

## Moose

Dempster Highway, Yukon

One must wait a long time to see a moose,  
have a quiet soul longing

to see, not what one hopes, but what, for a fleeting moment –  
the sun's slow slip over blue, before cloud,  
the cold lakes, their grassy bottoms –

I am looking into the wild places,  
I am searching for movement.

The road a trajectory and the bush a blur and shadow –  
a wolf or moose. In the low scrub, above

the tree line, a caribou hoof, lower leg  
gnawed off. Wild, this, and ordinary.

Elusive this index finger of want: oh, there,  
no there... I take on the scent of animal. I take things on.

Hide. Hidden. Den. The roar of traffic, of road construction.  
Antlers of plastic bottles skew-wiff in trees.

What am I hoping for?

A sign. Not all is human along this gravelled road  
between trees and mountains, settlements,  
overwintered deadwood, after rain.  
Not a pale rock, but Grizzly –  
Not the bent drain pipe in the river,  
but Moose or American Dipper –

Call me city girl. All I have is imagination, yearning  
as we roll the road out behind us.  
The lichen and shrubs, from nothing, stir  
on the green green slope  
going north.

Rivers turn to Arctic  
here. Creatures here seek and avoid.

I have come to believe that to see would be to understand.  
Would it? To see with eye,  
rather than mind. To pursue, to hike, be part,  
hear what is breathing –

– find that tawny animal rump, that muzzle, those antlers  
not the raised roots of a fallen tree, there,

look there, in the lake centre, in the shadow, antlers,  
a mother and her calf. Mossy hide, stretched light.