

# Green Milk

*I'd rather be in the mountains thinking of God, than in church thinking about the mountains* John Muir

There are days I go there in my head. When the babble  
and sky of lowlands fail me and I climb the tumble

of six thousand metres, breathless, in the Himalayas.  
I leave the clangs of *Dzo* bells behind me, shedding

the tree line, unlacing ravines of plunge.  
I peel off millimetre by millimetre of old belief.

I lean into mountains which pull me to them  
while cascades rob rock of mineral silt

and as granite and gravity remain indifferent,  
I dream of that green milk churning.

I climb past prayerwheels of sun-muted pastel  
as veins fill with the release of water,

torrents of cloudy rage over and under bones.  
Oxygen slides into memory. Blood thickens,

coursing. I come alive, drunk on wind-chill,  
at this height. The seize of snow, china-white,

smacks at seven thousand (where boeings fly)  
turns bones to glass, and heads to God, inclined.

In this place, the dying zone, the only real belief  
is benevolence. Amen, pure submission in Apnoea.

*Sagamartha* is addiction. I've heard of men blinded,  
hypnotized, torn between peak and the safe plod home.

Mesmerised by the crack of glaciers, and the need  
to finally look down. Mountaineers, Sherpas alike

are marked by stones and flags on the Khumbu moraine.  
In scree above the *Gura* red of Rhododendrons, I pause.

Reverance, for the first time in my life, feels right.  
Those who've never been here, call it madness

but the hymns bursting streams are kaleidoscopic.  
If there must be religion, then let this be it.