*Lawrence Kessenich*
**What Poets Do**

I can walk along the river
with ear buds jammed into my ears
but if I want to be a poet
I must listen to the mating calls
of red winged blackbirds, the scuffle
of mammals in the underbrush
the silent movement of green waters.

I can drive through the city
in an air-conditioned car, windows rolled
up tight, but if I want to be a poet
I must feel the oven breezes on my face
the thump of rap from passing cars
observe the lines of sweat sliding down
the cleavages of luscious women.

I can watch television, feeding on
commercial pabulum, but if I want
to be a poet, I must dig into
the complexities of Rilke, Shakespeare,
Dickinson, listen to street musicians wail
the blues, learn from dancers and soccer players
whose finesse trumps brute strength.

I can go out on a date with anyone
who comes along, but if I want to be
a poet, I must fall madly in love
pick daisies from dusty fields and thrust them
into my beloved's hands. And when love
dies, part of me must die, too, shriveling
like a plum on a Tuscan tree.

**Wild Turkeys**

I watch them from my office window
pecking at pebbles on the blacktop
pink heads, iridescent feathers
stick legs moving with surprising grace.

Living in the woods behind the office
park, they tolerate our diurnal presence
unmoved by creatures four times their size
invading in steel and glass.

Ben Franklin preferred them for our national
symbol, and they act as if they deserve no less.

How different would our nation be if we
had chosen these gentle grazers – who
nonetheless defend their nests – over
a bird who scours the earth for prey?

I don't want to go there, now. I want
distraction from rocket attacks and
suicide bombers in Iraq. I want to admire
the delicate joint of a leg, the sheen of a feather.

American though they are, these turkeys have
no allegiance. They only need a patch of earth
to scratch, a place to raise their pink young. And
come to think of it, do any of us need more?