

"Your frothy gifts have the stink of bait  
Too long in the trough in the sun.  
The hook is plain, I know the price;  
Good Captain, I can wait!

"I'll wait for a man with bags of seed  
For the sureness of the earth.  
Where salt from sweat and not from spray  
Weighs up a husband's worth."

Noreen stayed long on the fog-struck beach  
With fringes of foam round her knees  
While staring for years at each square-rigged ship  
Slipping in on the morning breeze.

Her hope reached the depth of her scuttled pride,  
But one day the Petrel returned.  
The barque lowered sails, her captain waved,  
The crew scrambled over the side.

None ever heard of an owner named Woods.  
She was bought from a Captain Krayle.  
One man remembered a rumor about  
A master who vanished-- a gale--

Noreen kept on swimming beyond the shoal,  
Her eyes on a distant gull  
Skimming and circling quicksilver patrol  
Over a half-sunken hull.

The ale is strong at the Great Auk Inn  
Like it was when canvas was king.  
The years wash back if you close your eyes  
And listen to figureheads sing.

The old sea dogs squint out at the bay  
Each dusk when the water looks brown,  
Then tell their tales of love and sails  
And watch the birds dive down.