

## 1.6 The Flying Stag (1985)

My compliant lady bird  
who rested flickering in my hand –  
as now you catch the spirit of the air,  
I'm trying to define the thing you are  
to me (and I to you):  
my falcon on a gyre  
my magic acrobat  
my child, my vibrant Pegasus  
my *cerf volant*, my flying stag –  
all these by turns you are.  
Or are you just my double self  
my leash'd spirit freed,  
which for a narrow spell  
embodies all my yearning  
and the ancient wish  
which drove that father  
and his boy to sail too near the sun?

Am I your governor  
or your accomplice? – hold you tight  
against your will  
so that all the stallion force  
which you derive  
from the blind and muscled air  
does wield my very arm  
and like a whip can cut my hand?  
Or do I hold, support and will you up,  
so that as you strain  
my heart leaps up to you,  
and as you dip and falter,  
or wheel a great relentless curve to earth,  
I bleed and die for  
our coupled failing?

Do these slim and gleaming strands  
retain you or sustain? At times  
you seem to stand on them  
like legs of gossamer,  
but then again they are your silken chains.  
Is your will at one with mine  
or a rebel child's desire  
for freedom like the arrow from the bow?  
Do you not know  
that if I give you all  
the towering height you crave  
and the freedom of the sky  
you'll quickly fall to earth?

And don't you sense  
my strength to draw you down  
against the buoyant promise of the air  
in your small form, my love more concentrate  
than all the winds of heaven?  
My pull it is that plays upon  
the wind to give to you  
the grace and fire you have.

Of these all, I cannot say,  
but what I know –  
as you rise and take my breath with you  
to stand against  
the azure bowl of sky  
losing your dark wings against the blue,  
with only the red triangle of  
your breast to signal you in heaven, -  
you are my abstraction  
and my firey dream,  
yours the freedom  
yours the power to  
fly before the sun,  
to blind the eyes which  
watched and guarded your ascent,  
to break the hands which held you.  
And yours the right  
to seek the tryst that you desire  
in the sky where you belong.

Le Canadel (April 1985)