

On the mountain

And so we glide
Left shoulder and right
The forest rising and falling
beneath us, I pull up
So she comes alongside
And I can watch her
hold firm, her hair freshly cut
No poles, her strong legs
Bones barely a hundred months
Flesh a match for any cold

And the mountain is ours
For this moment ours
The sun behind the ridge, discrete
Like the pistoires who climb the lifts
In slow motion, not to interfere
Not to descend before we claim
the sheets that subside
and are gone to the valley

And the forest takes us in
I let her lead, carving tracks
through the powder of last afternoon
What is piste and what is forest, the boundaries fade
We choose a new path between the trees
I watch her concentrate, her rhythms
drop and rise, now climb up
and fall again to level, I call
each while "control the turn" or "weight on the..."
She hears but knows it does not matter
It is just a distant sound
Like the hum of the pistoires behind

And I imagine her mind
She says "it's great being here, just you and me, on the mountain"
I see through her eyes, cutting our way
through pine branches and white floor
Like the first explorers
I picture myself as a thirteen year old boy
having broken from the group, on purpose stayed behind
to claim the mountain for my own

And so we emerge
And rising up is the town
In the valley below
Just as far as the speck from the top of the hill
And just as clear