

POETRY: "Sedona, in Gold and Rust" by Eitan Fishbane

1.

Dreams of the past.

Into solitude, beyond room and study,
words of the Concord sage
inscribed in me at the beginning of my way:

*uplifted into infinite space
a perfect exhilaration
currents of the Universal Being circulate through me.*



Courtesy of the author.

2.

And the dancing mystic howling into the night –
far from the marketplace and the crossroads,
toward the Nothing at the soul of All.

Then in the day when the trees and fields
are gathered up like kindling into his prayer,
melodies singular and symphonic,
notes to the score of wonder.

Or the woodlands are reshaped
into an otherworldly instrument –
soloist playing in slow undulating dance before
his darkened audience;

then a quartet, then a symphony of sound –
music-vessels of the hand
seen only in the prophet's eye,
heard only in the chambers of his mind

resonating like two thick strings
of a caramel and amber violin –
reaching forward to the breaking open of souls.

Piercing and crying of E, folded into A,
bent in the shape of minor lament
exploding into organ fugue
before it is sorrowful klezmer once again.
A lifetime of sadness collapsed
into three lines of score,
released into visionary mind
infant born of the soothed and clarified heart.
Melody and solitude.

The river flowing from the Upland
and down to the Black Sea basin –
into a forest of oak, maple, and elm he withdraws;
cry of the rebbe
resounding across the surface of deep time.

3.

And here, now, in this sublime American southwest
I find myself a world away:

Into the north country I pass,
the desert highlands beyond the valley of the sun –

mountain air of this enchanted earth
where memory lasts in the millions of years
recalling how once there was an ancient sea,
volcanic rupture and the slow loving kiss
of lapping waters

iron-bleed sandstone, vibrant rust –
layers of history marked in the salt lines.

Red Rock Secret Mountain Wilderness
guarding the whispered prayers of all who have crossed
her trails:

Anasazi, Hohokam, Sinagua;
Yavapai, Apache, Navajo –
their words a jumbled mystery
and yet inscribed in the stone
and in the memory of the earth and plant life.

The heart of her brimming vitality –
gentle current of Oak Creek,
life restored in the juniper wood
burning in the medicine man's fire –
fragrant smoke clearing energy and air.

Chaparral, interior, leaves powdered or tea-steeped
healing the pilgrim, wanderer lost.

Cottonwood, sycamore, velvet ash –
desert ironwood and catclaw acacia;
banana yucca, speargrass
redberry juniper, Arizona walnut –
four-wing saltbrush, shrubby buckwheat, and agave.

Plenitude of formation primordial,
breath and speech of the land murmuring softly,
exhale of a living creature
sweeping over the sunlit face of the hiker
crossing borders into wilderness sanctified:
Yerba, pinyon, ponderosa.

4.

Solitary kaddish
whispered
wrapped in the pure white tallis
from a day long ago

the psalms sung low and slow
as meditation

The work of His hands spoken by the heavens.

Memory in this place is endless,
like *Ein Sof* overflowing into Mind
emptied of color –
all potential, of what will be,
but still the fullness of what was
in the time before time when all there was
was time.

5.

Pilgrim's journey to the cathedral on high
towering over red plateaus
meditators lying supine on the rocks,
absorbing her gentle and soothing breath,
brisk sun flowing into the crevices of untold pain
in a thousand passers-through,
each an ache unique –

and she, force of the cathedral,
mystery of the one-seed juniper,
bathes and rinses the weight of hearts,
even if first she lifts that fiercely burning sorrow
from the dark well of inward hiding,
raising it to the searing presence of
feeling and knowing.

Only then can the climb break you open,
fragile and vulnerable like the Mountain Bluebird
to the Black Hawk
plunging from the sky with talons raised
at two hundred miles an hour.



Courtesy of the author

6.

He steps out of the rain
into the shops at Tlaquepaque –
loft overflowing
with the intricate vision of a carpet weaver:
this one nearly all silk,
smooth and cool to the touch;

And in The Inner Eye
the wood carvings
and small hand-painted boxes
designed to hold secrets, promises, regrets.

What secret will your box hold?

The lover's letter to the one who is like scar tissue
over the wound of memory;

or perhaps the spices of another time
unearthed for separating holy from profane
at the moment of soul-crossing.

The lamplights emerge with the coming of night,
and their glow reflects
on the rainswept cobblestone path
that weaves between visions and artists.

In the gallery
cobalt blue with shades of azure,
egg and bowl-shaped
glistening and drawing the meditative gaze –
strewn with sand-hued speckle
and draped with curtain-like layers
of willemite, crystalline glaze on porcelain.

7.

In this wilderness
beyond the well-worn pathways of trail
he knows the creatures, predator and prey,
crouch in hiding and rush through
the beargrass, the mesquite, and the hackberry;
coyote, mule deer, and javelina –
ringtail cat, black-tailed jackrabbit, Arizona tarantula,
and the rattlers: western diamondback,
mohave, black tailed.

In the trees and fields and streams of this
Pinyon-juniper woodland
the black chinned hummingbird sings its song,
the blue heron spreads its majestic wings and fishes for
dinner,
and the ladder-backed woodpecker cackles and chirps
as it rises in the quiet daytime heat.

Not far is the sweet flow of Oak Creek,

and here – in the Rimrock Verde Valley,
surrounded by ancient red butte and the sea-lines
of primordial waters –
all the rich varieties of life are
reminded of their oneness;

Where the hiker breathes in his exhilaration,
leaning on his stick like a wandering monk
from long ago:
smiling at the slow sublime ascent of God's face
in the golden rust of late afternoon.

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