

Virus Vigil

**Poetry by Jim Blackburn
Art by Isabelle Scurry Chapman**



The Gannet 2

We start at the trailhead and walk toward the edge
Where we encounter a most pernicious ledge,
I pull out binoculars and the birds can be seen,
There must be thousands on the water so green.

A bullet-shaped white bird flies into the face,
Wings flared, feet extended, it lands with grace
Within inches of its mate and its chick,
The guga's hungry, parent back in the knick.

I stand on the cliffs and look out and celebrate
The yellow-headed, blue-eyed gannet and mate,
Survivors in the task of living life uniquely,
To do so you cannot live life meekly.

The gannets approach land only to breed,
On the vertical cliffs where they plant their seed,
And the lovely guga shortly appears,
Its appetite putting parents in arears.

And here in Bridlington, they never land
Anywhere that human beings can stand,
Instead squeezed in wing-to-wing on the face,
Where one misstep will a guga erase.

This place is known as a bird colony,

How they all pack in is a real mystery,
The birds here are great and put on quite a show,
With well-defined roles and lines they all know.

And when it's time for the guga to go,
It drops a hundred feet to the water below,
And then it swims on out to sea,
Eating its way until flight ecstasy.

The North Sea – the provider - is a master chef,
Feeding so many birds it will make you deaf,
An Earth Church temple, a place of worship,
Where the bird world comes to do their courtship.

So welcome to Earth Church,
Pull yourself up a pew,
Here we are amazed by nature
And so might be you.