



The Scarlet Ibis

Susan Hahn

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In *The Scarlet Ibis*, Susan Hahn has created an intricately structured sequence of interlinked poems centered around the single compelling image of the ibis. The resonance of this image grows through each section of the book as Hahn skillfully employs theme and variation, counterpoint and mirroring techniques. The ibis first appears as part of an illusion, the disappearing object in a magician's trick, which then evokes the greatest disappearing act of all—death—where there are no tricks to bring about a reappearance. The rich complexity multiplies as the second section focuses on a disappearing lady and a dramatic final section brings together the bird and the lady in their common plight—both caged by their mortality, their assigned time and role. All of the illusions fall away during this brilliant denouement as the two voices share a dialogue on the power of metaphor as the very essence of poetry.

bird trick iv

It's all about disappearance.

About a bird in a cage
with a mirror, a simple twist
on the handle at the side
that makes it come and go

at the magician's insistence.

It's all about innocence.

It's all about acceptance.

It's all about compliance.

It's all about deference.

It's all about silence.

It's all about disappearance.

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