

JAMES NORCLIFFE

*At Fossil Gorge*

That time of the year when the leaves fall,  
branches emerge in the rocks below:

brachiopods, coral from an ancient sea.  
The leaves are brown, yellow, the fossils

are white as time, but the turkey  
buzzards are black and do not fall.

Instead they hover like silent blowflies,  
wait and dip as funerary fishhooks or

gently flapping scissors wrapped in black  
crepe, festooning the sky with menace.

A scatter of iron filings but purposeful;  
black fillings in the mouth of the sky.

There is something large, someone says,  
something large and dead in the woods.

There should be a verb to harbinge for  
they harbinge the worst that is to come,

or seem to, as the leaves fall, and yet they  
hang like hinges and what so frightens me

is that something in the woods and what  
it was and is and what they will make of it.