

The Ascent of Snowdon

Thinking deeply of you and of distances without trees,
I climbed the spurs that rose sharp as mountains on old Japanese
lacquerware, the gray cracked paths that pared the sheep runs,
while a crew, like a chain gang, restacked cast-down
homey stone walls, their hands hardly holding the broad stones
against dirty leather aprons and crooked knees.

Above, ceilings of peeled blue burned through
miniature fog clearings, short fast flights of sheep broke
in the uncurtaining penetralia of sun on the brink;
shale brittle then, crushed to scattered arrowheads, chinked
my way uncertain, and a dizzying raven swooped a sharp hook.
My camera's eye failed and, fog-blind, I imagined you

Lay by a city ocean and shielded your hand
against tidal-wave heat, frowning at children who swam
out and challenged life guards. You spoke with love
up to young men with curled hair to their shoulders,
who stood and swayed on their legs reddening to foxglove
beside slate-gray waves like distant moraine boulders.

The white wind then tore at my sweating frown
and wiped clean my bare shins and dry tongue. Like lost
divers, loving descenders loomed and tossed
in cottony air, mumbled, and passed down
toward the treasure troves of mountain pools
that blackened below in the cloud holes.

Then my black wool bleached to bright frosted hair,
like yours, and my dark chest panted and sparked snowlight,
beside real foxglove, that sheep hate, whose hung
red, sacrificed flowers flagged BELIEVE and swung
like a druid knife through gallons of wet air
at the rock's hard altars in the summit's night.

Francis Blessington