

Death of a Climber

By Catriona Malan

It was no green hill far away
but here, where some great slumbering block
awoke, resentful; of the peck
of axe upon its dreaming rock,

wincing at the tread of boot on ledge,
and quite forgot the breathless thrall
its cliffs had cast, his reverent touch,
his love of stone, and let him fall.

No clamorous death, no heavens gone wild,
yet, like that green time on that hill,
the sun that set will rise again
and I will see him climbing still

where summer crags hoard winter snow,
where rowans burn high gullies, where
black ridges flaunt against pale skies;
my memory will set him there:

his fingers' grip, his misting breath,
on steepest face, on sheerest wall,
peak after peak – for he will climb
on my heart's hills and never fall.