

Durga's Lovebirds

To see them here —perched high in a tree
or on the windmill's fan or anywhere
but gliding overhead —was a rarity

before last summer when my neighbor's horse died
and none of the local backhoes was available for rent
so it was left uncovered out in the field

where a day or two later a black cloud of buzzards
descended to feast as they did every day
for a couple of weeks while the smell grew worse.

Every day until, gorging done,
forty or fifty would leave the rotting carcass
and fly to roost in the nearest tall trees

which happened to be the cottonwoods and cypress
out by my greenhouse. Once there was nothing left
of the horse but bones and lingering stink,

we figured they would leave, but we were wrong:
every morning they would fly off to scan the valley
for carrion then come back before sunset

to spend the night until, finally,
several months later when the cold weather set in,
they took off to spend the winter down south.

Good riddance, we said, glad that's over,
but lo and behold, come spring, here they were
again. No horses for them to feast on

but every afternoon all summer
dozens sailing in to spend the night,
flying off in a flutter of wings when I come

to the greenhouse on my morning rounds.
I tell myself not to worry about it,
the ominous feeling is not their fault,

it's not any kind of omen at all,
just nature naturing and it's good work
they do, important work, needed work.

Durga's lovebirds: bloodred heads,
hooked beaks, and the feel of roadkill
going down deep throats one piece at a time.