Phillip Staffe, Ship's Carpenter,  
Ponders His Loyalty to Henry Hudson,   
After the Mutiny  

Damme, if I know   
why I told Juet, Green, and Wilson   
to shove it; not that I thought   
all the world and the Seven Seas   
of the Old Man — changing first-mates   
the way wind shifts in a squall   
blowing up big as Leviathan.   
And as for him being a navigator,   
the Passage flies from him   
like dolphins and mermaids.   

I stayed with him for one reason:   
a captain’s the law, and without law   
all the imps of Hell jump from their holes;   
not that they haven’t already:   
Green as close to the Dark Man   
as any I’ve seen whispering discord;   
Juet a grumbling bugger   
for being passed over as mate;   
Wilson a savage in love with killing   
for the sight of blood on his blade.
Besides, if I'd thrown in
with them devils, who's to say
I wouldn't swing for mutiny?
There's nothing in England for me,
none I'll grieve, and none I'll mourn
to hear I've froze to death
or been eaten by those monster-fish
that make a man wish he could fly.

I'll likely see my last
of earth in this shallop.
So be it, a ship's carpenter
can't choose his comings and goings.

ROBERT COOPERMAN