

MICHAEL TYRELL

## *Mirages*

1

No children for me  
except in stories, sister  
& brother lost in the forest,  
never aging of course, & no forest  
near my flat, only hollyhocks  
& sick Dutch elms, an eyesore  
shack, a crippled blunt thing,  
burnt like the woman  
the children hurled into a kiln  
to get free.

2

They're never free,  
the ones with children.  
They never sleep,  
but must scare  
the children to keep them  
home, a made-up  
forest that every year  
seems more fiction  
than the hag  
in the eyesore shack.  
It's a mirage;  
hunger makes it  
look like sugar.

3

If I can't be tracked  
on the machines,  
I don't exist.  
Near landing, the flight  
circling the lit-up map

we live on now.  
How dainty  
the city's circuitry,  
the plane also—  
like an egg  
handled by children  
pretending they have children.

4

Children,  
I write to you  
from the city  
where in winter  
the only green's  
the go signal reflected  
on storm windows.  
The mothers and fathers  
bring you, girl & boy,  
neighbors in the alphabet,  
to life for their  
young insomniacs,  
& your stepmother's husband  
who promises  
he'll collect you,  
tells you you're  
too big to believe  
in witches, spares  
them a story about fate—  
how, with crumbs, without,  
collected or otherwise,  
we all come to harm.