

this escarpment by Lisa Borkovich

this giant's backbone
this lick of bruce trail
has defined my entire life

leviathan of grey white rock
a terrain embedded with memories
all its own as limestone & dolomite
pieces of me scattered throughout

as a kid we moved up
the mountain from
just below the red hill valley
today a highway cut through trees
changing all perspective

we'd travel up and down
the kenilworth access
visits to grandparents far below
ottawa st north and gage park
neighbourhoods each with stories
worlds rich in ethnicity and class
the view from there a deep breath

upper lower regardless
i love the feel of those hairpin curves
queen, claremont sherman
rush of trees on one side
roof tops, smoke stacks, water
marking two solitudes
I came to know myself through both

the tales it could tell and does
wide eyed listening to how
(in a house right near my nanny's)
evelyn dick chopped up her husband
made that rockface his resting place
his torso dumped on the brow
practically at the end of our street almost
could have been one of those 5 kids

we were always scaling the mountain
forgotten rebels looking for some
some teenage head off trail
everyone knew where the bush parties

hidden mickies, others lugging 24s
smoking doobies on the tracks
getting flushed out by police
everywhere that day near albion falls
a boulder unearthed itself onto a kid
could've been one of us

getting towed up the nancy green
skiing down a split second of king's forest
those hills let us cut our teeth on them
then during the bus strike descending
the jolley cut to my job at eaton's deli
classes at mac the challenge of ascending
holding me through all those transitions

our first house nestled below the trail
stepping out of time kids leading the charge
another chapter unfolding generations
goblins fairies troll territory this
white blazes of wonder like bread crumbs
steps of terraced roots and stone
holding my kids, my marriage

traditional territory acknowledged
history lesson: erie neutral huron-wendat,
haudensaunee mississauga
anishinaabek land we have the privilege
to explore its trees, the place holders
guardians of a sacred presence

we'd ride the rails
cycle west past the train station
dundas or sometimes up ancaster way
cycle the east trail up the slow incline
now condos, camps, walkers infill
old turf forever altered time whittled
lower sherman access midway point
to dad at st.peter's for a short time
silent witness while I bawled

every day walking our part
the trail seasoning our existence
not claiming it as my own
it's claimed me this genius loci
shaped my east mountain backbone
ground of being for my kirkendall life

witness to my evolution, me to its
as consciousness awakening dying
a constant companion awaiting
my ashes, me sedimental for
this escarpment.