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Himalayan Facebook Fiction

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Tenzin eyes the three restless blonde trekkers,
hairy limbs poked out from North Face pupas,

bad breath, sweat, impatience condense,
bead the ceiling.

Fog huddles in, clouds block Everest,
wet tents sag.

He knows they prefer a kind of fucked up fiction,
a *Himalayan Pure Land*,

meanwhile, tea plantations wilt with drought
dried sky sticks to bushes,

traffickers comb through the ruins
luring girls fed nothing

but Bollywood
from the lone village TV,

like his cousin Pema, who woke up in a brothel,
sore as a gutted fish,

now cleaning bathrooms at Kennedy airport
as the trekkers *namaste* their way around her mop.

Glossing over the spring break vomit,
she rings her mind of doubt and regret,

earplugs blocking the violence of flushes
while the industrial toilets suck the shit away,

the smell of cleaner like poison to her eyes
as she looks up as if through cataracts, to accept a tip.

At lunch break, she watches *Fox News*
prance its gaudy circus of stars.

Meanwhile, to pass the time, the trekkers burrow
down to the roots of America's woes,

comparing them to a more Noble Nepal
Tenzin doesn't recognize.

To tune them out, he feigns meditation,
quiets himself in the corner, Buddha style,
working his prayer beads.

He's running out of fictions to feed them,
the ones they post like hornets, stinging friends with envy.
Still, he's no better,
wants Pema's bold and beautiful USA
to be good and pure,
even though he suspects
she beams so many pretty lies across the web.

Amidst his staged calm,
(the trekkers lapping up the chance
to post "Our guide, in deep meditation")
a murder of thoughts erupt:

He could rip their fictions with his fists
if he dared,
like lichen, like lace, so delicately held in tact
clinging across the very ceilings

of their psyches, the gauzy mists moving
from land to land
East and West crossing borders
in a silent pact of deceit,

My Country Tis of Thee

At night Pema flaunts a more glamorous version of herself
on Facebook,
hips jutted out in a cocky stance

Sweet Land of Liberty

Fair and Lovely bleaching her face snow white
til she floats like a moon above the sparkling
skyscrapers

Of Thee I sing.

Adrie Kusserow is Professor of Cultural Anthropology at St. Michael's College in Vermont. She is the author of two books of poetry, *Hunting Down the Monk* and *REFUGE* (BOA Editions), and an ethnography, *American Individualisms* (Palgrave MacMillan). Most recently her poems have been published in *American Poetry Review* and *Anthropology and Humanism*. Her current ethnographic and humanitarian work focuses on anti-trafficking awareness raising efforts with the non-profit MARG, based in Darjeeling, West Bengal, India.

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