

The Flock

On the ground it's a gaggle,
a skein of geese in flight.
we recite lines of collective nouns
as if they are the rime of an ancient huntsman.
not Saturday morning reading from back pages
of a pocket dictionary. talk about a building
of rooks or a litter of whelps!
all day we feed on morsels
of sleep and song
and words preceding the exclamation mark
(how about a sleuth of bears!)
going out of the house only once
for the bank will soon close.
(don't forget the shrewdness of apes!)

Returning we read Heaney—
the death of his mother in our afternoon,
his alphabets early evening.
oh that I could shake off sleep
the way he so precisely
folds the sheets; consonants knit
to the sounds of his world.

That I could do half as well.
I flounder, I sprawl and slouch,
talk too quickly, slur my words
and swallow a dopping of sheldrakes
as I read my own poems
and think about a murmuration of starlings,
the exaltation of larks.
I am grounded by my singularity
and groundlessness, by the sweet buzzing
in my ear of the flock.