

Red Fox on Zaleski Trail

DEBORAH FLEMING

Vinton County, Ohio

On the trail through hillsides
twice shorn of woodlands
and regrown, I sat down on the earth
to listen to the wood thrush
at the solstice when the sun was high
and the shade deep, and saw
from the corner of my eye
an orange back slipping along
a clearing at a trot,
and thinking it a cat I called out "Here,"
and it turned and I gazed full in the face
at a red fox with expression so perplexed,
bewildered, as if I had been a talking stone.

It leaped into the underbrush,
as all visions vanish into shadow,
I a scourge upon his sun-filled day,
he a precious ornament to mine,
appearing unbidden before my eyes
within a resurrected wood.