**‘What guile is this, that those her golden tresses’**

**[*Amoretti*, XXXVII]**

What guile is this, that those her golden tresses

She doth attire under a net of gold;

And with sly skill so cunningly them dresses,

That which is gold, or hair, may scarce be told?

Is it that men’s frail eyes, which gaze too bold,

She may entangle in that golden snare;

And, being caught, may craftily enfold

Their weaker hearts, which are not well aware?

Take heed, therefore, mine eyes, how ye do stare

Henceforth too rashly on that guileful net,

In which, if ever ye entrapped are,

Out of her bands ye by no means shall get.

  Fondness it were for any, being free,

  To covet fetters, though they golden be!

—Edmund Spenser

**Nothing Gold Can Stay**

Nature’s first green is gold,

Her hardest hue to hold.

Her early leaf’s a flower;

But only so an hour.

Then leaf subsides to leaf.

So Eden sank to grief,

So dawn goes down to day.

Nothing gold can stay.

—Robert Frost

**Gold mouths cry**

Gold mouths cry with the green young

certainty of the bronze boy

remembering a thousand autumns

and how a hundred thousand leaves

came sliding down his shoulderblades

persuaded by his bronze heroic reason.

We ignore the coming doom of gold

and we are glad in this bright metal season.

Even the dead laugh among the goldenrod.

The bronze boy stands kneedeep in centuries,

and never grieves,

remembering a thousand autumns,

with sunlight of a thousand years upon his lips

and his eyes gone blind with leaves.

—Sylvia Plath

**Processional**

Think what the demotic droplet felt,

Translated by a polar wand to keen

Six-pointed Mandarin—

All singularity, its Welt-

Anschauung of a hitherto untold

Flakiness, gemlike, nevermore to melt!

But melt it would, and—look—become

Now birdglance, now the gingko leaf’s fanlight,

To that same tune whereby immensely old

Slabs of dogma and opprobrium,

Exchanging ions under pressure, bred

A spar of burnt-black anchorite,

Or in three lucky strokes of word golf lead

Once again turns (load, goad) to gold.

—James Merrill

**Elegy in Gold**

Earring, tooth,

dog breath, shoe,

mango fruit or pocket watch,

sunlight on my love’s

elbow, sunlight

in the kettle’s steam,

we walk in the rubble

of the sunk ship’s dream

brushing crash-site

from our hair & dresses.

This is the country

of the gone-away: Harlem,

you wear the missing

like a golden chain.

—Aracelis Girmay