

This I believe:

Taos is a tone, a lesson, a way of being.
Its song hums in earth, flora,
fauna, mountain, sky.
Its song inhabits the land.

Does the land imagine me,
shape me in its rhythms?
To know who I am:
reflected by the mountain,
chamiso, piñon, el cielo azul.

I am a visitor on this ancient land,
absorbed into the mystery
of the gorge that splits
the valley in half.

Its mythical beings lodge in my heart:
the pulse of the Rio Grande,
the clarity of the sky
the ancient presence.

The song of this place nurtures me,
changes me, humbles me.

I believe:

El monte sagrado called to me,
pulled me to itself.
to make my home here.

I believe that...

When I look back at the places I've lived over the past 70 years—California, Oregon and New Mexico—each place has had its own underlying tone, revealing itself in the form of a lesson, a way of being in the world, that I needed very much to learn.

As Sharon Blackie writes in *Mythic Imagination*, “There are various instruments that play their part in fashioning the song of each place: geology, flora, fauna, weather, the skyscape, topography, folkloric and mythical beings and motifs, stories told by its human inhabitants ... some bright and upbeat; others, discordant, heavy, but they lodge right in the heart of you anyway.”

I believe...

I'm still learning the song of this place called Taos. The land itself carries a song that drew me to it because it had something to teach me about myself. In the *Enchanted Life*, Blackie writes, “We think that we imagine the land, but perhaps the land imagines us, and in its imaginings it shapes us. The exterior landscape interacts with our interior landscape, and in the resulting entanglements, we become something more than we otherwise could ever hope to be.”

I believe...

Something about Taos drew me and my husband to this land, not to impose my interior landscape on it, but rather to draw me to itself, interacting with my interior landscape, and in that process, changing us both.

Where I am is on ancient pueblo Indian land. I am a visitor. Not all immigrants to this land understand where they are. I try to listen to the tones of this place, to be impacted by its mystery, by the mountain, by the land, by the Gorge that splits the valley in half.

Long time Hispanic residents speak of “querencia,” the love of the land that nurtures and changes us so that we become more than we were when we arrived. Many outsiders make no attempt to adapt to this place, but rather try to make it like something they are familiar with. While I also bring my expectations and privileges to my life in Taos, I also wish to allow the land to change me by “lodging in my heart.”

I believe...

Others who made Taos their home decades ago also felt the pull of the land which shaped them according to the hum of the mountain, the pulse of the Rio Grande, the clarity of the sky and the rich cultural heritage of the indigenous past and the Hispanic presence superimposed over its ancient being.

I believe...

The song of this place works its magic to impact every newcomer like myself to learn to love this land and allow its nature to change us. I am humbled and honored to begin to know where I am living in this magnificent valley.