

From my book, *Slipping Out of Bloom* (WordTech Editions, 2010)

Somewhere Else

We'd expected this,
their naked, red heads
ducking deep into the flesh of a fox
dead for days—drawn to its suffocating scent
lingering like sweat on the hot road—
their ivory bills peeling back the sorrel fur,
picking meat off the bones.
It was dinner for two.

But when a car approached, their wings sprung open
propelling them around our yard. Mid-loop—
what surprise!—a red-winged blackbird
popped out of the Black Locust nearby,
hopping onto the thick back of one vulture,
screaming like a thrill rider
as the mute scavengers flew two laps low,
then landed, finally shook him off, and walked
back to their meal.

And soon enough,
only the pelt remained upon the pavement
like a hunter's splayed-out rug awaiting the traipse
of traffic, the stench like the birds,
hanging around death
somewhere else.