

Heodale*for Jimmy*

I walked to Heodale today without you,
 with you, trying to find the shortest route.
 Head towards the Stelli and climb the hill
 and then down to Blida Wick. Go straight on,
 avoiding the waterfall, until you
 reach Brei Water, its southern shore fringed
 with water lobelia. Then a warren
 of disused peat banks, loose quartz underfoot,
 a heather gansey out at the elbow.

Now the ground rises gradually, until
 suddenly you're on it, or it's on you,
 the view ahead all scooped hills and softness,
 a layering of Islesburgh on Muckle Roe
 and beyond. It never fails to brim the heart.
 And below you, falling away, the drop.
 From the distant loch the burn meanders
 then dog-legs halfway towards the sea.
 There's Egilsay, unequally divided.
 I won't go down; we'll do that together.

I see now a large flat stone at the side
 of the burn, like a table or altar.
 We could break our bread there, and drink a cup.
 Talk about affairs of the heart, although
 maybe not, probably not, and no matter.

The first time, I came here by accident.
 I'd been exploring; I think I was lost.
 I never knew heather could be so deep.
 There were hares all around me. It seems
 impossible now; the past always does.
 That was early summer. Now it is hairst,
 and we are nearer the sea than the source.

On my way back I saw a solitary
 sun-enamelled diver. One bonxie flew
 over, then another. They have come through.
 Why not just salist a while, take your time?
 I give you an ungainly high five –
 look at us, mere mortals. We're still alive.

salist – pause, linger