

1947

Four Poems

Helen Pinkerton

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Recommended Citation

Pinkerton, Helen. "Four Poems." *New Mexico Quarterly* 17, 4 (1947). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmq/vol17/iss4/13>

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FOUR POEMS

GREEN-GROWING BUSH

Green-growing bush, compounded elements,
 The clean excrescence of the earth, the first
 To rift the stony desert face and burst
 The rigid outline with a foliage dense,
 Your latest leaf against my garden fence
 Is older than the silent man you nursed,
 But silent too, with only mortal thirst,—
 Is younger than the man which man invents.

Your budding and fruition do not wait
 For man; you are more sure of pace than he
 Who would of you a verity create,
 A measure of his own inconstancy,
 Take you from silence as a speaking mate
 To share his passage to eternity.

THE SUBJECTIVE ONE

I measure years by days, the days by hours,
 But in the elastic hour of calculation
 I leave immeasurable the instrument.
 In my delineations watches bend,
 The slow distortion of amorphousness,
 And now the bullet's flight may be the moth's
 When simultaneously I ride with both.
 No frozen age, no night perpetual
 On Georgian steppes and canyons of the west
 When a dead moon reflects a dying sun,
 Turning to the unheard refrains of time,
 Is longer, darker than the eyelid's rest
 The veil of flesh before oblivion.

I DID NOT SEE YOU

I did not see you even when I went
From the long afternoon's forgetfulness
Into a night of knowing the distress
Of questioning your presence and intent.
If you I look for when my discontent
Is more than tentative unhappiness
Are not the mere reply of mind in stress
Be with me casual and concomitant,
As gentle breathing in a midnight sleep
When no one bids the breast to rise and fall.
Be as a quiet fire of which I keep
The welling warmth in blood the veins recall
When love, released from too much freedom, tries
The film of cold on hands and lips and eyes.

SUNLIGHT

In touching gently like a golden finger,
The sunlight falling from the spaces dimmer
Upon the curling fruit leaves fills with hunger
The mind for meaning in the limpid summer.

Dispersed by myriad surfaces in falling,
Drawn into green and into air dissolving,
Light is not caught by sudden sight or feeling.
Remembered it gives rise to one's believing:

Its truth resides in constant speed descending;
The momentary beauty is attendant;
A flicker of the animate responding
Shifts in the mind with time and fades, inconstant.

HELEN PINKERTON