

Five Poems · *Michael Carey*

BIRDBRAIN

for Max Garland

I have a friend
who says he was hatched
by a chicken
and I believe him.

Some say
his grandfather
just told him that
because he didn't know
about storks and all
the poor boy did
was talk to birds
in the straw
of the crazy coop
his grandfather
had fashioned
from rotting wood and
other people's garbage.

He says the eggs
were always warm
when he picked them.
He always cried
and told the hens
he was sorry
for the fragile hearts
beating in his hands.

He says the chickens
know more than we do
about crickets and worms
and the weather. They
never drown in the rain
by keeping their mouths open.
They are simply offering
their bodies to God
and, sometimes, He takes them.
At least, He takes their
small feathery souls
above all that man
has slaughtered,
rising, like the dew
after a hot rain,
to their small
ignorant heaven.

FROZEN HARVEST

A sudden cold
shakes the timber. Iced
branches fall along the
driveway like Grandpa's hair.
After a wet spring

comes a wet harvest.
Nearly Christmas and the bins
stay hungry for grain.
At last, the ground will hold us.
Soon, the combine will slide
down the rows like a fat

and aged dancer. This
is the dream we keep having.
The banker smiling. Father
restful in his sleep. But