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TURKEY VULTURES

hang-glide across the highway
on struts of feathers and glue.
Called buzzards by some who don’t
really have a clue, they are
actually Nature’s red-capped
clean-up crew. Cloaked in ragged
overcoats, dressed in tattered
satin and tat, they become
the ultimate vagabonds.
They ply their trade, rag-picking
yesterday’s living. Then drunk
and staggering under air
dense with death’s other pungent
bouquets, they merely waddle
away. Mornings find them out

hanging their wings, like laundry,
heavy with dew and doing
without, they know that “patience
is a virtue” and in fact
that life is like flight: the one
and only balancing act.
STOLEN INTERLUDE

after the painting, Woman Reading, by Umberto Boccioni

She snatches this moment from her day
to sit beside an open window and read
about their love affair—the secret rendezvous,
the cabin in the woods, the hasty kisses
followed by a long and lingering embrace.
It’s her sole escape from the tedium of her day.
She knows the kitchen sink awaits,
the dirty dishes, too. The floors to sweep
the furniture to dust and wax, and always

laundry waiting besides its tub. And as her
day is winding down, a dinner to prepare
and another round of dishes to clear away.
she sighs and leans into her story.
Sunlight comes with the breeze that parts
the lace curtain and lifts the pages of her book.
She slowly reads, her eyes dawdling over ever
word. Wisps of her hair slip the confines
of her bun and make a halo around her head.

Behind her, the cart man trundles on down
the road and a horse grazes in the pasture.
What’s that? She thinks she hears a step
upon the landing and lifts her head.
She places a thumb to mark her place
and holds her breath, her moment to
herself about to vanish. Then her daughter
peers around the door, and she tucks
her book into the basket with the mending.
NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE’S PRIMROSES

How he admired the night-blooming kind; neither prim, nor properly red, this harbinger of spring, this first blush of love mingling with moonlight.

How they transformed the familiar edgings of a path he knew to be something illusive, filling in the chinks and crevices of decay in very unexpected ways.

That’s how nature enhanced humanity with glowing gems that could adorn even nettles at the prison gate, inspired him no matter how fleeting or short-lived.

Conducive as they were to enchantment, illuminating any room and making it more suitable for romance. How the moon figured in all of this, he dared only guess.