

## Helena Minton

### Off the Old Post Road

1.

This summer of abundance  
hummingbirds swirl  
between my feeder  
and the one next door,  
more than in any recent year.

I have to keep boiling  
sugar water,  
let it cool, before filling  
the swaying crimson feeder.

2.

Not much room  
between townhouses,  
six feet of deck,  
  
railing that needs paint,  
obscured by scrawny cedars,  
sprawling sand cherry.

Tinny chirp at dawn: on the other side  
of the ragged cloak of leaves,  
not a bird but a car door opener.  
The cars back out

of their numbered parking spaces  
slowly turn, smooth sound  
of tires on pavement;  
in the evening, their return.

3.

Sometimes at dusk my neighbor  
sings in Portuguese  
as he strums his guitar

and I can't understand a word,  
yet his song feels private,  
wrong of me to overhear

him sing as if he is not  
a deck away, half hidden  
by unraveling river birch,  
rather near mountains or the sea.

His voice makes me a shy  
sunset eavesdropper,  
not meant myself  
to be transported.

Coming up the walk the day before,  
we chatted, pleasantries.  
I asked him,  
*beija flor*, he said,  
the Portuguese for hummingbird

**Helena Minton** is the author of *The Canal Bed*, Alice James Books; *The Gardener and the Bees*, March Street Press; and *The Raincoat Colors*, Finishing Line Press. Poems have also recently appeared in *Wilderness House Literary Review*, *The Listening Eye*, *Sou'wester*, and the *Ibbetson Street Review*. She worked for many years as a librarian and lives north of Boston.