



Image from Mystical Dance

Christopher Bernard

## Like Lightning

*For the Ballet Afsaneh ensemble of dancers and  
choreographer Miriam Peretz*

*This poem was inspired by “Me-e-Raj Darvishan II:  
The Moment of Awakening,” danced by the Ballet Afsaneh  
and choreographed by Miriam Peretz, with music by the  
Neydavood Ensemble.*

Four young women  
furled in white.  
Hesitant, a subtle,  
changing melody  
on flute, violin,  
furtively begins,  
hesitates, moves on,

hesitates again,  
once again begins,  
stops, pauses then,  
like a butterfly  
wings away. And one  
of the veiled, still women  
begins a languorous spin.

Another picks it up,  
another, then another,  
their heads lean to the right,  
their arms are outstretched like  
a ballerina doll's.  
Slowly they spin, their skirts  
rising like a bell  
around their turning bodies.  
Their arms begin a slow  
dancing of their own:  
like trees beneath a wind,  
like seaweed in the ocean,  
like cloud trails in the sky,  
blown by the wind of their dancing.

Then each one begins  
till all of them revolve  
around a central dancer  
like moons around a planet.  
And now their spinning quickens,  
the pace grows fast and faster,  
rotating and revolving,  
their skirts flare out around them  
like waves upon the ocean  
and birds across a sea,  
a lapping of the swells,  
a leaping of gazelles,  
a whirling of the wind  
of love for the Deity.

Faster yet, and faster,  
swifter yet, and faster,  
the music and the dancing,  
the flute, the violin,  
the tambour beating faster,  
voices, shouts raised higher,  
are drunk and pale and giddy  
with worship of the Master,  
with adoration, dancing,  
devotion to the godhead,  
the fountainhead of being,  
and it is all the world,  
it is the universe,  
here, dancing, whirling, spinning,

drunk on music, dancing,  
the wild whirl of being,  
white flowers and white clouds,  
white waves of foam and sea,  
a pattern of all flowering  
shadowed on their whiteness,  
faster yet, and faster,  
swifter, drunk on swiftiness,  
blind and blurred and drunken,  
drunk on love and worship . . .

#### A Star

leaps to the heart of the dancing,  
flashing, thrashing, banners,  
streams of light in splendor,  
bathing the white blurred dancers  
with the blinding gold of being,  
blinding yet revealing,  
astonishing yet loving,  
turning the world and dancers,  
the drunken universe,  
into an infinite dancing  
with no end or beginning.

And from the women's dancing  
strikes ecstasy. Like lightning.

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Christopher Bernard is co-editor of *Caveat Lector*. His poetry collection *The Socialist's Garden of Verses* won a 2021 PEN Oakland Josephine Miles Award for Literary Excellence was named one of the "Top 100 Indie Books of 2021" by *Kirkus Reviews*.