Landscape with the Fall of Icarus (after Pieter Bruegel)

By Sally Meyer

Some think it was his fizzing brain
constantly attention-seeking. Seeking.
Here, he's an afterthought. Not even
the centre of his own blazing story.
Glimpse him out of the corner of your eye.
You didn't know that for days before
he was catching each drifting feather.
He'd brush them against his hand,
the sharp, oily ones. Tickle his palm
with soothing soft down.
Stitching into stretched wings
for escape. Pressing into the wax.
They say he couldn't follow instructions.
His father did tell him.
But he launched, leaping for rising thermals,
forgetting his graceless self in the joy
of beating, weightless flight.
Till the hissing wax dripped and stuck
to his body, singeing skin.
A flurry of feathers as he belly-flopped
into the sea. Legs last.
The fisherman nearby unmoved.