

The Mandarin

is redolent in the garden,
his hair entangles
frailties of moss and aphids
his armpits fester wilted leaves

he cannot live
another night below frost line

only the loquat blooms in October
a dream of bees hovering blossoms
their syrup fragrance at his nostrils,
petals cluster his flesh as he sleeps

he is homeless

he has left his cover of embroidered satin
at the last guesthouse, given over
his last cumshaw gold piece

he shall never recover

he will be crushed
in the seasonal struggle of hemispheres
in this indecent meeting of spring with autumn:

loquats in blossom
and snow to fall

Jean Hollander