

Helmeted Muskox

Your cervical vertebrae
is as rough and light as sand.
I'm diminishing you,
rubbing off grains.
I put you down, tap the bark
of your high-skulled horns:
I slide my hand inside
your head and quickly out.

*

Two vertebrae.
Bison in one palm,
muskox in the other.
The palaeontologist
closes her eyes.
She can tell you apart
without looking.

*

I saw you, shaggy palaeo-palimpsest,
at the wildlife preserve. Skiing,
I slid beside you, dark colossus
of loamy, stringy hanging fur
brushing high bright snow,
hunkered, sturdy, the most
perpetual animal I've ever seen,
the most impervious
to ice and evolution.