

## LOST LANDS

*a word is elegy to what it signifies* – Robert Hass

The thinking, old and new, is still about loss –  
so many pages filled with decaying Edens:  
places where poets, lovers, thoughtful people,  
made the old mistake of going back:  
Tintern Abbey, blousy with candy wrappers;  
Fern Hill faded from carefree green to mud;  
New Brunswick woods, crossed by nocturnal buses,  
but never bringing forth from scratchy shadows  
that perfect, ambling moose, *high as a church* –  
Bishop's sad-faced harbinger of joy.

Yet even knowing this, I enter the gash  
in the chalky hills, try to rekindle the past  
with steps that slide on trampled, grubby grass  
and search again for my body's imprint, stretched  
deep in daisies, purple clover holding  
the shape of someone young, someone flat  
on her back, gazing past small brown bees,  
the sky smudged with wavering vapor trails  
of planes headed south where I always wanted to go.  
The word is honeysuckle; the life was sweet.

from *The Conversation* (Salmonpoetry, 2015) c. Judith Barrington