

## Quickening

It's the way our hill has somehow  
heaved its shoulders high enough  
to catch the sun.

It's the ripple of warm eggs  
in the nest box, and the protests  
when you lift a ruffling hen.

You might say it's the young sheep running  
bucking down the wintered slope; the way  
their hoofs carve little curls of mud.

Surely it's the sweet stink of green buds  
bulging on the blackcurrant. Or the way  
I prize the sway of catkins like clean washing.

And didn't I stand outside  
in my socks after dinner,  
on the cast iron doormat, listening

to the oystercatchers pairing,  
whistle and circle,  
in the March dark?

**Jean Atkin**