The Wasp and the Secretary

Split in the thorax by the fat hand
Of the manila-envelope wielding man,
Master of rote, who loves his mother:
"Did you see that?
Its head flew one way, its body another!"
I hated you, too, I admit to that,
But I gathered your parts on a yellow sheet
And in horror saw you were still moving,
Digging, chewing,
As if your life were a thing worth saving.

One long wing, shiny and crisp,
Remained, a veined, stained-glass wisp,
The color of smoke, resembling
A quartz chip,
Iridescent, transparent, trembling.

Your legs, hollow broomstraws bent,
Were signalling without intent.
On their edges, saw-toothed ridges
Dragged half of you
Toward headless dreams of screens and ledges.

Far away two blister eyes stared,
Lidless, prehistoric, bare
As river-bed stone, bone ovals set
On either side
Of molded shoulders, clay epaulets.

Your pieces lay like a broken bowl,
A brittle little artifact, a ceramic soul,
The color of dry things, of locust, or carob,
Of chalcedony,
Every curve an ivory carving, a scarab.
A fallen flower crisply pinched,
The overturning of a turtle trenched,
The shell belly, flown apart.
Grasping, drinking,
And nothing but air sucked through the heart.

Your schissmed self, your self apart,
Your tigery abdomen, glossy and fat,
Squirm'd, a waspish waste, lame
As a worm in rain,
The stinger searing for someone to blame.

—Beth H. Roney Drennan