Rookeries

All men knew a secret of the northern part
of an old world, a less perfect

idea. For the bicornuate woman,
it was an island. Though its birds

lose our trust, we might learn
their language. After all, we have
been taught
to read and write,
to remove our hands
from other work
as we watch water twist into rock:

to cover our wounds,
staying alive light after light.

For something, I worry.

The moon pronounced with clarity
its known topography. Our letters

and lists, reconstructed grammars:
they replace the ways in which we were

grabbed, and pushed, then shoved.
Set a wife and her children
to rove with indefinite orders:

lineal migration on a small scale
is not nautical, but conflictual.

Of those men,
we knew I could never do

them any good. In this way
I forget, and let the wind

river. It gales and tears
at my shoulders and wrists.
Dark Traffic

& the snows buffer the sound of a voice set forth.

I thought her lost already, that she had gone
to neglect the late migration

Before it ceases, the ice collapses easily.
There is no day without a symptom.

Consolation may turn out to be a guttural practice, after all, the small gesture

of sound lodged deep before it glides without warning downward.

There is nothing but the wind, a howl and dive where water is thrown

over water and sown into it.
A howl and dive of wind, water

she found flown

over water where once we found ice,
where the snow once stuttered the sound

of that shouter, shouting, for this listener holding her head in her hands, the head

in its fine blank way, an original.

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Naŋitkia / he beat her

blood into the crowberry-stained ground:
her cervix bruised by his various parts
augering daughter into mother
wordlessly :: mouth agape :: for years on end & now he wends
his way atop new summits until she knocks him into hell.

She cannot say she will not see the migrating snow geese
bright in the blue sky again: flock-call
struck into her skull while the ravines thaw
when they should really be fixed in ice.

He delegates women to rip follicles
from her scalp & she remembers a story
of a season when the sea gave no sustenance:
you remember with her
even as you forget her wounds.
White Alice Gone to Hell

FBK FAIRBANKS
founded on low water & high expectations rosehip
confounds a wire open w explosive smoke

AVM ANVIL MTN
a correctional center bled there, weathered in w
Lockheed Martin

CDB COLD BAY
while overseer ogles my goiter, my Always
Overnight with Wings

ANC ANCHORAGE
misnomer, magician

DRJ DIAMOND RIDGE
blue clay alder switchback coal lupine sandstone
dizzying gulch erratic erratics

EDF ELMENDORF AFB
otterless Otter Lake apprehended
offroad was she
raped am I
yet
Milk Black Carbon

Observe the coal dust over boats in the harbor, the snow load on the glacier. Take in the woman who pursues a myth to counter another myth. What dazes, scatters and filters: each respiration blurs an image. The coal tipple tilts in its blue skin. Meadows blonde. From open shelves, honey jars tumble to split and spill in the gasp of a temblor. The thick odor of a nearby smoke will signal the end of something, not summer. The fire veins as sap does, translating stands of beetle-killed spruce to crackle and torch. She cannot hurt too much, too long—take in the woman you have not become. And then, take a little breath and hold your breathing. Breathe, don’t move, and hold your breath again.
Gray Eraser

There is no one to scold,  
even when the heavens deem  
the most abject of failures  
receptive to correction.

Likewise, in cackleless sleep,  
the magpies remain tucked away.

A mother can no longer dismiss  
her child as a spectacular waste  
of an education. Even the wind  
stills its sighs in the dry and bare  
branches of the nearby white  
spruce damaged by Lirula blight.

Meanwhile, a pearl-green fox  
retracts its untrussed tail  
through an eastward sky  
thick with unfamiliar stars.

If I wake missing the cold,  
fresh sound of new snow,
I may still miss the kinds of places
that scar me and complete

my sorrow. Late at night,
the birches must let their leaves

pitch and imbricate the floor
of what is left of the woods

near what is left of me.
Various Instructions for Translating Her Past

To make the lost person’s location become known
forget nothing of the field & see that you were wrong

As in no field
   no exilic
   no arcticality
   no longer a knot of inexplicable pain

As in
   it makes no light & misunderstandings
   are to be listed & left unresolved
   as the snow disappears & lest she trample
   at the brink of a public abyss
   see sura & suġat, & the boy who was surprised
   when he rolled to a stop in Signazuaq—
   he thought the land a long way off

When we had access to the same facts
   we had access to the same language
   before he made a wound of political declension &
   before she knew what it was to have evacuated our island
   her story & series of syllables
so badly that we might yet step backward & conjure again up to the mountain or out on the sea

We no longer have to refuse the help of people such people want us dead