

Allelujah

Joy K. Young

*Is it not strange
that sheep's guts hale souls
out of men's bodies?*

—William Shakespeare, "Much Ado About Nothing"

When the semicircle is complete,
each pedestal placed aesthetically
on stage, the girls enter.
Thirty earnest seraphs
bend to elaborate benches,
tilting their harps until
they lean into one shoulder.
A shower of sound pours from the curved neck,
each narrow stream stretched
to the soundbox like an enclosed
reception fountain, splashing our faces
with drops of tickling tones.
Dilated hands spider the strings,
plucking ornate banisters of arpeggios,
circling the staircase of a topless tower.
Is it any wonder artists
fasten wings to their backs?

When I was young
I begged to play the harp,
never knowing soft fingertips
picked and bleeding like a quilter's
were the price to pay.
Hands poised, I could become
true elegance—making melodies
attached to a pillar
from yards of silken glissando.
I imagined myself in a gossamer gown,
shining hair brushing freckled shoulders,
hands worshipping in string-sandwiched prayer.