Out at Pine Grove at sunset looking for cranes,
the mauled carcass
of a deer not twenty feet away. A hunter
comes by sprouting a vivid orange cap.

We talk briefly, like members of neighboring tribes
whose fathers fought
long ago to a bloody standstill,

and who now seek out the company of wild animals.

What have you got,
he asks. Cranes, I tell him. They’ve been passing over
all day. When he sees the twisted torso
in back of me, he kneels down, thinks a minute, says coyotes,
two or three of them, last night about dusk.

Following the example of an ancient priest who
is said to have
traveled thousands of miles with no care for comfort,
thereby attaining a state of ecstasy
under the pure beams of the moon, Basho left home
in August
of the first year of Jyokyo among wails

of the autumn wind, determined to become a pure
bride of the wind,
skeleton by the side of the road, unknown
to all but the ants and the coyotes
of that country, said to have been some species of
featherless bird
that sings small songs of complicated kind.