

December 17, 1903

WINGING IT

Two brothers scanned the cold front stalled northeast.  
Not promising at all, and yet their blood  
Was humming yes! --their bones agreeing, genes  
Evolved beyond the wax and feather stage,  
The Icaros infection now afire  
Inside a circuit rider's gangling sons.

Here where a continental splinter spared  
The Carolina coast from Neptune's wrath,  
Here where his aviary wintered, bred,  
A new breed waited for its fledging time.  
No more a cold pretender, now a bird,  
Warm-blooded thirst for fuel in its craw.

The wind increased as Orville thought of past  
Debacles-- men he held in awe, who knew  
Much more, and yet they clung to principles  
Now proven false if he could dare believe  
His own. He thought how Wilbur's first box made  
The Outer Bankers laugh: A kite, a toy

To lift a man and let him guide it down.  
Then came a larger one. They set it free--  
No lines to grounded hands-- a managed arch  
Responsive to their afterthought of rudder  
And shifting body weight. Its shallow glide  
Was like a petrel's outspread, unflapped wings.

"Good lads but daft--" The Bankers winked and watched  
The brothers sweat two summers on the beach.  
One day a wizened fisherman had warned:  
"You Wright boys had your triumph. Sailed the sky  
Like seamen rolling combers in a skiff.  
"It's time you set your minds on solid things."

Home in their cluttered shop when flight seemed doomed,  
An artist's misbegotten fiction/farce,  
Those words were added drag on Orville's hope.  
But he, the uncured optimist, would spark  
Once more the re-ignition of them both.  
Today he revved his faith to soar again.

(cont.)