



Orpheus & Eurydice: A Lyric Sequence

Gregory Orr

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How can I celebrate love/ now that I know what it does? So begins this booklength lyric sequence which reinhabits and modernizes the story of Orpheus, the mythic master of the lyre (and father of lyric poetry) and Eurydice, his lover who died and whom Orpheus tried to rescue from Hades.

Gregory Orr uses as his touchstone the assertion that myths attempt to narrate a whole human experience, while at the same time serving a purpose which resists explanation. Through poems of passionate and obsessive erotic love, Orr has dramatized the anguished intersection of infinite longings and finite lives and, in the process, explores the very sources of poetry.

*When Eurydice saw him
huddled in a thick cloak,
she should have known
he was alive,
the way he shivered
beneath its useless folds.*

*But what she saw
was the usual: a stranger
confused in a new world.
And when she touched him
on the shoulder,
it was nothing
personal, a kindness
he misunderstood.
To guide someone
through the halls of hell
is not the same as love.*

"A reader unfamiliar with Orr's work may be surprised, at first, by the richness of both action and visual detail that his succinct, spare poems convey. Lyricism can erupt in the midst of desolation."—*Boston Globe*

When Gregory Orr's *Burning the Empty Nest* appear, *Publisher's Weekly* praised it as an "auspicious debut for a gifted newcomer...he already demonstrates a superior control of his medium." *Kirkus Review* celebrated it as "an almost unbearably powerful first book of poetry" and enthusiastically reviewed his second book *Gathering the Bones Together*, noting that "Orr's power is the eloquence of understatement." Most recently, his *City of Salt* was a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times Book Award*. Gregory Orr teaches at the University of Virginia.

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