

Excerpts from the Poem *Sunlamp*

by *Kristjana Gunnars*

6

you have made me think of my childhood
the silent years
years of waiting, of pressing
unlikely sorrows inside me
and longings of disbelief
that I will wake up suddenly to find
it was only a dream, all
only a dream

you are my parents, you are
the ship we sailed, the distant
relative who wrote fairy tales
and watercolored images of the other
me locked in the dream
or locked in the reality of which
I was the dream

this early life that so resembles
an Ingmar Bergman film
where we go about thinking thoughts
never expressed, where no one says
what he means, where everyone knows
this is a film we are in
an unhappy film due to end

and I long to arrive at that end
to stop seeing the reel of images
pass by in still succession, I long
to rise from this wooden bench
with you, and walk out of the dark
room holding your arm

7

I have discovered there are no degrees of love
no levels that go higher
or lower, no altitudes of thinning air

it has no measure, it cannot be
surveyed, counted, marked
with signs, numbers, arrows

love is not a mountain we climb
or a cavern into which we descend
it is not a hall of mirrors or a carousel

or an ocean infested with sharks

or a story that begins and ends
and it is not bound or covered

and yet love is
an existence apart, I have discovered
it is my life

an existence gone through because of you
incomprehensively, unknowingly
all things leading up to you

and after that, it is all I have
to offer, I sometimes think
this love is all I am

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there is also terror in my thoughts of you

that there is something I will be
unable to hide from your
intense eyes, that I will blunder
make a mistake, that you will notice
the other me

that there is another me in the shadows

a certain terror that as you love me
after you have given yourself
your mouth, skin, arms, everything
that is you has been offered

and we have been in the dark too long
you will turn on the light and find
I have changed. and again I will be
speechless, unable to explain

it was dark for too long and I wanted
you too much, I could not
help it, and instead
you will see that smaller person
who has been hiding in me so long

defective, crouching behind her knees
covering her face and eyes
from the glare of the dangerous rays

10

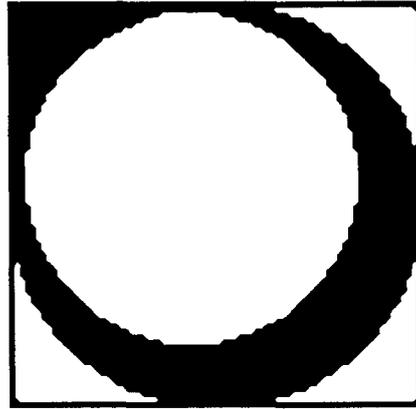
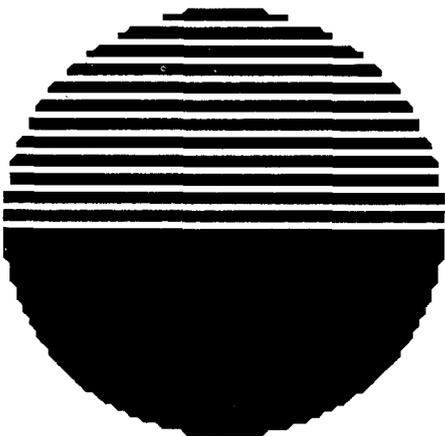
the late evening sun flows sideways
onto the Trappist monastery of St. Norbert
accentuates the deep greens and golds
of sun bleached limestone and dark
pines before the pale fields

the monastery stands in its ruins
broken walls half hoping to the sky
wind swept openings where windows had been
guttled by fire. small birds
now sing the litanies of open echoes

we have been wandering here, my son and I
that boy who has grown beyond recognition
not fully knowing this was at our back door
a vacated grandeur, a sudden beauty
of walls accidentally exposed

the hopes of tranquility, solitude
desire for peace, ravaged by chance
calamity flooding like high tide
over the stones on the shore
leaving bony ruins and true silence

into which the Manitoba sun pours
and that boy has been climbing the walls
without memory, without thought
admiring the half leprous limestone
and I am glad he is made so free



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I do not understand time
the sudden passing and abrupt jumps
from one time to another
large gaps lost, outside memory

I do not know where our life has gone
whether we have gone through it
bravely or not, mistakenly or not
and there is much I do not remember

large days without you
when you have receded out of focus
perhaps in the whistle of the train
burrowing by at night

waking me from sleep
the speeding alarm on its rails
that says there is something we forgot
and the walls are shaking

13

I am propelled by my sense of loss

the morning sun does not succeed
in comforting me, the fresh smell
of prairie grasses refuses to reach me

I have lost you even in your affirmation
that I cannot lose you

I cannot account for this emptiness

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