

Wolf Girl, Clais Mhadaidh

I sense
it is you
from the bothy door's rattle:

could it have been
a mistake to leave your name on the map
all this time?

I have known you from the gamekeeper's tale
of the cailleach meeting you in the lane with
a gridiron to hand

and when my father sent me up the drove road
with a seedcake and file I knew the shadow

of your permission would fall across my path
somewhere between restoration
and the irremediable

where was a pack was a trail
is a trail still noun-verb you conjugate
where you brush with a reconsecrated
dew claw the alpine milk-vetch again

and where does the first fresh footprint go
landing as though out of the sky?

a pelt's unfinished business
leaves its story neither drowned in the burn
nor on the lodge wall

and tracking your shadow incautiously I find
an odour of old peaty hags
of a nip of Scotch taken in the fault of a morning

but will you turn to disregard me over a shoulder
as you slope into the spruce cover
under the ravenous drench of an August dawn

where I think of myself in the light of extinction
name habitat behaviours
passing hidden into the fossil record

except I can't bring you back
all I do is
toss your echoing passage round the high corrie
walls of the hollow
wearing your name like a spider-web
beaded with frost

and grasping like a palmful of haar that

there are some thoughts these
can be thought only between
a girl and her wolf