

Hob Moor

Henry Raby & Hannah Davies

York town centre becomes Taddy Road becomes
Railway underpass becomes Hob Moor.
I am squelching and regretful, seeing off the end
of a night out, not by catching a rumbly bus or cab
But passing the plague stone.
A slab of medieval memory.

*There are pennies in the plague stone on Hob Moor Lane
Copper coins for those before who died out in the rain
They've lost their glint and sparkle, dulled and spent and done
Though the plague is no longer here, lockdown's just begun*

I am propelled by not-so-safe goodbye hugs,
the last ones for a good, long lockdown while.
But now in darkness I am up and down tides of bumps
And skirting swampy patches and scuzzy bushes.

*Sober up, walk it off and trudge across the moor
You've drunk and shared your last embrace on tonight's dance floor
Cross the scrubby grassland by the ghost of lepers' mill
Heart and feet fall into time, moving through the still*

The epilogue to my evening is a not-so-convenient
Soggy shortcut and the wary presence of cows.
I spot youths carving out their corner of the moor
Sharing bottles, stories and recording midnight TikToks.

*Come and drink at twilight on Hob Moor
Bare your hearts as dark falls down, like they did in times before
Bottles propped on fence posts as they soak up the evening sky
The wind skims off a note from each, a weary beery sigh*

I navigate this curated wild not by sailor's stars
Or trusty compass but the gentle fluorescent Lidl lights.
In daylight; buttercup and pignut, heath bedstraw and tormentil
pop beneath the wings of yellow wagtail, whinchat and skylark.

*English elm and cowslip, big kids out late on bikes
Leave the path and make your own through the moor's dark night*

Staggering one foot in front of the other

And Hob Moor's voice breaths back

*Times are sent to test us, nothing's here to stay
These things pass, take my hand, let moonlight guide your way*

With a wind merlins use to fly
I am alone, but guided
Home.