Joseph Farley

The Presence

It comes rushing at you

like the songs of birds,

with the weight of sun beams,

it comes to you

with the humming of plants

and the preciousness

of fallen logs,

it comes at you

with no time to dodge.

It is here, there, everywhere

and you are overawed.

The American Way

Death and decay

is The American Way

clear cut this

bulldoze that

kill it

grind it up

put it in a vat

these are lessons

learned and spread

throughout the world

let us breathe deeply

the fumes of greed

and bequeath our children

deserts and empty seas

The Sun Also Sets

Australopithecus saw the sun rise.

So did T. Rex and the Dodo.

Shall we add man to the list?

A million years from now

the sun will still rise

over the black line of the horizon

turning the sky into a box of crayons

with rays of gold and red,

tinging the clouds with pink.

I doubt man will see it then,

but hope whoever or whatever

roams this planet in that time

will have eyes and appreciation

for both dawns and sunsets.

Lone Heron

A blue heron lurks
in my back yard
some days.
I have seen it there,
perched on an old tree stump
near the swing set.
The kids no longer use it.
They have gone off to college.
The swing sits near the fence
that separates my home
from Pennypack Woods.

I have also seen the heron
in the woods down by the creek
standing aloof on one leg
away from the mallards
and Canadian geese.
I pointed it out once
to a man fishing with his son

as it bent its long bill

and gazed towards us

with one eye.

The man told me,

"I have seen it before.

I heard it is ancient,

been living alone

in these woods

since the Civil War."

I am not capable

of judging the age

of a heron

or even its sex,

but I know

it is always alone.

There is never a pair,

young ones,

or a flock.

I have seen it

or a single bird

that looks much like it

off and on

for the twenty years

I have lived in my house.

I wish I could talk with it,

hear its story,

learn all that it has seen,

but I cannot speak

the language of birds.

I could ask my neighbors.

One of them might know

the heron's tale

or a feathered tongue.

But we do not speak.

Never have in twenty years.,

Don't even know

each other's names.

That's the way

the neighborhood is.

We have hedges

and privacy fences

instead of walls,

but these work just as well

at shutting out intimacy.

We just grunt in the morning

to acknowledge

the others existence

before climbing into cars,

and sometimes grunt at night

when we come home

from our distant jobs.

I guess we are all

lone birds in our own way

guarding our empty nests.

Maybe that's why

that heron comes to visit.

This morning I looked

out the back window

while dressing for work.

The heron was there again.

It seemed quite at home

brushing elbows from a distance

with a scattered flock of monkeys.

Tempest (2)

This day is not like other days,

But there is no good reason why.

It's just a feeling in the bones,

A deep sense of transformation.

A hidden line has been crossed

Between the past and the future,

What was and is no more is seen

Clearly as it fades away.

Gazing ahead all is darkness.

Clouds and mist obscure what will be.

Thunder claps and lightening flashes,

Who can judge the length of the storm?

It may spell the end of the world

or just another summer rain.

False Carrots

they dangle it before you

a carrot on a stick

thinking you will pull harder

like any other jackass,

hope you won't notice

that it is made of plastic.

it is called

contract negotiations.

add the dollars and cents,

see what you lose

in exchange for nothing.

management is run by magic.

see how they cook the books.

their business model

contains so much slight of hand.

the presentations to stockholders

involve mirrors and sawing

a woman in half.

there is much applause and

wallah! your pension plan

or 401K has disappeared.

the CEO is in tune with wall street.

his finger is on the pulse

of the economy.

his other hand is in your pocket

or up your ass.

the workers of the world

dance on strings,

their eyes open and close,

watch as all disintegrates

around them.

neighbors lose their homes.

friends lose their jobs.

relatives lose everything.

someone will get rich from this.

someone always does.

it won't be you.

you will have patches

on your clothing, but

at least you will have

those carrots to eat.

In The Time Without Tongues

The men have come.

They have taken our tongues.

We can no longer speak

the words of our fathers

or follow the ways

of our ancestors.

We have been told

that this is progress.

Our hearts protest,

but who will listen

to our silence?