



Bullock's Oriole

Investigating oil spills out around Midland Texas,
Driving in a landscape parched and puny,
Desert shrub – creosote flats, yucca and cholla –
Dust devils spinning up yellow-looking dirt –
Soil like a stray dog, poorly fed.

Our driver gives an animated whoop –
And points to the bird
Dashing across the road –
Shouting “A Bullock’s oriole” over
The grind of the road,
A gorgeous slash of yellow life
In a moonscape-like landscape -
Otherworldly – like our driver
Who next shrieks “Roadkill”
And pulls over to collect
The raccoon and later the jackrabbit,
Scraping them up from the tarmac,
Placing them in body bags
Carried for this purpose,
Two lawyers with mouths agape,
Youngsters learning the business.

And learn we did - learning
Because we were open and receptive -
Our driver the bird lady of Midland –
A healer of wounded birds,
Birds kept at her home with little budget,

The raptors always needing meat,
A woman with love for Earth Church members
Who had fallen upon hard times,
Birds like the oiled grebes cleaned and
Placed in the bathtub, birds that dive
When surprised but must come up,
Horrifying a man seated on the toilet,
Birds like the great blue heron
Standing in the living room corner,
A statue until it squawked,
A woman who opened my eyes and heart
To the cathedral of Earth Church
That is the harsh, dry desert of West Texas
With its beautiful yellow oriole
That paints the dull landscape with color,
A woman who showed me what love
For fellow beings looks and feels like,
An experience that made me more.