

**Murmuration: Starlings on the St. John River**

**Ian LeTourneau**

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Flashmob. Wingbeats. Murmuration.  
The starlings' policy is beauty, written  
in fluid cursive across impending dusk.  
A love letter in blank verse from the folio.  
The sky is their amusement park,  
their rollercoaster, their tilt-a-whirl.  
Their flight, pliable like toffee: pulled  
apart, stretched to breaking, but melded  
back to a centre. A chainmail of feathers.

Murmur: a recurring sound in the heart;  
softly spoken roar, as the Greeks put it.  
Murmuration: the sound our heart improvises  
now as it cartwheels. The birds soaring  
over the cobalt bolt of river.  
Like the sublime notes only Coltrane could hit,  
in "Out of This World."

A falcon stalks the border  
of the starlings' cyclonic city-state,  
reminding us — not that so much  
around us is out of synch,  
but that the shapeshifting of a summer sky  
is purposeful with each billow and surge.

And these ingenious plot twists  
up there keep the falcon guessing  
until, like the convincing snap of  
a tablecloth, the flock disperses.  
And we disperse, too, though transformed,  
the syncopated beat of wings carried on.  
Murmuration: twilight's civil service.