

Geghard

Michael E. Stone

I went to Geghard yesterday.
By the way you can see
Fruit trees and villages and stalls selling jam
and coloured necklaces of walnuts and apricots.

Snow and stone roaring down,
Washed out the road in places,
Volcanic rock and tufa gravel shining with black obsidian flakes
witnessed the volcano's creation, the lava's upward push.
Its power.

I was in Geghard yesterday.
It is as beautiful as ever,
And the frothing, foaming stream swollen with snow melt
carolled its spring song sprinting down from the peaks.

Over the lace stone doorway,
two bulls rearing up
and two birds en face in the spandrels,
Coat-of-arms of dead princes evoke another, former time
when the caves resounded
with chanting and incense.

Bishops and barons,
Smbat and Burtel,
they reached even here,
bulls and eagles, pomp and ceremony,
and cells dot the hills.

Peaks, some snow and the river's cascade
at the foot of the church's hill.
Polychrome fruit lavash, and
round pilgrims' bread hawked.

Stone crosses in the rock above,
strive to vanquish the rocky cliffs,
bring them under faith's yoke,

like our selves our bodies.

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