

# Kjell Espmark

From: *Gotland Poems*

*Translated from the Swedish*

by Robin Fulton Macpherson

I.

We're as close to you as sweat on the brow  
although we live in another layer of time.  
We prevent the wind from snatching you away  
and scattering you among the centuries.  
We look after the fields for you by night  
with an inward gaze  
and distant smiles that remember.  
We shine up the words before the light of dawn  
and try to be patient with you  
although you ruin the world around you.  
Without us bread would not be bread  
and the ground as brittle as thin new ice.  
Without us language would turn its back on you.  
Our death enables you to breathe.  
With our chilled hands  
we help you into your future.