



*Michael Downey*

## **Progress**

Black wires, holding  
the speed of light,  
stretch across this city.  
Their bisecting lines  
slice the high blue bowl of sky  
into rectangles.  
Now all new wires are being buried  
beneath the concrete.

What about the soft-feathered birds  
who for generations  
have teetered on phone conversations?  
We'll have to build  
some kind of  
tree.

*Beverly G. DeMario*

## **Old Places of Winter**

*(For P. L.)*

The boughs no longer disturb the silence.  
Not in a year has one leaf shaken,  
Yet a strong green throngs.  
The tree holds itself in air, in winter.  
What's drowned is bound by moonlight.  
Nothing is standing that does not stare  
At its own ghost.

Nothing has changed these eyes, these fingers,  
The heart of silence knows the answering,  
The narrow rooms.

Am I to leave with nothing learned,  
Too little love and too much thought.  
Although I cannot stay, the wild is still,  
Birds dream and wake.

Remembrance is one shadow behind,  
Wandering, dulled by pacing,  
Repeating the grey stroke, it reaches yet never proves,  
Nor alters the face.

Where are the branches, the blue flame, the autumn.  
Only the tongue holds still.  
If I speak nightlong, half grief, half laughter,  
How it holds, how still the eye.

Is it here that I begin,  
All between the knees that creaks.  
Is it below the breath, hard to hold the yellow seeds,  
Too soon it's gone, the face leathery,  
The sapling picked by sun.

Is it love that beckons backward,  
Wood calls, the years past, yet does not tempt  
the windless night  
Sweet and yet a song too human for a bird.