

# Watching the Perseids

By Isabel Rogers

The parrot, Einstein of birds, who can count  
and reason calmly in our tongue  
while outliving us, disdains the ostrich.  
For all its sprint records,  
the ostrich will be remembered  
for hiding from the truth.  
You can't outrun stupid.

We the people hold some truths  
to be self-evident: our magnificent brain  
in a body that can't flee, can't smell fear,  
can't hear death, can't see straight.  
Even so, our retinas, with rods and cones  
as intricate as any telescope array,  
evolved to see a predator  
slide out of oblique shadow  
and give us time to bolt.

We survey our closed dominion  
until we look up in August  
to find comet dust flaring in the night.

This vastness, this vertiginous awareness  
mocking gravity on our speck of now,  
wakes us with a recalibrating jolt.

But soon our familiar star will claw toward us  
in seven-league boots from the east,  
drawing its Valium thread across our planet  
as if to cloak a birdcage  
to muffle questions that blink through dark matter  
and would pour over us  
until we drowned, dreaming of amnesia.