

*Gerald McCarthy*

**Winter Solstice 2004  
(or The New War Dead)**

A flock of starlings  
scuttle on the rooftop  
splashing in pools of rainwater.  
The last leaves in the branches  
of the red maple tree.

Look, my friend says  
there's a kind of dark  
all around us,  
you have to get used to it, s'all.

Bricker's neighbor shot himself in his garage,  
the summer I turned eleven.  
He drove an old gray Plymouth,  
a car with a single headlight like a beak.  
Birdman of Church Street, we called him.  
The car was pulled in when the shot went off.  
*A pistol*, Tommy said, *Smith & Wesson 38*.  
Once in winter I cut the yards,  
saw him bent over his workbench—  
the trouble light overhead,  
cigarette smoke.  
He saw my shadow and looked up.

Now December rain keeps falling  
and the news slips out.  
The dead come back.  
A line of graying birds  
huddled together in the rain.

## Pylon

*And the young ones?*

*In the coffins*

—Miguel Hernandez

At night, invisible  
aluminum boxes  
slide down steel rollers  
out of the belly of a plane.

Names from a new wall  
count off a kind of cadence,  
marking time  
no one hears.

Trucks wait to upload  
their cargo.  
Shadows edge the airstrip,  
a greasy rain begins to fall.

**GERALD MCCARTHY'S** recent poetry appears in *Hawaii Pacific Review*, *The North American Review*, *Italian Americana* and an on-line anthology-*Enskymment*. He has twice been a Visiting Artist at The American Academy in Rome, and his books include: *War Story* (1977), *Shoetown* (1992) and the forthcoming *The Light Has No Tongue*.