SOLITUDE

Cold evenings know
I widow-walk the floor,
and stop to gaze at rust streaks
fled from outside iron stairs.

They let me hear
the snare-drum ta-tac
of somewhere
broken fans,
and watch with me
corroded pipes
descending
like the carnal rumors
from above.

Cold evenings
help define the stain glass glare,
from zig-zag shots of neon,
on the yellowed plaster wall.

Sometimes I catch
my shadow, my black mass dance,
mute and slowly shifting
like the roll of dust
in narrow corridors
of a brown building.

Samuel Gould Curtis

ICARUS

Unlike the unobtrusive rise
Of puffballs on a breeze, Icarus,
Yours was no soft ascent.

At first the ecstasy;
Realization of a sudden stretch
Of circumstance.

And then the sun's unspoken dare;
The sneer that turned
Your smile scarlet.

A curse broke from your throat
Like a burning coal;
Eyes squinted upward.

Wings clapped the wind like blades
Swung broadside, waved back
The warnings from below.

Did you notice, Icarus, as you climbed
The clouds, the perspiration
Budding in each pore,

Or was every sense set to crack
The sky's dome, and wrench the mask
Of fire from the sun?

You could not see
The slow softening of wax;
Salt glazed your eyes.

Nor the first feather fall; higher
You climbed, your sightless gaze
Clamped to the sun.

Your breast thrust its drumbeat
At the heat; pain, the narrow rodent,
Gnawed in your side.

But your sweat anointed body
Shone like rubbed bronze,
Your matted hair like tourmaline.

Icarus, those bright beings, hovering
To stare upward at your ascent —
Were they eagles or angels?

A. David Lander
HOARSE LEAVES

in yellow spring
i sit solitaire.
i coughed first
in november;
now, combusting april
rips her robes; the bodice
of larval icarus ignites
into bastard butterflies.
i only sketch these sprouts
like vermillioned mammoths
because i coughed by a north
navy ocean;
it waned crustacean warmth,
and i watch the sun go out
someday.
i sit
watching isometric portraits:
arteries of spring’s samothrace
with empire toes impact,
beach-moods with all
the pregnant grace of breakers,
sounds of hoarse leaves,
ancient decades.
i was a bird toward light;
now, only dark angels thrust
their black statuesques
like paragraphs
against my bedroom wall.

Louis A. Renza

A SLAIN FOX

Now color overcomes the cough:
The grey bilge creaking at the river's skin
Bears the daily flotsam in,
His luted throat hangs like a web
A spider cast off.

Heir to ochre spinach, dun seed,
The labors of waters come to their time:
Spewn forth, he knew never the lime
To rocket his vein
Nor the red pulses plead.

Into that final fugitive posture bent,
Where the seed and sere of sleep is,
His body's little sun eclipses
Both the alpha and omega:
The pallid hounds sniffed out his scent.

A wet lung lisped, and over the knees clung
His shy-fingered hands,
A castle founded in the sands
And left uncrumpled, save a stain
After the ebb.

For bells of elegy, a jangle of junked wars,
The ooze’s glory made profound;
The red sign spilled without a sound
To make roots whereon the sky is hung
And eyes as deep as dung,
O houndish stars.

Peter Hollenbeck
LINES . . .

I hear America sinking —
er her top bananas I hear.

I hear the roars
and whistles
of her mills,
the single soft sound
of money
dropped
into her tills.

I hear her children
with goals
unprofitable
crying,
reconsidering,
giving up,
and going
to those mills.

I hear the moans
of her past patriots,
now vaguely
remembered
on the faces
of bills.

David Curry
DEVOTION

The delicate petit-point of his manner,
Sampler like.
Mother never was quite well enough,
And, then again, the right girl
Just didn't happen by, but
All that's past now, or
Most all.

Mansfield Kirby Talley, II
THE WINE-TASTER

Lines of fine wine  
Soothing my throat,  
Sipping Burgundy and Rhine —  
Ecstatic energy  
Tongue-titillating  
Mouth pursed in thought  
Of Chateaubriand and Pernod —  
Water of France  
Of Flanders,  
Germany, Sweden —  
Sweet aura of heaven  
Thor had no better!  
Tasting,  
Sipping,  
Rolling

My tongue, glottis aglow  
With wonderful wine.  
Amorous amphorae:  
Colors of the labels  
Table level  
Reds, purples, and whites  
Of wonderful wine.  
Slipping, sliding  
Greased pig wineglass  
Can't catch  
That wonderful wine.  
Arms aloft  
Voices alight  
Ceiling spinning  
Floor uprushing  
As I call for  
Wonderful, wonderful wine.

H. D. Kisor
THE CARPET IS KIND

My tin men can meet
and love with such sweet
ardor and leave
their pasteboard homes to fight
with such neat
unknowing of pain, brutal passing;
endure utter night
with only a babe's hand
to break their seal:
being never ending.
But they are all
after all
just pretending.

Peter Hollenbeck
GIRLS

When the sun tickles their ribbons,  
Girls are softer than boys —  
More tempting than apricots.  

Their hair makes a brighter playmate  
For breezes; the cupped puffs under  
The fluff of their sweaters are plumper.  

Mohair is happier cuffed  
At their wrists, and their curves  
Curve like palm leaves in wind.  

When the moon dilates their emeralds,  
Girls are harder than boys —  
More lubricious than lizards’ eyes.  

A. David Lander
WINGS

What I worry about is wings
Black feathered
Tapered to a green madness
Distended pinions
Taut for the abyss of flight.

What I worry about is
Like the sudden rain
That blots out the sun
Barrens the sparse bank
In the guise of giving life

Peter V. D Fish