

Meeting in Tharkegyang

The Danish hippy crosslegged at the fire
 while the girl pounded ginger
 for our meal.
 "The West is all fucked out
 — pink bathrooms and showers!"
 Superstoned on raksi, he talked to the lamas
 and waited for the smoked meat and rice,
 a tall viking in the shadows.
 Rain on tin roofs,
 mist in the junipers,
 the porters' clothes steaming in the dark.
 He told us about his house in Solo Khumbu:
 a Sherpa house, a Bhuddist house with big rooms
 "None of this Brahmin-Chettri bullshit."
 The clear liquor rose in the cups,
 outside the huddled houses, stone and pine,
 the first since the pass.
 In Denmark he'd been in jail.
 What for?
 "Man, it's real heavy there,
 they can pick you up for anything, anything."
 Later he had to go and see his girl,
 paid for the raksi,
 said he'd come back for the food
 (he didn't).
 I walked outside to say goodnight,
 Venus bright in the clearing sky.
 Across the gorge a waterfall
 fluttered like a prayerflag.

Alan McLean