

John Millet

ANGUS NIVISON — HIS PAINTING —
THE LANGUAGE OF MOUNTAINS IS RAIN

They are cut-outs, these mountains,
seen through a white slant, shut
in a frame remembered so well.
I counted them next to a cloud glut,

yes and where a walked-under moon
shone, as I slouched past the paddocked
cows — and a white scrim of frost, hunkered
In ground bogs and on the matted

and hand-hoed gardens, Christ-cold.
I saw wind grab the blinkered stone
house where Joe Madden knew, by his heart
Song, this knotted skyline was his only home,

(God rest the mauled life he led).
Like a stringhalt mare he'd stumbled and skid.
They're buckled to him — the gloss of rain scrim
or a morning fog — places where he hid.

Today I watch a storm-flight pass Walcha
and the white lines of his kinked horizon —
behind him the old weightlifter mountains
I still love. Whether the season

is mine or Joe's, it's the same wind
that drifts down the cold half-light, masked
by the white lines of our hunger
for what we had once and have lost.

Both Joe and I see the same shift-line, the same
chased light, horizons the colour of my tongue —
and the white slash of your scrolls that still say
The language of mountains is rain, Angus Nivison.