

Here are some of the submissions from our thirteenth Invite to Write inspired by the following work by the French painter Nicolas Vleughels:



On A Hawk, Already Out of Sight

Bird high, wing free,
bird knowing arcs existing
from the beginningness of air --

essential time:

no measuring.

Arcs are always there.

Wing fold, wind whorl,
wings spreading strong to hold
all height in articulated law:

arcing wings

are echoed by

curving beak and claw.

- Robin van Loben Sels

When What We Love

Are wild birds, winging, singing into the sun,
pluming the suppliant air,
whose sunlit feathers gladden into height,
so that we turn,
eyes blinded with the sight,
and reel at the proximity of earth,
nose-near and dizzying,
how dare we hope to keep,
weep to maintain,
a necessary gravity of sleep
and painless dream . . .

The pendulum of being swings too wide.
Sick with a roller-coaster lurch of
outraged space, we shudder,
focus firmly in,
settling for grace
and the symbolic beauty of a face.

- Robin van Loben Sels

An Angels Tickles

The child giggles,
as a little angel tickles
with her wings of silk
to awaken them for some night travel.

She incites sweet dreams no doubt.
She coaxes the little pilgrim to fly to worlds unseen.

Perhaps, she will see a rainbow world of love,
and come back to talk about it.
Or maybe fly herself with a Pegasus
across highways of sky in harmony.

The child is ready,
the minute her head hits the pillow,
on a playful day that ends to meet the night sky.
The young'un is ready,
the minute the feathered giggles
are planted in the station of her heart.

A heart that opens nightly to the highway of dreams,
led by a little winged angel of light.

- Star Blossom

WINGS

(for my father after the 50th anniversary of D-Day)

I couldn't have been more surprised.

I sat in the car waiting to go. You stood by the door
and spoke of missing your mother and father.

Your eyes shone,

white orbs, blue centers,

negative image of a doubled heaven,

dark openings where light enters and leaves.

You talked about your brother and sisters,

two in their 80's still living,

one who died suddenly in her 40's.

You hoped your death would come like hers.

Your face, three broad planes,

expanses of unwrinkled cheeks,

the forehead where furrows turned

unexpectedly downward.
You blinked, blinked before saying
you still dreamt of the bombings,
the flames you looked back at big as this town
you said, the women and children you killed.
I don't see how God can forgive me.
Your face went to pieces, Dresden china
cracking in the heat of Allied bombs.
Muscles corkscrewed round your solar plexus,
twisting your body. You turned away,
your hand, a bird on the wing,
caught in my hand, held,
the way a creature stunned
by collision with the human world is held.
It lay in still uncertainty
before it lay stilled.
When you turned back,
in your eyes, a quiet
flurry of wings.

- Elizabeth Young

Icarus Reflects on his Descent: Nicholas Vleughels' *Study of Two Wings*

for Gisela, like none other

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Wherever the poetry of myth
is interpreted as biography, history, or science,
it is killed.

- *Joseph Campbell*

1

The mythologies are quite flawed or inconsistent.
I'm supposed to have flown too near the sun.
The sun is supposed to have melted the wax
holding feathers and battens fast.
But mythology is a profligate fiction.

Science prefers a dispassionate discourse:

$$\frac{L}{D} = \frac{\Delta s}{\Delta h} = \frac{v_{\text{forward}}}{v_{\text{down}}}$$

That's the Glide Ratio: distance forward
over distance downward for a glider
flying at a constant speed in still air. No hubris,
no disaster imminent in those words.

Despite my variable speed, the turbulent
air, the sun's warmth was too feeble to melt wax.
Besides I was high enough to glide safely into exile
except for the Glide Ratio's one perilous presumption:
that the wings don't fall off.

But
they
did.

My father's fault, of course.

2

Mythologists never ponder how the cunning artificer,
the maker of the Knossos maze could have got it wrong.
He contrived wings for us to arrive alive, and *he* did.
My death owes nothing to defective wings or blazing sun.

The truth is I am victim of the gods' envy; but history

sees me as my father's hubristic wayward miscreant,
fittingly drowned. What divine irony! That you have
to know how to swim in order to fly.

Passengers on the passing ship witnessing my hapless
fall agreed their journey had been most worthwhile.
Feathers washed up on the shore were sold as souvenirs.

- Tony Ulyatt

With Angel Wings

With angel wings... **I**, shall fly in grace,
not in life on earthly soil,
but in open skies,
with mountainous clouds.

With wings that expand
not within 3rd dimensional reality
but like candles dancing in freedoms light.

With angel wings... **I**, shall mount heavens
where life's lessons get purged
for symphonic melodies to rise.

Where rainbow light forms in every breath,
and self rides crescent waves of harmony
like sacred dolphins.

With angel wings, **I** reverberate
not escorted by worries constructed from ego
but by letting of untruths to drift with eternal heartbeats.

With blessings that lets me see I am the hand of God.
Where ancestors carry peace inside oneness.

And With light, echoing love, **I** will harbor
my medals of angel wings proudly.
Proudly, as I fly to greet my future lifetimes.

- Star Goddess