

## CANTICLE TO CHANGE

Cottonwood leaves  
flame out their final days  
as glowing golden embers,  
remnants of a burgeoning  
season of green.

Desiccated leaves rattle  
    like sand wind-chimes,  
    cling,

against the day  
of pewter clouds and pitiless wind  
that will tear them from their branches to  
rustle winter away  
under the feet of questing quail.

A sudden blur of wings  
arrives at the last hummingbird feeder—  
    hanging full,  
    awaiting the late traveler.

Weary form perches,  
    drinks deeply,

a bare patch of neck skin  
testifies to a near disaster—  
    predator left with a clutch of feathers.

The hummingbird has escaped,  
only to face stress, lost energy, delays  
in a season requiring  
strength and endurance.  
Is sugar water enough?

Life changes,  
bones ache, joints grind,  
muscles protest. Restless nights toss,  
waves of heat flicker where there are no flames.  
I confront the approach of  
    winter.

Yet seasons of change  
hold both departures—  
and arrivals.

As cottonwood leaves  
spiral to the ground and hummingbirds  
launch their improbable journeys,  
a symbol of frosty transition  
announces itself

with a sharp, emphatic  
“*PINK!*”

and a querulous whistle.

White-crowned sparrow  
from mountainous northern realms  
transforms this season of endings  
into a lesson in beginnings.

Do not wait silently for winter to come,  
prepare for a new season—  
a time of change,  
that warrants song.

—published in *VALUE: Essays, Stories & Poems by Women of a Certain Age*, Beatlick Press, 2017