

onward walking on (1)

Stephen Ratcliffe



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Neo-Mimeo Editions:2025

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Cover from photo of Jigsaw Pass by Stephen Ratcliffe

Neo-Mimeo Editions  
Nualláin House, Publishers  
Digital Press Project  
Inquire at  
[nuallainhousepublishers@gmail.com](mailto:nuallainhousepublishers@gmail.com)

I.

first star coming out  
up there overhead  
then another then  
a million and one

looking up here see  
time passing in space  
blackness of night sky  
distant points of light

in motion further  
out there emptiness  
one shooting star then  
another warm wind

blowing down mountain  
colder air up there  
light coming into  
grey whiteness of sky

triangular peaks  
brightness of planet  
across from windblown  
pine branch pale yellow

flower above green  
stalk also blowing  
in wind red orange  
one two three four five

syllables one step  
after another  
walking up the trail  
breathing in breathing

out counting looking  
up triangular  
granite peak against  
cloudless dark blue sky

across from shadowed  
ridge tree in foreground  
still green no water  
sound of stillness in

windless empty air  
sun behind cloud next  
to edge of granite/shadowed  
triangular peak

wind rippling across  
grey blue lake surface  
diagonal white  
line of lighter rock

slanting across top  
of triangular  
peak Mount Winchell next  
to Thunderbolt Peak

North Palisade just  
to the right of it  
all three against still  
sunlit blue sky one

motionless white cloud  
Isosceles Peak  
next to Columbine  
more clouds behind them

no sound in the air's  
empty space of these  
five syllable lines  
white curve of new moon

in grey blue white sky  
going down behind  
diagonal black  
slope of peak in



foreground sound of jet  
passing overhead  
first star coming out  
soon there will be more

another across  
from it blue blackness  
of sky more and more  
stars one at a time

looking up at dome  
of sky eleven  
thousand three hundred  
twenty feet Dusy

Basin no sound but  
breathing in breathing  
out air going on  
and on light fading

in the west the peaks  
barely visible  
shadows below now  
silence of night sky

wind in pine branches  
overhead now gone  
first pink edge of cloud  
next to still shadowed

peak motion of lake  
surface as sun comes  
up again no sound  
of water falling

on rocks sunlit white  
clouds moving across  
pale blue sky above  
still shadowed peaks

condemned to be free  
all roads lead to Rome  
breathing in breathing  
out rock in foreground

shadowed slope of ridge  
to the left of it  
further than it looks  
stop to drink water

eat half a Cliff Bar  
Potluck Pass up there  
one step at a time  
12,200

granite in picture  
person who takes it  
imagined not there  
pick up white rock

will sit on kitchen  
table back at home  
triangular white  
tent at edge of blue

green lake way down there  
below Columbine  
Peak Thunderbolt  
against bright blue sky

to the right of it  
to the left of North  
Palisade summit  
Boy Howdy as Sean

used to say gone now  
missing him leaving  
us next door neighbor  
Indian Paint Brush

red orange still here  
late August water  
down in lake and streams  
working one way up to

Thunderbolt Pass  
still above below  
empty bright blue sky  
distances covered (?)

and the landscapes see  
places in center  
of order of things  
ramp system heading

up across loose rocks  
attentive to each  
step one to the next  
suddenly the pass

appears just up there  
views to the southwest  
blue green circular  
Barrett Lake Potluck

Pass across from it  
descend boulder field  
toward Dusy Basin Lake  
eleven thousand

four hundred feet light  
wind on lake surface  
no sound curve of new  
moon in pale blue white

of sky getting dark  
now orange of moon  
going down behind  
edge of black ridge

sky full of stars  
flashing light of plane  
moving toward handle  
of Big Dipper whose

two stars point to North  
Star disappearing  
behind edge of blue ridge  
star light star bright first

star I see tonight  
now black dome of sky  
thousand points of light  
wind moving across

shadowed lake surface  
toward slanted granite  
rock in left foreground  
approaching Bishop

Pass empty bright blue  
sky wind blowing through  
it no sound but that  
sunlit round looking

rock somewhere down there  
trail curves to the right  
disappears behind  
more grey granite rocks

now walking down from  
Bishop Pass one step  
after another  
sunburned left forearm

cobalt blue green lake  
below red dirt trail  
ten rocks placed across  
shallow outflow stream



perception at each  
moment it happens  
thinking it writing  
it down in these five

syllables in lines  
going on present  
remembrance of past  
tense things forgotten

who what when where why  
things actions events  
coming back at times  
perhaps this moment

then disappearing  
again in the dark  
backward abysm  
of time going on

in forward motion  
stellar jay calling  
from tip of pine branch  
sound of wind coming

shadowed trees footsteps  
walking down the trail  
yesterday today  
and then tomorrow

person walking around  
granite rock on trail  
curving into sunlight  
blue green lake below

wind in aspen leaves  
sound of its motion  
going on going  
on present moment

August 28 - 31, 2022

[South Lake / Bishop Pass

Knapsack Pass / Potluck

Pass / Thunderbolt Pass

Bishop Pass / South Lake]

Stephen Ratcliffe is the author of more than 25 books of poetry, including *m o m e n t* (Spuyten Duyvil) *Black and Yellow Notebooks* (BlazeVox), *Rocks and More Rocks* (Cuneiform), *Painting* (Chax) and *Selected Days* (Counterpath) which won the SF State Poetry Center Book Award, as well as a collection of his correspondence, *Barbara Guest : Stephen Ratcliffe : Letters* (Chax). He has also written 3 books of literary criticism, *Reading the Unseen: (Offstage) Hamlet*, *Listening to Reading*, and *Campion: On Song*. His ongoing series of eight 1,000-page books written in 1,000 consecutive days are at Editions Eclipse (<http://eclipsearchive.org/projects/editions.html>) and his series of daily poems-plus-photographs are at *Temporality* (<http://stephenratcliffe.blogspot.com>). Publisher of Avenue B books and Emeritus Professor at Mills College, he has lived in Bolinas since 1973.