



The Trumpets of Jericho

Unica Zörn

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This fierce fable of childbirth by German Surrealist Unica Zürn was written after she had already given birth to two children and undergone the self-induced abortion of another in Berlin in the 1950s. Beginning in the relatively straightforward, if disturbing, narrative of a young woman in a tower (with a bat in her hair and ravens for company) engaged in a psychic war with the parasitic son in her belly, *The Trumpets of Jericho* dissolves into a beautiful nightmare of hypnotic obsession and mythical language, stitched together with anagrams and private ruminations. Arguably Zürn's most extreme experiment in prose, and never before translated into English, this novella dramatizes the frontiers of the body—its defensive walls as well as its cavities and thresholds—animating a harrowing and painfully, twistedly honest depiction of motherhood as a breakdown in the distinction between self and other, transposed into the language of darkest fairy tales.

Unica Zürn (1916–70) was born in Grünewald, Germany. Toward the end of World War II, she discovered the realities of the Nazi concentration camps—a revelation which was to haunt and unsettle her for the rest of her life. After meeting Hans Bellmer in 1953, she followed him to Paris, where she became acquainted with the Surrealists and developed the body of drawings and writings for which she is best remembered: a series of anagram poems, hallucinatory accounts and literary enactments of the mental breakdowns from which she would suffer until her suicide in 1970.

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