

WINGS

They were always my metaphor for life:  
Airfoils curving wind over leading edges,  
reveling in the lift from below,  
the sudden release from heaviness. Mine,  
the century when humans escaped gravity.

Fairy terns soaring in columns of light  
reveal their design, their shadow bones  
through fire-shimmered feathers.  
Wings move the planet, fan the trade winds  
on their way, cool the savage sun enough  
to grant us a long reprieve.  
Wings let us bargain with moonlight  
on the bias of darkness.

I crashed in a glider once.  
Seeing with osprey eyes those moments  
before earth claimed me, seeing  
the great curved sweep of heaven seamlessly  
welding all we are to all we aren't,  
I flew again, tamed my fear,  
put it to work like fuel to stay aloft.

And I know  
this cold-white gull at my feet,  
this found art, broken in last night's gale,  
knew jubilation at its height.  
And never regretted its wings.

--Glenna Holloway,  
ARIEL, 1999