
Alpine Stories

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A Monk between Hell and Heaven

Eiger, Mönch, Jungfrau –
A monk between extremes
Cowled in the contemplation
Of neighbours: the monstrous stonefall
From Hell and the virgin queen
Raped by the railway. He asks
Why this species comes up the slopes
In this new fashion, paying with paper
And more than they know.

The Mönch meditates between storms
And hears cowbells tolling answers:
*Without contraries is no progression.
Energy is eternal delight.
No bird soars too high
If he soars with his own wings.
The eagle never lost so much time
As when he submitted to learn of the crow.
Improvement makes straight roads
But the devious lines without improvement
are the ordinary routes of Genius.*

Eiger, Mönch, Jungfrau –
The monk mediates extremes,
Hearing both Hell and Heaven
Whispering for descent or divinity
Between stonefall and sunset,
Smelling the raw fear, the cold sweat
Of commitment, watching the argument
Go to and fro between partners needing
To return with more than they know.