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Two Riddles

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Poems

TWO RIDDLES *by Craig Williamson*

I

I am the jewel that haunts the tree,
And the fur-flanged night is dear to me.
Some say I am a Solomic bird;
Others, I deal the dark advocate's word.
I am the furrier who sells no fur—
Who sings clacking to the bones that were
Once life. I am the blind wizzard of diamond
Day, and the seer of seraphic night.
I winnow wings and wail words:
I am the king of darkling birds.

owl

II

My house is salt,
 My salt is stone;
 I hold my hostel
 Of mantle-spun bone.
 I welcome sailors
 On the drifted wind—
 Floaters, feasts,
 Ushered in
 To soft tables.
 I am able
 To spin orbs
 Like ice-milk
 For a woman's ear.
 I fear man,
 The snail,
 The tentacled star.
 I am the sea's
 Tiresian queen—
 Still without sight.
 I am the cripple
 That cradles light.

oyster

Craig Williamson is assistant professor of English at Swarthmore College and author of African Wings (Citadel). He has recently completed an edition of the Old English Riddles of the Exeter Book.