

## DONALD JUSTICE (1925–2004)

**Sestina: Here in Katmandu<sup>1</sup>** (1956)

- We have climbed the mountain,  
 There's nothing more to do.  
 It is terrible to come down  
 To the valley  
 5 Where, amidst many flowers,  
 One thinks of snow,  
  
 As, formerly, amidst snow,  
 Climbing the mountain,  
 One thought of flowers,  
 10 Tremulous, ruddy with dew,  
 In the valley.  
 One caught their scent coming down.  
  
 It is difficult to adjust, once down,  
 To the absence of snow.  
 15 Clear days, from the valley,  
 One looks up at the mountain.  
 What else is there to do?  
 Prayerwheels, flowers!  
  
 Let the flowers  
 20 Fade, the prayerwheels run down.  
 What have these to do  
 With us who have stood atop the snow  
 Atop the mountain,  
 Flags seen from the valley?  
  
 25 It might be possible to live in the valley,  
 To bury oneself among flowers,  
 If one could forget the mountain,  
 How, setting out before dawn,  
 Blinded with snow,  
 30 One knew what to do.  
  
 Meanwhile it is not easy here in Katmandu,  
 Especially when to the valley  
 That wind which means snow  
 Elsewhere, but here means flowers,  
 35 Comes down,  
 As soon it must, from the mountain.

<sup>1</sup> **Katmandu:** The capital of Nepal, a country in the eastern Himalaya mountains.