Among the Vultures, Alcoy

Terry Gifford

From a natural rock bench
we sit and peer over the rim
of the plunging ravine among
the cruising Pterosaurs
passing above, below – slow
as the sun burning our backs.
From a black eye aligned with the beak
through the white head we’re flicked
a glance of utter distain
straight from the Late Jurassic
where the wind’s constance
widened these barn-door wings,
their black-shadowed trailing edge
circling the scents of death on
rising thermals from barren earth.

Entranced, we watch for hours
as evolution unravels before our eyes.
Two birds now wear gold
wing tags like jewellery, fluttering
their individuality audibly
as they pass. Now they have

numbers from a species counting

its years. But the birds already

have trained the butchers

from the noisy town below

to leave carrion on the plateau. This

is also a new development.

Like the evolution of the town

by a species exchanging gold. It will go.

For this is the landscape of vultures.