Starlings

We use folders of bamboo and deerbone
to construct you: slinted claw
and oilbead plumage, its gloss-speckle and lustre
crisp-folded on the cusp of winter.
Tweezers pin your reedy legs
and thorny beaks, wings blown
from mountain folds and pleats,
their feather-strata paper-cut-sharp
and glorious as angels'.

Evenings, we line you up in trees to roost,
wind you up to hear your clockwork grobbling
and deep space radio whirrs.

Each dawn, exhilarated by the light,
you sing in clicks and shrills, wolfwhistles
and bright cellophane twists,
then fly your squadron down to land
and dandle determinedly across the grass
to yesterday's pecked apples.

Fieldfares descend in reverse folds.
Unfazed you dance defence,
flyweight boxers on your thinstalk legs.

In dreams, we gather you in, gently open out
and press flat your mulberry squares,
their iridescent foil,
store you in a drawer, loose-wrapped
in leaves of tissue, for emergencies:
secret trapdoors to another life,
fast and dark and beautiful.