

1984

Poems

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Poems

Abstract

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Ivor C. Treby

ERUPTION AT GJÁSTYKKI

Earthquakes they had supposed
occurred when Loki
tortured, turned in his agony
struggled against the mountain weight
pressed on his narrow shoulders
then cliffsides swayed and dropped
earth groaned, lifted and split
gaped with snapping stone jaws
rocks twisted, slip-shuddered apart
cracked and unshelled in falling boulders

I think he lies there yet
uncounted leagues under
the waiting land, these warts and pustules
vents where his leprous sweat
welled to the surface, congealed and dried
the issuing plumes of steam
mark his uneasy breathing
warm springs, a long endured incontinence
the milky glacier flood, semen from hot dreams
hidden from Odin the one-eyed

Last night he had a bad turn
I stood on his new-blackened skin
watched as he haemorrhaged
spat blood at the sky, shook the ground
with his howling, vomited fire and smoke
at times such as these
the ancients feared for the sun
devoured at a single gulp by Fenrir
the wolf, expected worm Jörmungard's
emerging, the terrible day of Ragnarok

Christians, seeing that crimson
throat, the incandescent spray of boiling
magma, said it was Hell's Mouth
found a new bogey stinking of sulphur
to terrify the converts to their myth
Odin the All-Father getting his own back
demons licensed for torment by a Loving God
we still believe what we want to believe
see what we expect to see
prefer anything to the truth

THE BEZOAR STONE

for years
 he'd kept it loose in a pocket
of his beachcomber's jacket
hunted in safe waters
not too far from the shore

distrusted
 people
kept himself to himself
no liking for man's gruff pleasantries
no use for women or gallantries

till
 this person met him late one low tide
liked him an awful lot it seemed
took salt, offered him at table
a half egg matching his own

after this
they saw a deal of each other
he sent the old coat for cleaning
lost the stone through a hole in the lining

he was always there in his old-fashioned coat and hat
until late this summer
he fell so desperately ill

you went to the hospital once, i'll grant you that
a boy must consider
his future, such things as a will

he wouldn't expect you to waste a wreath or a tear
attend his mocking last rites
that was never your plan

but wasn't it indecent haste to hurry back here
before they had even buried him
for a drink with your new old man?

Basil George

THE OUTCAST

The dawn's pale light
edges out
the darkness of the barn
creeps into every corner
uncovers the curled figure
embedded in the hay

In the pale light
it looks like a log
thrown up on a beach
twisted
and beaten into being