

TWO POEMS OF GUNNAR EKELÖF
GUNNAR EKELÖF (1907-1968)

TRANSLATED BY
W. H. AUDEN AND LEIF SJÖBERG

I.

O narrow chink
between good and evil
You who know nothing of shame
You who know only what is afar off
just as a girl of fourteen
and betrothed wearing
a crown of turquoises knows
what is afar off

To You shall no god come
no man no angel
and no devil
for You are holy in Yourself
Your breasts shall grow
and multiply
to give us milk
Mysterious You shall stand
aloft in the sky
and your eyes like stars
shall shine upon the flocks
of us who are shepherds

The young men
shall dance foot to foot
the young girls
veil their faces
both out of mutual desire
But You shall remain unattainable
You shall remain the One.

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II.

You who came upon me
in the day of my affliction
what can I give You
that I too can see with my hands
Rings of gold
or just a single ring
in the lobe of the ear, or a moonstone in the nostril
Perhaps a barber-surgeon
could sew a thread of pure silver
into the cleft between your breasts
and hang from it an image of me
If an image of one who is invisible is not to be found
he may hang there a mirror

On two of your toes
You shall wear little rings of gold
which I can touch but not see
and on your forehead a crown
of golden coins
I shall tell You, no sing
stories, no!—songs
so that in my mind
I shall see your eyes grow dark
and in the depths of your eyes
a red lustre of wine
and round their rims
a ring of pure water

My annunciation
in the day of my affliction
Let us sleep
each alone
but close to each other.