

Poems by Lavinia Greenlaw

On the Mountain

To travel the world explicit
in its fault and fold.

To enter the background
as each thought discards itself:

pine-needles to the tree-line,
scree beyond.

To move small, sleep low
and dream new depths

of emptiness and order.
To be troubled by neither.

The loosening air
concentrates your blood

and your heart has the simple grip
of speedwell or gentian.

You forget what it is
to elaborate or qualify.

You breathe
white against white sky.

Otolith

A bear waking in Siberia
breathes out the last of winter
and the wind rolls west:
pine bend, reed sway,
sea plunge, sea fray,
sluice dribble, crab snap,
a merchant's Flemish beaver hat,
tooth rattle, jet boom,
curlew splash, cathedral tone,
dog confusion, jackdaw bluff,
the passing bells, the plunge and fray,
sea bend and sea sway,
the passing birds, the Flemish bluff,
a bear's loose tooth, sea breath,
corncrake, godwit, stonechat,
– which of them is coming back? –
the last of winter, gasp of spring,
and earth, and air, and rain.

Lavinia Greenlaw is a poet and novelist based in London. Her poetry collections include "Night Photograph" (1993); "A World Where News Travelled Slowly" (1997); and "Minsk" (2003), which was shortlisted for the T.S. Eliot, Forward, and Whitbread Poetry Prizes. "On the Mountain" and "Otolith" first appeared in the collection "The Casual Perfect," published by Faber and Faber in September 2011. © 2012 by Lavinia Greenlaw.
