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## Flying Back

Beth Turner Ayers

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JULIE JEWETT

The almshouse matrons sit, wearing their  
broad, smooth collars and shirt cuffs like  
placques hung on a wall  
declaring this almshouse to be "The  
cleanest in all of the Netherlands," or recipient of  
"1664's Best Place for Old Men to Go to Die"

Did all those poor men see these women as angels,  
with their white collars and faces like candle flames  
flickering up out of the darkness  
Did they look with eyes straining  
upward from their bowed heads,  
at each woman, as each cutting gaze met their own

And when those women looked back at some  
peasant or pauper with trembling hands held  
tight to his stomach, did their expressions change  
at all, or remain fixed as if  
carved out of granite

*Flying Back*

BETH TURNER AYERS

The grackles  
Seem ever present  
With their squawk  
And the splat  
Baking on my windshield  
But their feathers shine  
In bright sun  
Like circles in oily puddles  
A shimmering rainbow  
Shattered with a squawk  
A piece of my past glides by  
In a graceful dive across the road  
The memory circles to perch  
High, alone on a wire  
Split tail feathers speak to me  
Of happy Oklahoma springs  
Thoughts of days gone by  
Shattered by a squawk  
The scissor-tail flycatcher  
Lifts away from Texas grackles  
The search for a mate continues  
On a journey toward home