

Cedar Waxwings

October's invitations, hand-glazed red crab apples;
ornaments in red tiers glint in kissing ripeness
in the late sun.

At the appointed time they come—
masked revelers, courtesans draped in peach-fuzz
coats of gray and rust. Each wingtip flashes
a ruby and a topaz.

Their maple-nut voices
outdo each other with stories
of blazing pyracantha
and frosted juniper berries.

All afternoon they spin through waltzes.
Then as sunset nears,
eat delicately at the pregnant tables.
While the backdrop flames and drops in ashes.

—Cheryl Carlstrom

This poem won second place in the *BYU Studies* poetry contest for 2000.