

Pepper Trail

Hiking Alone

The winter gave us little snow, and already
the May meadow is dry as summer.
The stream still hurries south, but in the quiet
of its murmur I hear a certain desperation,
as in the song of the grosbeak, melodious as ever,
but deadened by the breathless heat.

High above, a heavy-bellied vulture skids across the sky
headed toward the rimrock, and I imagine a sheltered ledge
where chicks sleep contentedly in the sun,
grown fat on the fruits of this fatal season.

The year of corona, I am in this valley alone,
no ragged trail of birders or Boy Scouts behind me,
nothing to point out or explain,
no need to fall to my knees beside a wildflower.
But I do it anyway, out of habit
or a certain desperation.