

Sky

by ying

She said, "Death might separate us—but life won't."

~Tsangyang Gyatso, Dalai Lama VI

the sky in Tibet is blue
with a closeness that can almost be touched
faded strips of five-colored cloth flap
in the turquoise wind
mountains turn to sand
slip
into marshy wetness
on the banks of that wide flat river
where willows dip green tips into melted snow
like the long hair you used to have
draped out to dry
in the courtyard
where wrinkled brown faces glide past prayer wheels
tarnished black with bright gold handles
where chanting hands navigate body by touch
for the blue eyes of old men
blinded by proximity to heaven

I walk down a flight of cement stairs
In this land where babies are born with blue eyes.

like the black yak with colored ropes
and red ribbon wound round its horns
I blink over a white brick wall
topped with loaves of dirt
into the courtyard
where a little boy in split seam pants
squats to poke at a bug
his penis touches yellow dust

I walk down a flight of cement stairs
Towards light and music seeping through a door
In this land where blue-eyed babies are wrapped in diapers.

breathing white into cold air
you lie on your back smiling
as we float past many willows on currents of melted snow
bouncing off occasional rocks in our yak skin raft
your braids once tucked into the back of your belt
silver earrings like stars swinging gently back and forth in a night of yak skin
softened by river water

I walk down a flight of cement stairs
Into blinding lights and rock guitars
In this land of blue eyes far from heaven
And see you singing in a white spotlight.

your voice pours
like waterfalls from the land of nine villages
ever unable to speak

you sing
songs to the goddess of the sacred snow mountain with sand dunes sliding off her back
songs for drinking barley liquor
songs about pleasure wrapped in pain

I sit in a corner underground
Drinking cheap yellow beer as
You sing song after song
In the language of this land
Your voice rising above deep drums
Booming from hollow human hearts.

ever unable to speak
you gave me your hair that lifeline Tibetans never cut
except when leaving this world

a neat black braid
the length of two arms
which I wear
like a belt

a collar

a leash

In this land far from heaven
I have found you singing in a bar
Your voice rising above subwoofers
Booming from the inside emptiness.

that night I was drunk as I held your hand
sleeping
in the turquoise wind

And you turned up that flight of stars
Leaving
Traces of perfume
In my hand.