Gathering Maple

Nora Delaney

They lie mulching:
those five-fingered folios—
the scant leaves that dapple
into humus on the damned concrete—
palmate, veined and lobed,
like unmittened hands in winter.

The thought of them leaves
bitter breath on the palate
like the word Acer—the Latin
for maple. So far from the sweet
syrup we had when my father
made pancakes on Sundays.

As I walk by, I see him. He suffers
the same color-blindness I do.
And I wonder if we see the same
gold that ekes through green.
I pick a leaf for him—mottled,
burnt and awaiting its own rot.

It’s clear the sugarglow won’t last;
it compacts the acrid season into earth,
as October grows old slowly.

Where God Must Sleep

Patrick Carrington

I often wander by the park before dawn,
even when the weather turns
as ugly as my dreams.
By law, the doorways and underpasses
must empty when the streets grow
dark and lonely,
so each bench on the promenade is full—
you could easily think every man there
is without the sense or strength
to come in out of the rain
to the protection of an awning or bridge—
it’s not some weakness
but the mandate of the city
that soaks them, its bias against bad luck.

Yet they sleep, and I can’t. I feel a weird
sort of relief when they wake
and I hear them
mumble unintelligibly to themselves
with one breath and with the next
thank Him, quite elegantly,
for not taking them during the night,
as if that good fortune
was a matter of partnership.