

RITA BURKS

Clouds

I used to believe I saw pictures in clouds—
Camels, elephants, old bearded men—
All made of that soft cottony fluff,
Outlined in clear honest blue.
I imagined myself floating up
And capturing a piece of cloud in a paper bag.
I dreamed of keeping it in a box on my dresser,
Taking it out, fondling it,
So sedate, serene, without worry.

The other day as I was driving through fog
I realized I was in the clouds;
They were all around me,
But I wanted to blow those clouds away.
The air was too thick with solitude.
I could believe I was the only person:
The world limited to where I was,
Nothing around me but lonely peace.

Now, I wish I could bring back the clouds.

LINDA JO BANKS

Troilus

Troilus, I reject you!

In my youth I thought you, as you lay on your couch,
Immobile, eyes burning from the smokes of your heart,
Glassed over with opaque cameos—
You were what lovers ought to be.

But, you puppy, you only loitered on the first rung
Of a ladder leading not to a white rose
But to the surging phoenix of love.

Love burns not my wings;
Love makes me more than I ever could have been,
Less than I shall become,
As I grow free and open to receive.