



Sonnets to Orpheus

Rainer Maria Rilke , Mary Dows Herter Norton (Translator)

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To Rilke himself the *Sonnets to Orpheus* were "perhaps the most mysterious in the way they came up and entrusted themselves to me, the most enigmatic dictation I have ever held through and achieved; the whole first part was written down in a single breathless act of obedience, between the 2nd and 5th of February, without one word being doubtful or having to be changed." With facing-page German.

Sonnets to Orpheus Details

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From Reader Review Sonnets to Orpheus for online ebook

Gül?en says

Her ?ey dinlendi:
Karanl?k ve ayd?nl?k,
çiçek ve kitap.

I: XXII

Steven Godin says

It's a shame I couldn't have read Sonnets to Orpheus in the original text, but alas, my German is not up to scratch. Whilst writing in 1922 on his deeply philosophical Duino Elegies, and experiencing what he described as a 'savage creative storm' Rilke wrote these extraordinary, darkly bewildering and joyful cycle of sonnets, 55 of them in fact, one just as good as the other, like an album with no filler. They are, Rilke wrote later, 'perhaps most mysterious even to me, in the manner in which they arrived and imposed themselves on me - the most puzzling dictation I have ever received and taken down.' This kind of dictation is often the source of the worst as well as the best writings'.

Hailed as one of his best pieces of writing, I have to say this not only took me by surprise, it completely blew me away, to fully experience the expressions of his immense talent.
Beautiful to read, cleansing soul and spirit...

Silent friend of those far away, sense
How your breath expands space.
Amidst the beams of the gloomy belfry,
Let yourself toll. It is a succubus who

Feeds on your sustenance.
Enter and exit, in your metamorphoses.
If your experiences have been painful
And drinking them has been bitter, turn them into wine.

In this night of excess, be
Magically empowered, at this crossroads of your feelings,
And become the meaning of this strange conjoining.

And if what is of earth forgets you,
Say to that earth of silence: I flow.
Say to the rushing waters: I am.

Dylan says

This book was bought for me on one of the most romantic and fulfilling evenings of my short life. Fresh from the Met's "Orfeo ed Euridice" wandering into a bookshop in the East Village, and returning home to a mind-gasm of reading aloud with someone I care dearly for. This collection is perfect for anyone who has loved or lost. "She slept the world..." This collection will continue to delight and haunt me for as long as I live.

Leslie says

While I found some of these sonnets thought-provoking, they were mostly too obscure & difficult to understand for me. I appreciated the translator's notes and made extensive use of them but Rilke's philosophy about death was enigmatic. And the allusions to Orpheus and Eurydice were veiled to say the least!

Adam says

In *A Portrait of the Artist*, Joyce (or the stand-in for his youth, at least) says that art should invoke a stillness in one's being. This collection of poetry exemplifies such an invocation. It's occasionally almost Emersonian in its description of nature and sensuous life, but far more serene, gentle, inclusive. Its effect is cumulative, rather than based on the power of individual verses, but I'll toss up a favorite quote anyway:

...A few notes of music, a tapping, a faint
hum—: you girls, so warm and so silent,
dance the taste of the fruit you have known!

Dance the orange. Who can forget it,
drowning in itself, how it struggles through
against its own sweetness. You have possessed it.
Deliciously it has converted to you.

Brian says

Coming back to this volume has been interesting. It has a magical force to it--the speaker and the presumed audience seem to shift in delicate ways, although the presumed structure is Rilke writing to Orpheus, and there is a sense that Rilke is channeling some deep and wise force in the universe, with surprising and delightful incantations resulting: "Dance the orange. Who can forget it,/ drowning it itself, how it struggles against its own sweetness." "The water is strange and the water is yours,/ from here and from far below... Your task is to love what you don't understand."

Mar'yana says

There is this cemetery I used to go for a walk. It never felt like a cemetery, but a huge park full of tall trees and bizarre and beautiful sculptures and lazy cats. One day I came back there with a friend and accidentally

we crashed into a funeral. A hearse, a woman crying, my friend saying that we better go, we better go, but he was too cold to feel any of that. I just felt guilty to be there, to be here, to be alive. I still wash my hands compulsively as to remove the scent of a candle and the hint of death.

Ironically enough on the same day I picked up this book in a library and even more ironically my grandfather died a few days after. Reading these poems was really precious to me.

The story behind this set of poems is rather simple, but at the same time incredible one. I think the death of Rilke's young acquaintance was a trigger to express on paper so much of his thoughts, feelings, emotions and life events... It feels really genuine the possibility of presence, absence and presence after the absence.

Adam says

I haven't stopped reading this book since I received it as a gift in the spring of 2006. Rilke is arguably the greatest poet of the 20th century. He confirms Holderlin's great words that poetry points to being itself.

Jonfaith says

**Even as the farmer labors
there where the seed turns into summer,
it is not his work. It is Earth who gives.**

Despite the parched ground it is but a shade of spring outside. The world appears geared to disrupt such edenic days with the distant rumble of foreign thunder and a blurred blunder on the button.

There were flashes here which I truly admired but not others. My hazed judgement might conceal a concern or two -- perhaps it doesn't. This series didn't engender thought so I'm moving on.

Kitaplarvesozleri says

Rilke çok sevdi?im ?airlerden biridir. Yap?kredi Yay?nlar?n?n bas?m?n? g?r?nce bu kitab? almak istedim. ?yi ki alm???m, ?airin ?iirlerine bay?ld?m. Ve Yap?kredi yay?nlar?n?n bu denli g?zel ?al??mas?, a??klama ve, ?airin notlar? k?sm? çok g?zeldi. Kitapl???m?n Kaz?m Ta?kent Klasik Yap?tlar Dizisi ile dolmas? dile?iyle.... ?

Lena says

3.25?

anya says

Oh, this is strange, passionate, poetry that is concerned with music, death, love, life, ecstasy--but trying to get at those things thru language. You have to read this before you die.

Laura says

But you now, you whom I knew like a flower whose name
I don't know, I will *once* more remember and show you
to them, you who were taken away,
beautiful playmate of the invincible cry

Dancer first, who suddenly, with body full of lingering,
paused, as though her youngness were being cast in bronze;
mourning and listening— Then, from the high achievers
music fell into her altered heart.

Sickness was near. Already overcome by the shadows,
her blood pulsed more darkly, yet, as if fleetingly
suspect, it thrust forth into its natural spring.

Again and again, interrupted by darkness and downfall,
it gleamed of the earth. Until after terrible throbbing
it entered the hopelessly open portal.

~First Part, Sonnet 25

Matthew says

A more literal, sparer translation than the Stephen Mitchell, good for students of German and, if less beautiful, truer to the succinctness of the original. Especially recommended is Sonnet #2, though there is plenty of heart-crushing material to be found here.

Marci says

A classic, certainly. But I always feel like I'm missing out on most of the music when I read poetry in translation.

MarjaHannele says

Meni täysin yli hilseen! Juuri tällaiset runot saavat minut tuntemaan itseni tyhmäksi. Rilke on kuulemma hyvä ja arvostettu. Jokaisen sonetin luin - ainoatakaan en ymmärtänyt. Minulle ne olivat vain sanoja

peräkkäin. Yritin myös pitkää saksaa lukeneena ja Sveitsissä asuneena lukea, myös saksaksi. Sanat ymmärsin, merkitystä en! Joo, ei mun runoja!

William says

Rilke's Sonnets to Orpheus were written, remarkably, in a few weeks in a kind creative overflow after finishing The Duino Elegies, a group of ten poems that took Rilke ten years to write. Hearing these poems in German is a memorable experience (even if you don't know the language). They are little technical masterpieces, with very strong rhythmic structures, and the rhyme of a classical (Petrarchian) sonnet. Of course, all the structure and form is lost in translation, but they still read remarkably well in English, largely because of the Rilke's imaginary. Over the years I've read many recent English translations, but, in the end, I still prefer the Herter Norton translation, which was first published in 1942. It is curious to me that in February of 1922, when Rilke was in his little castle in Switzerland, finishing the Duino Elegies and writing the Sonnets to Orpheus, T. S. Eliot was a few miles away in a sanatorium, also in Switzerland, finishing The Waste Land. It make you believe that a very special poetic star was shining down on Switzerland that month.

See my website: <http://tiltyourhead.wordpress.com/>

Dorotea says

My review is incredibly influenced by the fact that just before this, I read Averno. Louise Glück's poetry has a special place in my heart, so my judgement suffers terribly from this. Rilke's poetry is great, but it didn't make me feel as Averno did.

Özgür Da? says

Öldürmek, bir d??avurumu durmadan yol alan kederimizin...

Khashayar Mohammadi says

Das erste Buch, das ich habe auf Deutsch gelesen. Ich liebte Rilke von anfang an. Fantastisches buch.
