

## Finches

*It might not be politically correct,  
but I hate those little bastards,* he says  
as we watch the noon raid of finches  
at the feeder, finches driving off  
chickadees and nuthatches. There will be  
nothing but finches yelling  
and shoving each other off the perch,  
rag-and-bone-shop of finches and roaches  
and rats at last, even cathedrals  
breaking away to a swarming mass, finches  
on the boat from Haiti, finches on the  
road in Somalia, in Ethiopia, finches  
in line at the shelter downtown. This is  
not an easy story, the Malthusian end  
of things, in which the finch doubles,  
redoubles, more finch than is needed, red-  
breasted, blunt-bodied, little sooty  
fists of finch, faintly flame-  
headed, melodramatically headbusting,  
who get to the feeder first  
after I shut the window again, who  
destroy my faith in favor of destiny,  
who weight the feeder until it falls  
and spills the seeds of the split-open  
plastic, who fill their bellies  
until they hurt then drop the hurt out  
the other end and keep moving, passing

matter through to spirit so fast  
the two don't know which is which,  
things-as-they-are, in motion, widely  
wandering, turning in their beaks the seed  
we put out ourselves, dropping our shells,  
we paid for them, forgetting everything  
once it's happened, forgetting the  
future, forgetting even the droppings  
before they land, and we, it's us  
here, at the window, don't we matter?

FLEDA BROWN JACKSON