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Orphic Listening: Rilke's Sonnets to Orpheus, a New Translation

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For 10 years, Rilke struggled to create the Duino Elegies: a cycle of ten unrhymed, free-form poems. By contrast, the fifty-five Orphic sonnets presented here were composed in just three weeks, and and as the wake of the final elegy. In this, the first sonnet-form translation to appear ion print since 1960, the translator has sought to retain the musicality of the poems, to hew as closely as possible to the rigid and constricting rhythm and rhyme schemes through which Rilke proclaims the 'task of the poet': to listen to being in a most unique way, and to undertake the mystical work of inhabiting and praising the wonder of being as it saturates and transcends the here and now. The eternal questions of time, death, God and meaning are answered as they always must be: by an appeal to the ideals of beauty and love.

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