

ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE

John Esam

A Book of Changes

Matter is Change
The restless fulfilling of possibility
Whose order is
The marvellous rider, Being,
One with his horse of Chance.
Wait not for another guide then—
Go hang your restless seed
Upon the restless ocean.
Each person is a natural law,
A sheath in the world
For the Sword of Nothingness, inscribed:
‘Take this and cut the puppet free!’

Let go the strings that jerk
And never fear the laughing winds,
There is a heaviness in being
That will hold you here.
Life is weighted with itself,
No more yours to stop undressing
Than is the season birds leave.
A great river stretches across
The universe
Where sun and worlds are whorls
Lasting a moment
As the water goes shallow over stones;
Wells walk in the streets

Where seeing pours from Nothingness
Into space
And breaks like a flock of diving pigeons
Sweeping past your head.

Remember yourself
As an empty door the wind
Blows about in like a sleepy dog in a yard;
Listen to the stones of seeing
Falling down your senses' wells.
Consciousness comes as a growing
emptiness

Like a man walking closer growing clearer
In your shape.
He will arrive and walk on
Within your body
Shining slightly from the void
As he goes into the distance.
Leave yourself there to turn
And follow him.

Seeing is an act that touches
The seen
And makes it move as leaves aware
That it is seen
And so hear itself
Coming constantly into being
Through the trees;
So the seer hears the seen
Working effortlessly within its selflessness,
And his long eyes make its spinning echo
Faster there so that the seen,
Feeling itself being seen through,
Knows that it comes into being
Through being seen,
And that in seeing, being
Goes like a woman stepping down
from a train

To knowing, and knowing smiles...
Yet becomes aware of itself
As an object
And looks back into the seer;

So the seer's self rises quietly
To the surface
Of his self-objective eyes
And looks out into the world.
Open to all seeing now he listens
To the forest think
In the wind's slight breathing,
Hears sound coming in from space
Blow out through the seed's old ear
Into the experience of the thing,
Matter as a kind of knowing,
And made, singing reason's riding song
come out

Through all that is...
The stars
Standing in their stirrups.

Follow yourself
Down through the world,
Your body full of creeks where
The hidden brightness the self is
clings
Is the way,
Has the power of the empty circle senses
Work like winds within.

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Walk, and let the ceaseless forms
 Rise up through your shape to break
 Upon the empty beach
 And leave their meaning lying there
 Like a man from some ship
 The light has wrecked. . .
 To walk is to think
 When your self walks as another
 In your body.
 You have all natures in your nothingness
 Like tongues that use
 Your eyes without confusion, speak
 To themselves as you walk by their stones
 And riverbushes, not burning with meaning.
 Learn to overhear yourself,
 To see what you are
 With what is, and
 The continuous intelligence existence is
 Will come through that silence that
 Plays about every thing
 As rocks far inland catch
 On the seawind's throat.

Become responsible for yourself here
 As a world hanging
 In your body's breathing space
 And all your seeing goes
 To knowing
 As the earth is curved out
 From gravity's bending of the light.

Mortality is necessary
 That things may continue;
 Matter stays the speed
 Of light
 That selves may bring their selves
 Out from the stony days' tower
 Of cracking bells,
 Until the sword of time must cut the
 sun's knot

And let the dusty light out;
 Like a dewy web bag of young spiders,
 Broken open by a boy, disappearing
 Down the dry grass,
 Edges break the light
 Shattering time into the mind's eye.

In matter's mirror pause between
 The spaces, the ever-moving line
 Of Time that flows both ways
 Echoes in itself, makes
 The planets mutter like old heads
 And breaks against the hollows
 of the suns.
 Time enters space lost in matter

Come through the edges of
 One universe whose beginning
 Seems to disappear somewhere beyond
 the speed of light into another,
 And shatter to the cosmic mirror there
 Time catches on again. . .
 So this world loses its origins
 Into the next, and on towards
 That centre in the past
 Where the bell is being struck. . .
 And there are even some who can still see
 Stars in the nostrils of horses . . .

Our birth's a stone dropped
 into emptiness,
 A confusion like a sound that echoes
 away
 In the next room

Made by something you cannot find
 When you go in
 Through which time goes
 Into the obscurity of a being as breath
 Disappears down the blood into
 the body.

This world is time gone
 Dark in space
 The sun's eye leaves its images
 Gathering in;
 Not desire to be too clear now
 If you are to be a seer,
 Everything here is a blind thing
 Some seeing troubles into being.
 Light must be held up
 By matter's cloudy places long enough
 For the world to grow clear,
 Hanging round its old horizons
 Where the brightness we see by
 Clings as lovers lying lost
 In each other's eyes
 Go through their blindness to
 Beaches behind the sun
 Origin breaks
 To selves upon.

Not only the sun
 why I fell,
 Orpheus,
 but the earth
 breathed me in. . .
 All those lives I left
 with no life
 that I might fly
 unless I gave them
 matter's chance

curled there
like airless mouths
dumb men's hands grew out...
and pulled me from
the air that they
might breathe
and walk among
themselves.

So I fell to watching
the soft decay
of actions
that once meant flight
in old men's bodies...
And saw
that they had never
known what
those strange movements
in them might have been...
Each one choked
with unknown lives deepening
to a duller matter
the earth would rather
not have,
but must use...
All become slower, fallen
out from the quickness
of the self

living in its centres,
losing the sun's
feathery, flying light from
their breathing,
and so
their upper blood...
Lost consciousness
of their bodies' power
to find a way
up through the days
to the light body
of the soul
through the circulation
of the light
from the heart between
the eyes...
And could not rise
nor die,
matter going heavier
with senseless lives
hallucinating bodies
until nothing moves
and this
a dead planet winged
with hopeless ghosts sunk
in their own
bodies' cells
that cannot fly much longer.



"Icarus and Daedalus" by Dion Wright, photo by Neil Wolf

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