Visitors …
(for David Malouf, who dislikes the word ‘vibrant’)

… move through Stromness
unaware they are patching holes,
bumping ghosts; they touch
stone, thinking it’s clean.

They find vegetables, good
coffee; they keep alive
take away atoms of sky
traces of accent, salt.

Sometimes one comes
with more absorbent
mind and eye.

For you, David,
I hope standing stones
brood by Aussie lagoons;
St Magnus’s fat red pillars
prop the memory
of dappled tombs.

The autumn light (which is
not vibrant – never that)
was a little richer with you here;
is more various for you having
taken it home.

Pam Beasant
Rinansay*

Sheep and kirk, 
croft and lighthouse, 
wreck on treacherous reef; 
green, gold, grey, 
crumbling stone, lichen-covered – every inch 
could have been touched 
by hand, hoof or gull’s stick leg. Dig and dig, 
find new meaning in 
layers of soil, of 
genealogy. 
Re-invent 
this subtle, parallel 
place, that makes north 
true, possible, outlined, 
like a ghost’s drawn breath.

Pam Beasant

*North Ronaldsay, Orkney