

CARN INGLI, MOUNTAIN OF ANGELS

The sheep-tracks were secrets until we were upon them,
rambling twists of heather and gorse
punctuated with rocks from a scattered fort.

*Don't bear left too soon or you'll hit the steep bit,
summit the lower part and walk along*
- said Grandad, every year, but we'd still get caught

and end up in jagged loops round the top,
scrambling back and forth. The sheep would stare.
At the top of the outcrop we'd survey the horizon

down to the yellow and blue of the bay.
No angels would land but sometimes sent mists
with exquisite sunlight filtering through.

We would have a picnic and sketch the rocks,
the leaning grasses framing the sea,
the hut circles and wild horses,

the meandering course of the bay to the estuary
where Grandad would unlock his binocular case,
focus the lens and look for herons.

Carn Ingli was a dream of green and purple
clustering over ancient ruins, and always
another unravelling path to discover.

One year Mum told us this was where my sister was conceived
and we both looked at her in horror.
We didn't fancy picnics there after that

or, in the years that followed, mention the flow
of the estuary where Grandad's ashes were thrown.
We'd be silent, staring into middle distance,

while a lamb might skitter up the scree towards us
or an old ram descend to the bay,
straightening out the secrets of the sheep-tracks,

sweeping the pathways clear.

