BIRD MAN, 1911

DOLORES HAYDEN

Lincoln Beachey

Left school at twelve, can’t follow physics,
I’m just a man stepping out on the law
of gravity, making my living leaving –
and reappearing. Morning bally, evening
bally, I’m The Man Who Owns the Sky.
I fly over Niagara, down into the mist,
close to the whirlpools – whoooooeee!
under Honeymoon Bridge, soak my suit
as wheels kiss water. Suicide? Risk improves
my mood. I burn my last drop of fuel,
climb two miles above Chicago, glide
down to proclaim the gospel of wings –
heaven penetrated by human calculation.
Call me a minister in the cathedral
of exuberance – I trace a benediction
above red hots, root beer, ice cream,
racket a blessing, a holy ruckus in the sky.
Give me a hundred thousand pairs of uplifted eyes. Amen.