

# 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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