

Climbing the line

by Cathy Whitfield

Stand at the foot of the face.
Lay palm upon rock.
Merge yourself with granite.
This stone is unforgiving of softness,
yet it must have its weakness.
So search out the tilt and thrust
of a molten folding together,
and you will find the line to travel.

Your strength is of a different order -
swifter, transient - your movement
from one point of balance to the next.
You are muscles burning, palms sweating.
You are the terror of the fall.

But forget you're gravity's victim.
Turn your thoughts instead to stone,
your will to steel. Become the dancer
and the dance. Become life on the edge,
life on the line, a fly on a wall.

Hold yourself by wire and webbing,
by nut and bolt, by the ripstop
of a fingerprint's grip.
Reach from crack to crevice,
from hold to ledge.
Strain through that crux
of empty overhanging air.

Measure time by heartbeats,
by the shift of shadows,
the slide of sun on your back.
Measure distance by the length
of your own reaching body.

Gauge success by that change in angle,
the respite of a third dimension.
Know then that you've climbed the line
of your mind's eye.