



Sonnets to Orpheus (English and German Edition)

Rainer Maria Rilke

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Breathing, you invisible poem!

World-space in pure continuous interchange


with my own being. Equipose

in which I rhythmically transpire.

Written only four years before Rilke's death, this sequence of sonnets, varied in form yet consistently structured, stands as the poet's final masterwork. In these meditations on the constant flux of our world and the ephemerality of experience, Rilke envisions death not only as one among many of life's transformations but also as an ideally receptive state of being. Because Orpheus has visited the realm of death and returned to the living, his lyre, a unifying presence in these poems, is an emblem of fluidity and musical transcendence. And Eurydice, condemned to Hades as a result of Orpheus's backward glance, becomes in Rilke's universe a mythical figure of consolation and hope.

Edward Snow, in his translations of *New Poems*, *The Book of Images*, *Uncollected Poems*, and *Duino Elegies*, has emerged as Rilke's most able English-language interpreter. Adhering faithfully to the intent of Rilke's German while constructing nuanced, colloquial poems in English, Snow's *Sonnets to Orpheus* should serve as the authoritative translation for years to come.

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