Ébène

Ébène de ses yeux sculpte la lumière
Ses mains virtuoses font chanter mon corps
Et quand sa bouche aux lèvres pharaoniques m’embrase
Un vent tiède balaie mon cœur
Ses longs cheveux d’un noir absolu tombent sur ses épaules
Tel un Niagara de soie sauvage
Son corps brandit un vibrant obélisque
Où fier il affronte le monde
Il en veut il l’obtient et il en redemande
Puis l’aube couvre la nuit
Collé contre lui je défie la vieillesse et la mort

 ebony

His ebony eyes sculpt the light
His virtuoso hands make my body sing
And when his mouth’s pharaonic lips kiss me
A warming breeze caresses my heart
His long, jet-black hair tumbles down to his shoulders
Like a Niagara Falls of raw silk
His body brandishes a live obelisk
With which he proudly takes on the world
He gets what he wants and asks for more
Then dawn veils the night
Clinging to him I defy old age and death

Translated by Norman Cornett
Canoeing to fetch briquettes, you rest
your paddle on the gunwales,
a small hollow clunk.

Listening still
as the lake locks glances with
its bank.

Across the water, almost
a mile off there, your neighbour's screen door
slaps shut.
Poem at Large

An anonymous space I claim—
You claim

Being who we are—
As we traverse together

What keeps unfolding—
Not denying or changing

Leaves falling to the ground—
What conspires against us

The mercury level rising—
A simple text’s message

To behold or admire—
What I will bear up to

With each new image—
What I hope to summon

Unheralded again—
Being who we really are

Since the beginning—
Anonymous I tell you

Sotto voce
The Piano Strings

Once, you lifted the long roof
and bent your head
close to us; there was no notation for this.

Our stillness—stillness,
which was movement gone silent—made us
seem to listen, and so you sang to us

out loud—sang
into us, and we shook,
which made us ring, as though with sympathy.

One ringing noise
answered all your vowels.
You could be reminded of indifference.

Or the beautiful echo could be a beautiful echo.
Alexandra Dexel

dismount

can a mountain just be a mountain?
    [a mountain is everything]
she moves to the river
rock hands full of trees
    [good old cedars or ______
    good for all sorts of things, critters]
the water moves her
bark chips brand new garden mulch linear shining
    [we eat blackberries along the way for the cost
    of only a few purple fingertips]
her hands melt into pools and pebbles
knock down new wood framed building should curb touch is best
    [they say this rectangular dirtpiece is a waste
    of a valuable land parcel]
her fingernails fall off but this is okay
land to status maximization granite countertop potential bliss material domestic
    [i say hello to every person i pass on the trail
    because this is what i know]
whoops she steps into the currency current mudslide
location selling point for fog dripping sunday hike routine bonding you
    [we conquer nobly knobby crevice with teeth showing]
she scrubs her shoe in the river but it won’t come clean
fenced sunfill heart habitats for you family have it all under two million
    [we step out fresh trails around mountain sprawls
    and feel safe here]
she runs home dreaming barefoot and gravel

forget first national national bank home trust in numbers cannot quantify fresh air
   [a sanctuary for the lonely
       but rape repeats in the forest]

she wraps her muck apartment feet in honey and ivory

imprints of black carbon sole footprints marched for post-corporate pints
   [we point at the eagles they know better]

she peers into the mirror and sees nothing in everything

official wisdom signs hoot moonshine reflective
   [the dirt loves your ideas]

she wonders what reflection of herself she would see

what added taken and what away say you may notice some changes happening here
   [the adorners of land thought she looked naked
       without a tower atop her head]

if she could just look in the pools of water back on the mountain

heli tree shaved her head and secret baby eagle nests—don’t tell anyone
   [we call the tower a viewpoint or lookout and head up there together
       while it relays some signals]

she crawls back to the mountain and it is far

the river smelted up with conveniences
   [i wouldn’t swim in that water or touch it he said
       you don’t know what’s in there]

she pulls herself up the scar trail dragging her jowls

suddenly barren land stripes seen from satellite space reputation nightmare
   [our eyes trace the divide we know to be a wound and understand
       there is pain here that must be healed]

she finds the water and nestles into ripples
That part of driving

Tantramar
reading John Berryman
thinking John Thompson
hay to Boston
the Big Stop
girl with red hair
and breasts
and the boy who lit the fire on the marsh.
Primordial forest
gas
up it goes in
mutiny of bird din
hubbub chatter mute
and a tent
and your ghazals
and guns
and spatulate fingers.
Beer soaked ha
the Vautours and
a party in the Wandlyn
and how I can never
place the second river
or which is the prettier
of the two humps,
La Planche or Aulac.
Also, Fort Beausejour—
hated the way she said that.
Like Water, Music

Like water, music neither consumes as a fire does
nor transforms to dust and ash.

Resembling water in one of its states,
a cantata can drift through air
though unlike water, a hymn cannot in any configuration
be channeled across a landscape
despite how both music and water
may be harnessed to generate a desired effect
while retaining a pristine form.

Water is older than music’s earthly home.
Yet the art is ancient enough:
our bodies are mostly water
like the planet
and melody was taught to each of us in the womb
by a young woman’s heart.

Indeed, the human throat and mouth
are shaped as much for music
as for any other utterance. Sung words
were perhaps coincident with speech
—one thinks of those stutterers
who nonetheless can mellifluously
sing.

When winter fog
hovers over white fields here, shelves of ice
materialize at the edges of the rivulets and creeks
that thread out of the mountainside spruce and cedar forest.

So, too, fingers absently strumming guitar strings,
or an ear that absorbs a sequence of heard or
imagined sounds, or a hand scribing time-signature changes
onto a sheet of lined staves
are transubstantiated
by a mind into harmonies, contrapuntal rhythms, ballads

while above the ridges
float enormous clouds
—vast reservoirs of future music.
where 10 people gather

a bird of prey and some pigeons of prayer
protest they too are female

when 4mg makes mental fireworks stop
living can resume its vigil

clear articulation is a symptom of privilege
stumbling on a forced “tell me more”

what we have learned is a chute, a straw
in the damp crack between lips which open, incendiary

3rd generation inheritance bowls, earrings
were sourced from Chinese kid factories

I imitate the cat, sprawl
and by chance my shoulder pops back into joint

a tumble of grumbles.
why shoot a breeze that’s already emptied of you?

swat midges. did you know
a cloud the size of a bus yields under half a cup of rain?
Beauty, revisited

she wanders
through Westmount
her red cloak undone
in order to meet
the wolf

she admires
her own reflection
between dead
leaves in the puddles
along the way to another
young poet’s walk up

she is a beautiful liar
who sleeps with handsome
award-winners but never
returns their texts

poetry is fleeting,
she writes on paper
airplanes made of the pages
of their latest collections
she folds meticulously
before setting on fire
and flying them off
the balcony of her
19th floor apartment
aflame the plane
of poetry swoops
low, singeing the
ear hairs of formerly
dapper rogues sitting
in parks and listening
to Leonard Cohen
there's a wisecrack
in everything, that's how
the blight gets in, the frog
croaks
Seaside Town

These birds seem to ride a breeze in a light rain.

Is that the truth of birds riding the breeze in a light rain?

The difference between them screams.

Beside the sea spilling out the beach god sits

stronger than any bird—
not the rain screwed blind

glued to the street, not erotic longing,

nothing at all beating on the back of the wind

a wet bird.
I've been experimenting with which additives make the black crater inside myself shrink or grow. The recipes amaze.

Loneliness fills it with what I imagine potash looks like, a particularly tender person hollows the sides like a November pumpkin.

I'm like a porch dog on the top step arrowed toward the world. Occasionally I slump down and make a half-hearted nest in the grass. Mostly my interiors are clearcuts on some northwestern island southern people think is perpetually covered in snow and eastern people think is evidence of our weakness. We're just a minority here, amongst the brightening alder stems and the occasionally uncut fir standing like a starved sheriff in the field. My west is a peculiar mix of fermented berries and machinery parts covered in moss that makes the cogs shine like onyx, which I have always wanted to put in a poem cage, and adorn like a Christmas palm. I know I will never be good. My worry machine is not the shape
of a country in the Americas. It does not purr
as the machete's blade rises. It's a soft
multiple feeling like being alone

on a lakeside walkway in the midst
of 100 families, then returning weeks later
on someone's arm and not even recognizing

the place. A dog finds the entrance
to the crater, enters as through a
rabbit tunnel, her tail faintly swaying.

The invincibility of appearances
is where failure becomes universal,
something even you are doing. It's where

the poem cage's front viewing window
opens to the public and everyone
can see the prey I eat wasn't caught by me.
“Growth and development” sounds like something my mom used to worry about when I was little. Now I say it when applying for grants. Before that one of my favourite dead people told me that it begins with language. Since then I have found lots of dead friends saying the same thing in different ways.

What was once my mom’s, then mine, then mine through the words of others are now the words of the forthcoming Lululemon on Hastings Street, Escala luxury homes in Burnaby. This is the quality of dust. It filters through us, because we’re made of it, the language I mean, my friends know it too when they land in Los Angeles, Montreal, New York. No wonder we bought New Balance before parting ways, making excuses for the comfort worn by our grandparents—this is the quality of dust: it takes us dancing into houses and galleries until six in the morning, it keeps us here, this expensively repressed sympathy in sneakers and secret locations that separate us, like when I message you on Facebook, and it’s three in the morning but seven for you, but you gotta go because you’re writing a condo ad for work, even in Brooklyn and Toronto, even though it started here where we began to love each other, and I think that we still do because we come back every summer, and the smiles come increasingly quick—which is not to say that we’re eager to meet, or that this is the sudden light of friendship, but more than this—this is the construction of an act of love.