



The Space of Joy

John Fuller

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The Space of Joy is a sequence of poems that recounts the endless desire for love (and the failures and compromises that accompany that desire) in a number of writers and musicians who fatally prioritise their art. It begins with Petrarch, who created great lyric poetry out of an impossible infatuation, and moves through Coleridge's self-induced guilt within domestic happiness, Matthew Arnold's disbelief in mutual love, Brahms's self-delusion and the complexities of Wallace Stevens's marriage.

It so happens that both Brahms and Arnold found themselves contemplating their art and their lives in the small Swiss town of Thun, and it is Thun that provides the setting for the wonderful concluding poem of this collection in which Fuller thinks back to his own boyhood and his parents' marriage.

If there is any resolution in this sequence of magnificently playful and thought-provoking poems, it is the conviction that while 'poetry may be the only heaven we have', it is life itself that must create the 'space of joy' which art wishes to celebrate.

Shortlisted for the Costa Poetry Award.

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