

D. J. Simpson / SPRING BREAKUP

What a curse,
this damned intellect.

Always the ceaseless stream questions
every thoughtful word.

A darker line drawn through once
or twice shows

crocuses, all purple and white
are not the poem.

They're the omens of a darker season.
Like Newlove's bird —

not a robin, or any other bird of Spring —
A huge winged darkness,

shifts
heavily on a dead branch

in the rain
beyond my window

the lawn holds no robin's search
for worms beneath the wet holly.

What have starlings got to do with Spring?
Accept that.

They're the curse of every new lawn.
You can't believe the birds

so you draw a dark line through
to break the thought / that starling

over there on the fence, shits
on the grave where my cat lies

buried since last Spring.
Maybe the bird knows,

or maybe the robins know the starlings
are here already, and won't show.

So much for this poem hasn't arrived.
Only your letter

hinting at Spring breakup.
But there are no icechoked rivers here,
up north the earthworms are still frozen.
Even the birds know that.

So what lies shall I use
to crack the ice-white shell

or coax the geese northward in
lined Vees?

The intellect is too powerful.
There's something ominous below the ice.

Isn't this the same water?
Those eight boys drowned last Spring.

Surely it's a crime
to conjure up the mind's grey ghosts.

And what damned poet called back the birds six years ago
to a landscape of snow and ice?

Twenty-seven below
the robin's orange breast froze.

Meadow larks, swamp robins, finches everywhere
there was death,

grouped around the cook-car, death
huddled in snowdrifts.

Spirited northward by some poet's lies,
they descended on Clinton

and died in feathered heaps
on the roadside.