

GINA WERFEL

Garden Repose, 2016
Oil on canvas, 48 x 48 in



COURTESY PRINCE STREET GALLERY, NYC
AND MIKE TRASK PHOTOGRAPHER

CHARLES GOODRICH

Birds Dying of Old Age

1

The sparrow decided
eons ago
that when her time came

she'd just give up
fighting the fleas and ticks
and lie down in the duff

and close her eyes
and let the little people
eat her back to the Earth.

2

Just let me get back to Mexico
the turkey vulture is thinking

halfway across the gulf
his shoulder socket grinding with pain.

Back to my favorite tree
with the cow bones scattered underneath

and the beautiful view
across the empty chaparral.

3

The storm petrel was traveling solo,
riding a northeasterly off Kamchatka
when her heart stopped.

She crumpled into a feathered clump
and the wind carried her a few miles farther
before dropping her into the North Pacific.

4

An Anna's hummingbird
laps up a nightcap from our feeder
then returns to his favorite viburnum.

As darkness descends
he latches his claws around a familiar twig
and falls asleep and never wakes up.

The scarlet feathers of his gorget fade
but for years his desiccated body will remain
perched there on the branch.

Charles Goodrich is the author of three books of poetry, *A Scripture of Crows*; *Going to Seed: Dispatches from the Garden*; and *Insects of South Corvallis*, and a collection of essays, *The Practice of Home*. He has coedited two anthologies, *Forest Under Story: Creative Inquiry in an Old-Growth Forest* and *In the Blast Zone: Catastrophe and Renewal on Mount St. Helens*. For many years he supported his poetry habit by working as a professional gardener, and he recently retired from his post as director of the Spring Creek Project for Ideas, Nature, and the Written Word.