

MIKE MADILL

## TEETER

Perched on a four-twelve pitch,  
I'm clearing gutters with bare hands,  
skin grimy, cuticles bloody.  
Shoulder-knot deep-rooted  
like an abscess burrowing for marrow.  
The neighbour sees me  
teetering near the edge.

A flutter of black swoops past,  
banking hard, touching down  
in a maple grove.  
Crest flared regal red, a pileated  
woodpecker cocks his crown,  
stares me up and down.

Later, I struggle to trim tangled lilacs  
and laburnum back to safety,  
stepladder looming over hosta sprouts,  
tulips a day beyond their peak,  
half-fallen. If Mother Nature doesn't mind,  
I'd like to plant my feet  
on the ground again, feel the false security  
of gravity, tear free a clod of earth  
to coddle, grow roots from my shoes,  
land with both muscle and bone.