

## Kata Tjuta Sunset Flight

Silhouette against the clouds  
your chopper spins in circles,  
knifing the hemisphere  
as it drains of light.

Ochre spawns above the desert.  
Sandstone membrane,  
weary of being an icon but  
dreaming still the same.

Without wings of your own  
you lease an insect machine;  
cameras behind glass impatient  
to own twilight's cascade.

Lurching with every jolt, you  
collaborate with the rotors.  
Shadows dance with spinifex,  
ghosts eluding your grasp.

Dream denied, the price of oil  
mandates flight must end  
though you yearn to hover  
here, timeless above myth.

## Eagle's View of the Kali Gandaki

*Walking the Annapurna Circuit, Nepal*

This river gouges out a scar  
on top of the world,  
its valley so flat it could be  
a runway, if only my body  
were more aerodynamic.

Thousands of feet below  
the Kali Gandaki has shrunk  
to a white ribbon, its echo  
drumming like bombardment.  
Before the two-day climb  
it was a torrent of fury,  
transporting liquid snow  
to the submissive plains.

Clinging to the top of a cliff  
there's my shadow –  
flattened on the canyon floor,  
fleshing out the gulf  
of the planet's deepest gorge.

Here I'm level with eagles,  
stare them in the eye.  
They marvel that I have not  
yet come apart at the seams.  
Dare I venture any higher?

Too stiff to steer thermals  
I panic in the antagonistic air;  
for a nano-second becoming  
the tightrope of my own  
high-wire act: myself a bridge  
between zenith and nadir.

The Kali Gandaki mutates  
my eyes to cinemascope.  
Anapurna grazes my fingertips,  
I miss Daulagiri by a hair's breadth.

My feet unanchored,  
the shadow zooms closer  
in a nosedive I seem  
unable to control.  
Long a cautious lover  
of the lowlands,

Now for a moment at least  
I take the plunge.

## The Tibetan Border

At my back, winds out of the abyss  
seeking cracks in the body,  
testing for fault-lines in what  
little flame my heart can manage.

All I pass are hungry men  
wrapped in rags, shaking  
behind headscarves, hoping  
to conceal their souls from the gale.

Wind is the interrogator here,  
the landscape's purification.  
How long can I withstand  
the scourge of panorama?

Look, all those prayer flags –  
shredded by the agnostic blast.