stories in BORDERLINES, THE LITERARY REVIEW, and many others. She recently completed an English degree at York University.

**Jessica Jordan Nudel** grew up in NYC. She won the 1997 Shenango River Books Prose Chapbook Award for IN JENNA'S DREAM. Her poems and stories have appeared in THE CRESCENT REVIEW, BORDERLANDS, and elsewhere.

**Judie Rae** has been anthologized in THE ANTHOLOGY OF MAGAZINE VERSE AND YEARBOOK OF AMERICAN POETRY—1997 and has poems in YANKEE, THE ACORN, and others. She has also authored four novels for young adults.

**Paul B. Roth** has two books of poetry, HALF-SAID (Bitter Oleander Press) and NOTHING OUT THERE (Vida Publishing, Inc.), and has published poems in BLACK MOON, PEGASUS, PANNUS INDEX, and many others. He also edits and publishes THE BITTER OLEANDER.

**Donald Ryburn** is editor of 4•9•1 IMMANENTIST IMAGINATION and has poems in THE BITTER OLEANDER, BLACK MOON, POETRY MOTEL, among others.

**Terry Ann Thaxton** has poems in THE FLORIDAREVIEW, TAMPA REVIEW, BERKELEY POETRY REVIEW, and others. She holds an MA from the University of Central Florida and an MFA from Vermont College.

**Matthew Thorburn** was educated at the University of Michigan, where he was a two-time Hopwood Award winner. His poems and essays have appeared in magazines around the United States, as well as in Germany and Japan. He lives and works in Detroit.

**Fredrick Zydek** has published four collections of poetry and has poems appearing in THE ANTIOCH REVIEW, CIMMARON REVIEW, POETRY, and POETRY NORTHWEST.

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

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