

Eurydice on the Artist

/I wasn't in the poem the poem was true/

I promise, I've not screamed since Taenarum. Nor loved a poet

He always said he'd press a poem out of me: Wildflower pretty, wildfire pretty
Dead petals pledged to a smouldering page

Time stirs in its slumber, raises its three heads, slobbering from its three maws
and drags me back, kicking, to some eerie Thracian wood

/Relief/, I would have told him, had he asked,/is a poor counterpoint to venom/
/Relief/, I think, /feels bloody in the mouth, soured by sorrow/

The word itself, hisses and drips
From a lyre to a bitter pooling note - black ichor, molasses thick in the woodland smoke
A promise well worth crossing, double-crossing
Make a brook of me, babbler - or a damn of Styx,
His green stark against this underworld grey
Here we are, turning away,
Held hostage by our falsest moments, by our truest oaths
And by truth's course, a pair of ghosts.

And now, a fresh boy, a grave boy
As in newly torn asunder, yet a carcass overgrown
A snake split spine-wise,
/The queen coming home/,
Scaled skin shed like the turning of the leaves
/A pomegranate out on the seashore bleeds/
Seeps deeper, returns to the dust.

But forgive me, when memory fades - Death takes with it many faces
You tried so hard to make a muse of me
You, with your quick wit and portable pedestal
They will say you came for me, that you tried
But you brought a song to a grindstone for finishing touches, polished till it hummed with shame

See how it spins, how the story warps?
Worth as much as a kiss to a corpse

Reflective commentary

The facet that initially drew me to McCrae's poem is the way that it exists between truth and fiction, even within a mythological world. Eurydice herself seems torn between relief and betrayal, which was the broader tone I wanted to communicate in my poem - a longing for a state that never truly existed, alongside an indignance at its theft. Personally, I was inspired by the way McCrae captured the experience of rumour, fallacy and of not being believed. At some point, we have all felt voiceless, and every rendition I have heard of this myth speaks about Eurydice instead of speaking from her perspective. 'Eurydice on the Art of Poetry' offered a fresh view for me, so I felt the urge to contribute and to highlight aspects that felt important to me, such as their initial meeting, and Orpheus's own death. In my vision of this poem, he is a revered and seemingly perfect figure, whose talents forgive him many things, allowing him to maintain his immaculate reputation. All Eurydice can do is offer her story in the hope that someone listens, which I think contributes to the emotional undertones of distress and of anger. Rhyme and repetition are what I mainly based the structure on, relying on them to show emphasis and heightened sensation, as opposed to the original irregular line breaks. Furthermore, I was fascinated by the role of memory in the poem, which I chose to represent through enjambment, with specific breaks to show Euridyice's lapse in memory after death. In my response, I reference other mythological elements like Cerberus and Persephone as well as places of origin like Thrace to contrast the persona's past with her present, despite the way she slips between the two, reinforcing her feeling of vulnerability in the face of greater forces.
