Centerfold Reflected in a Jet Window / Sandra McPherson

There is someone naked flying alongside the airplane.
The man in the seat in front of me is trying to hold her.
But she reflects, she is below zero, would freeze the skin
off his tongue.

Beside me also someone is flying.
And I don't say, "Put on your sweater."
And I don't say, "Come back in this minute,"
though she is my daughter.

And there is an old woman riding inside the earth.
Metal shoulders wear her dresses.
She believed she would be an old woman flying alongside heaven
because she loved, because she had always loved.

Barn Fire / Thomas Lux

It starts, somehow, in the hot damp
and soon the lit bales
throb in the hayloft. The tails

of mice quake in the dust,
the bins of grain, the mangers stuffed
with clover, the barrels of oats
shivering individually in their pale

husks—animate and inanimate: they know
with the first whiff in the dark.
And we knew, or should have: that day
the calendar refused its nail

on the wall and the crabapples hurling
themselves to the ground. . . Only moments
and the flames like a blue fist curl

all around the black. There is some
small bleating from the calves and the cows'
nostrils flare only once
more, or twice, above the dead dry

metal troughs. No more fat tongues worrying
the salt licks, no more heady smells
of deep green from the silos rising now

like huge twin chimneys above all this.
With the lofts full there is no stopping
nor even getting close: it will rage

until dawn and beyond,—and the horses,
because they think they are safe there,
run back into the barn
which is burning. . . .

Three Admissions /
Howard L. McCord

Everything the fox knows
is kept in a stone at Axum.
Small, but hard to move.

The horse comes at night
to peer in my window,
his eyes white and quiet
as empty coffee cups
on a kitchen table.
He watches till just
before sunrise,
then walks away.

I drink in the afternoon,
and learn strange words.
A bar—without drunks—
is the only corporate body
I do not find contemptible.