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## Four Poems by Mikel Vause

Mikel Vause

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MIKEL VAUSE

## THE CONSEQUENCES MAY BE DEADLY

Perhaps we had become a little arrogant with  
our fine new technique of ice-claw and rubber  
slipper, our age of mechanical conquest.  
– Eric Shipton

Mountaineers dream  
To stand, at once and together, in three ancient lands,  
China Nepal Tibet  
The apex of all geography  
To see Earth's sensuous curve on the horizon  
Overarch cobalt blue eternity.  
It's ironic that below cramponed feet  
Which scratch both snow and sky  
Teeter precariously in thin air  
10,000 feet of emerald ice  
Razor-sharp grey-black rock  
Fall in infinite spirals into icy darkness  
Memory clouded by fatigue  
Blurred with summit joy  
Only halfway back to lowland safety  
Fatally forgotten warnings  
In the most unsuspecting places  
Yet in clear view  
(It all depends on perspective).  
Markers in tattered Gortex  
And wind-beaten rainbowed nylon,  
Warning or prophecy  
Magically dead—global pilgrims  
Wrapped in rope clinging tenaciously to ice axes  
Held in frozen suspension  
Defy the pull of Gravity  
Ghastly smiles beckon  
Stretched tight by time  
Dry wind high altitude meat-locker cold  
With bony frostbitten fingers  
Offer unsuspecting exhausted or unprepared  
The invitation of frigid immobility--  
Mortal monuments cast in endless darkness.

Kathmandu  
April 12, 2011

## MANI WALLS

And I, Nephi, did go into the mount oft, and  
I did pray oft unto the Lord; wherefore the Lord  
showed unto me great things.

Wilfrid Noyse said "It is in our nature to go out"  
Since beginning of days  
Step out of casual collective comfort,  
Escape the jail-house of civilization  
Explore the fringes of existence--  
Physical and metaphysical  
Touch dark spots of maps  
Search for freshness  
Investigate lost innocence  
Lean against the wind  
Scratch the surface of iron-hard ice  
Taunt tendons, cramped muscle  
Grasp cold rock—dig for razor-sharp flakes  
Find what's been lost  
Obey the nature of being  
Humans are made to explore  
Evolution at its finest  
Bipedal upright stance  
Big brain to process  
Visual perception  
All the right tools  
To seek mysteries  
In the lock-box of creation  
In the Himalayas  
It's always been so  
Mani walls prayer wheels cave shrines  
Older than the west  
Testify of pilgrims  
So far back time has forgot  
The record of advancement  
Scratched on cave walls  
Pictographs are records of adventure  
Petroglyphs the poetry of the past

Kathmandu  
April 12, 2011

## HIMALAYAN THUNDER

Experience is the way  
Into the soul  
It carries us from sunlight  
To shadow and back

Feel rain  
Smell of deep freshness  
Speaks new life  
Thunder explodes  
Violent lightening  
Shatters night sky

Above Kyanjin Gompa  
Ignites Langtang Lirung  
Exposes its deadly secrets  
To all who brave the fury  
Fifteen-thousand feet below

Away from cities  
Uninhibited by science  
And human reason  
Raw power of God  
Works without constraint

Pulls tools from the arsenal  
Of creation  
Revs up the reorganization of matter  
Making the perfect more perfect  
Without human consent

Kathmandu  
April 1, 2011

## QOMOLANGMA'S FROZEN RIVER OF TEARS

Next to the tent  
Stones  
Quiet and nondescript  
Rest on living ice

Rongbunk Glacier  
Qomolangma's frozen river of tears  
Run toward  
Great Tibetan Plateau

The grave moves  
Secretly as Gravity  
Grinds Sherpa bones  
And prayer beads to dust

A mound  
Among a cluster  
Of yellow tents  
And fresh snow

Repository  
Of right-sized rock  
For tent flaps  
Exposes boney fingers

That point  
In accusation  
Toward the Sunrise  
And Heaven

Base Camp Mt Everest, North-side  
April 24, 2011

*Mikel Vause is Professor of English and Director of the Environmental Studies Program at Weber State University. He is an avid mountaineer.*