



Mystery My Country

By Robert Vivian

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Contact: Amanda Mays,

hello@anchorandplumepress.com

Mystery My Country is a collection of dervish essays (a species of prose poem) that seeks to unite readers with water and sky, flower and highway, darting fish and all the wonders of the natural world through poetic ache and yearning, a wild seeking utterance of what is true and lasting and alive in the present moment and every moment there ever was or could be. These prose poems also bear witness to the second birth of a writer who finds himself suddenly stunned by the beauty of the world and his own miniscule place inside it that for reasons he cannot fathom or understand he was given to celebrate, sing about, and cry out to. It is a book intent on a most outlandish but somehow necessary quest for the times we live in, asking again and again in these headlong pages if this same stunning world will take his hand in marriage, even though he has so little to offer it in return.

Advance praise for *Mystery My Country*:

Words at the door of the Universe never get over the threshold, but these come as close as it gets— this books seems to witness the marriage of the wind with the seed. —Mary Ruefle, author of *Madness, Rack, and Honey*

The “country” Robert Vivian’s “mystery” encompasses is vast and packed densely with the things of this world (lost softballs, hit men in sunglasses, corrugated roofs drummed by rain, flight attendants named Brenda and Roy, a child proffering a single acorn), but it also reaches beyond this world into a limitless, visionary realm in which the speaker’s very self fuses with all of it in a rush of praise. A self-proclaimed “minor league mystic,” Vivian is anything but minor as he rides crests after crest of language into exuberant revelation. His headlong poems outrun Whitman’s, whose echoes can be heard here, but they are best savored slowly, a few at a time, for the way they caress and polish and offer bits of our world back to us freshened, full of refracted light. —Leslie Ullman

From the mystical traditions of Bernard of Clairvaux and Hildegard of Bingen, of angels and dreams, of visions where the speaker feels a part of himself “leaving the world” and can “feel sunlight in my veins,” to the everyday world of Fred Astaire, stones, rivers, hobos and bee keepers, Vivian brings us a world only he can see accurately with something like Blake’s fourfold vision. As we travel passionately from Turkey through St Petersburg, Michigan and nameless spaces in between we experience what all superb writing should bring us—a unique, personal, wondrous vision that changes the way we see everything. Part prayer to our humanity, part celebration of the world’s abundance, part excavation of a heart, this is a book that will transport you to unexpected places, a book whose world you will never want to leave.

—Richard Jackson, author of *Out of Place*

