

MICHAEL HALL

AFTER A WEEK

The first foray into the land we disappeared into
the 45 minutes it took, more farms, and snow

skittering across the road as if the whole south
west of the province had tilted fifteen degrees, and

the wind had nothing to do with it at all. Across
half-submerged fences, in vague fields, brown

lines of last year's wheat lay exposed by the wind,
like waiting immigrants hoping for their lives.

We found the small town, clinging to an intersection,
the single, swaying traffic light like a visa stamped

onto this cold madness. And where the neighbour said
gas was cheap; owned by the Syrians, he'd said, as if

Syria had built a pipeline to here. Removing the
nozzle, and squeezing the handle, I turned my back

on the south, and while the rusted pump ticked over,
looked out at the few houses across the road, and

though it was late January, a couple of wreaths, a
straggle of dull lights, a sad reindeer in a front yard

remained. I alternated each freezing, exposed hand
into a pocket, the gloves left stupidly on the dash in

the minivan, and though only a few metres away,
they seemed forever lost now.