

My Good Dog Zachariah

My good dog Zachariah
died hard this winter of fevers
and yaw and is bundled in
an old tarp 'neath the wood floor.

Red Zack was a chicken killer
as soon as he got his teeth,
running them down
in a fury of blood and feathers.
It was mean work for a stout heart.
He broke a law which
protects the stupid from the quick.

My Grandma Totten put an end to it,
short of a twelve gauge,
by hanging a dead hen round his neck.
Zack dragged it for an August week.
He never killed again, never sucked eggs
or napped on a feather bed.

Didn't have to beat Zachariah
over the head with a board,
how loathing teaches courage,
hindrance the relish of freedom.
Stink is an argument
even the brickheaded understand.

Later on, Grandma tried the same lesson
on me, as I grew up,
strung my neck with beer bottles
old stockings and whorehouse menus.
It worked on Zack, not on me.
I buried them both
And I just stunk through it all,
Still do,
Wearing the collar.