

Black Mountain Cairns

Walking the silent tops of the Black Mountains,
you find, every so often, a heap of stones,
anonymous, nothing scratched there. Not the broken
tablets which marked the boundaries of old sheep runs,
initialled by some farmer dead for a hundred years.
Nor the standing stones, isolated lower
in the valley, which track the path of the winter sun.
No, these were raised to assure the lonely traveller
someone had come here before, perhaps with his thoughts.
You can walk for miles till you see one, rest, and start on
the dry, exhausting trek to the next cairn.

They're kicked over often enough, the stones scattered
on to shale. The mist clears and the peaks return, occasionally.
Each time I pass, I add another stone
unnoticed, to the gaunt bulk of the cairn.

Merryn Williams

