

Divination

Unloosed in the dead-end of a winter day
the vultures get a grip on an updraft,
begin to unwind the long, crisp afternoon
in widening loops, to zero in on dead center.
Half a mile up, they locate stillness
in a world of movement, they encompass
the dead thing, the redolent absence:
dried out roadkill woodchuck, the deer blown apart
by a ten-wheeled Western Star long-hauler.

Chilly, juridical, Chaldean, they
register cause and time of death
well before touchdown. Stooping to
their autopsy, they confer, then bald
heads enter each carcass and emerge
like so many priests unspooling
entrails for news of the future. Always
the same answers to the same
questions, what to eat tomorrow?
When will we die?