

ULTIMA THULE EVEREST

Michael Wiedman

In eons past, Avalokitesvara
Patron Saint of Everest
and Buddha of Compassion,
jousted with the Devil for the summit
and rode dawn's sunbeam in first ascent.

Where are they now
our two strongest,
passing Mallory's shade
on the Second Step?

No radio communication
for three days now,
after three months
of crackle and banter.

Last contact from Camp Six
shrieked of winds
that rent the tent ashred.
But no further sounds since.

Late morning classic plume.
They should be on the ridge
or snows of the summit pyramid
reaching, reaching a bit higher.

They seek the touch of substance,
no tricks of hedge, option of pass.
We look on for their final cling
not their thoughtless leap.

Where are they now
as we watch for a sign,
a track, a flash that tells
where we too, are now.

At the step in the clouds
with Mallory o'erwatching,
they had heart, but not time
to go on and return alive.

In eons present, Avalokitesvara
teaches Everest's higher lesson:
Compassion,
in judging our failures
and our fellows' successes
where the earth meets the sky,
Ultima Thule.

(Communication was re-established when Tom Fitzsimmons and Gregg Thompson returned from 8600m on the NE ridge of Mount Everest on 20 May 1984, at the high point of the American Ultima Thule Mount Everest Expedition. Dr Michael Wiedman was the high altitude physician for the expedition.)



MANI STONE RUBBING RONGBUK MONASTERY

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