**Eyass**

He was gentle at first,

knew how to imprint me,

an eyass he’d drawn from the wild.

I grew used to his hands,

the blood smell of them,

the way he’d stroke my back,

soothe me when the sudden dark

of the hood descended.

The first time I flew, he knew

I’d come back to him,

take the jesses willingly,

calming to his touch.

He gave me treats,

the best parts of prey

I brought him; the hot

entrails of a sparrow,

a blackcap’s liver. I began

to fly further, mapping the terrain,

the thickets rabbits sprang from,

the woods with their larder

of blackbirds, woodpeckers, pigeons.

Once I treed, sitting atop

a vast beech while he called

and called. How small he seemed,

head craned upwards, flightless.

I went back to him,

suffered the rough hooding,

days flapping from perch to perch

in that stinking cage.

He was manning me, feeding

me his prey; sick, unmoving meat,

making me beg for it. But

I’d tasted something else,

the brain-burning excitement

of footing a rabbit,

the hot spurt of its blood

in my beak, the quivering

as it died in my talons.

I’ll scourge his face to fly again.

Hugh Dunkerley