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Portraitist, Behold !

Zhaleh Esfahani

How would *you* portray, I wonder,
The sea of my inner maze :
Would it be white ? Or green, or blue ?
What colour would you paint restlessness ?
Or sleeplessness ?
When nightly my eyelids as moths flutter vainly
In search of elusive calm ?

Truly, you may depict sorrow with a charcoal;
Joy in a radiant face; or the freshness of a blossom.
But, do tell me how would you paint a barren wish,
Or hope bursting into bloom ?
And yet again how may a stanza
Or some bars of minstrelsy,
Do justice to your painter's colours ?

Come, imagine with me :
The silver moon riding on emerald trees,
Holding my soul in thrall.
I want to float in her colours.

Verily, how woeful a world lacking light, void of
colours, wanting birdsong :

Truly, empty-hearted out lot would be.

Will you behold for me the vasty ocean,
Waves of amber and lapis lazuli,
Reaching for the sky

Only to see their boiling fervour
Dashed on hard, slabby rocks,
Condemned to scatter and rise,
Scatter and rise,
To time's end.

Now : you magician of colours,
Create therein an image in my stead,
Perched on that ocean rock,
A woman yes,
But half of me is bird,
My feet hold fast to the unyielding rock,
Yet my fluttering wings lift my head among the
fiery stars
Contemplating Creation's eternity.

Zhaleh Esfahani

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(English translation : Robert Stansfield)