

POLINA BARSKOVA

Translated from Russian by Catherine Ciepiela

The Translator I

We flounder through powdery snow
Siamese t-t-
Twins bound by the tongue's sweet saliva,
My round-the-word dawns break inside you over you
With awkward precision—
A tattoo job,
Wet still, traces of blood from the needle,
The trace of my writing stains you.
This is how the night eye
Makes things out in the dark—
Aha, that's an armchair, a cat, the cords of a curtain
Swaying—that must be a ghost
Not wanting to wake-disturb,
Though sometimes his breath, or a lightbulb's quick falter, gives him away.
That we both see this ghost is a sure sign
There's a shared way to breathe/not breathe breathe/not breathe
To clear the mounting silence—like the ice on these sagging steps.