



Sonnets to Orpheus VIII

[FIRST PART]

Only in the fields of Praise may Complaint
go, the nymphs of the plaintive spring,
watching over our defeats,
that they would be clear on the same rock

that carries the arch and the altars.—
See, on her quiet shoulders dawns
the feeling that she was the youngest
among the siblings of sentiment.

Joy *knows*, and Longing remains constant,—
only Complaint still learns; with a girl's hands
she counts through the nights the old wrongs.

But then suddenly, unpracticed and askew,
she fetches a star-image of our voice
in the night sky, one that doesn't cloud her breath.

Rainer Maria Rilke
(tr. Cliff Crego)

(Image: At Timberline, Summer's End. looking East—the Alps)