

Concordia

We glacier-rats scurry about the wide skirt-vestments of the squat Bishop
Corpulent and gravity-anchored, his white flecked stygian ermines
rise in a crumpled chaos to a diminutive snow mitre
It ascends in pristine sculpture, piercing the thinning blue
This righteous Baltoro pontiff gains stature by mere proximity
Take the courage to leave this brightly hued canvas of man and mule
and you will see a grandfather, hunched in his labours
A fussy acolyte overlooked and ignored by the stone deities of the Karakoram



I find a geometrically perfect point in this vast confluence
Sighting the second greatest pyramid and its cloud tendrils
aligned between small icebergs and Americans
It is flanked by a triple-headed god
whose vast, multiple tongues, loll dirty and fractured in the intense sunlight
Next is shy Gasherbrum, aloof and hidden behind a vast isosceles shield
At the opposite end of this roofless nave stands the bride
A raiment pure and unblemished, an equality of colour
Her marital train whitens the rock-litter, strewn across this awesome defile



I make the pretence of silence
And yet this reveals the mechanism sounds, both interior and exterior
Gastric and ice-chute gurgle, heartbeat and avalanche boom
The second greatest pyramid is but a foot-day or corpseplane-minute distant
Here the ice, rising in shards along flume lines
is freed from the schist coverlet of pebble and boulder
The air is pleasantly conditioned in these sunken byways
We arrive in thirst at base camp, greeted by flags and domes of unweathered yellow
A transient civilisation of hardy journeymen and their obsessive moneyed masters
share this ephemeral sanctuary in the frozen maelstrom
Perhaps they ascend the fixed lines that are now etched into my dreamscape
I sip my offering of sweet tea next to a cheekily not-for-Prophet chorten
Endeavouring to contemplate this Concordia



Andy French. August 2018.

