

## Releasing the Sherpas

by Campbell McGrath

The last two sherpas were the strongest,  
faithful companions, their faces wind-peeled,  
streaked with soot and glacier-light on the snowfield  
below the summit where we stopped to rest.

The first was my body, snug in its cap of lynx-  
fur, smelling of yak butter and fine mineral dirt,  
agile, impetuous, broad-shouldered,  
alive to the frozen bite of oxygen in the larynx.

The second was my intellect, dour and thirsty,  
frowning its fox-like brow, my calculating brain  
searching for some cairn or chasm to explain  
my decision to send them back without me.

Looking down from the next, ax-cleft serac  
I saw them turn and dwindle and felt unafraid.  
Blind as a diamond, sun-pure and rarefied,  
whatever I was then, there was no turning back.