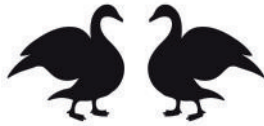


SIMON PERCHIK



Face up this darkness
almost catching fire, the wallpaper
side by side like a door closing
clicks! the old bulb brooding again
exploded, tried to dry its heart
as every night soaks up
the still dripping Earth
—this cremated bulb
started out red :a shade
calling everyone home
more and more trains
till no light made it through
and the mouths one on top another
so black even stars can't get out

—you pour more coffee
afraid my fingers are too dry, pour
till the air is without air
is an endless grate :a fountain
rubbing its sleeve on a list
read out loud to those eyes

that sound like words
and you make believe it's words.

That damn train again! Pouring
as if a train was passing
and its rails dripping —Here Here Here
Here :names on every wall, Here Here
on the ledges, Here Here Here on the margins
Here on the question marks! their names
must grow inside those trees
huddled then cooked into paper —no name
rises out, no name wipes off
or these packed walls
en route to the stacks, the riverbanks
the smallest branches stopped listening

—you pour the cracked cup for yourself
know it's the one I will grab
like the light from another room :a boxcar
creaking, filled with shadows
holding on to a wall
as if they could stop
or this bulb dark enough
black enough, ever in time.