

A sombrero of pistols & Brenda's reliquary

By

Robert Rinehart

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... Here's a pair of splendid poems by Robert Rinehart, admirably venerating Pablo Neruda and Carl Sandberg. In 'A sombrero of pistols' (making you guess which who this is), "Neftali ...carnation-festooned ...diffused the arms-hunger / by passing around a hat." "Neftali, aka Neruda, / spoke firmly that day, & Samuel / Colt turned in his grave. Charisma." In one kiss, you'll know all I haven't said. Now on to Galesberg [sic], Illinois and 'Brenda's reliquary' "Make me a simple stack-framed house, / white clapboard sparse & direct. / Assume my complexity at your risk." I don't know where I'm going, but I'm on my way. "Your relics recollect the good times." "That statuary glares / in the steamy afternoon." It is so good to have Mister Rinehart have drawn Sandberg out from under his rock. If Billy Joe Shaver had got a hold of this ballads, he might have had one more hit. (Spacing is poet's own).
HS*

A sombrero of pistols

Neftali, in a fit fear for his life,
amid the waters of Lake
Xochimilco, carnation-festooned
—every sort & colour—
diffused the arms-hunger
by passing around a hat.

Poets, like soldiers, present

as leaders, speak firmly,
righteously. Neftali, aka Neruda,
spoke firmly that day, & Samuel
Colt turned in his grave. Charisma.

With sensible men, men who listen
to reason, men who have thought of life
& death, "open carry"
is simply a slogan.

The fear

that drenches their loins,
wet
seeping into eyes trousers
& souls, eyes that have seen war,
wized eyes whose flesh-lust,
tempered by the vision
a childhood friend's brains
scattered like so many
gelid wheat grains on the wind:

those men can be trusted
to do
the right thing.

Brenda's reliquary

in Galesberg, Illinois
for Carl Sandberg

Make me a simple stack-framed house,
white clapboard sparse & direct.

Assume my complexity at your risk.

Take me back to green trees, to picket
fences, green gables, rockers on the porch,
neighbors, & barbeque Saturdays.

Your relics recollect the *good times*.

Momentary lapses vanish, sanded
away, the raised nap forgotten.

Whitewash plain as the nose
spread across your Swedish face: honest
for none of these complex situations—though.

Collective memory tempts us to reminisce. Where,

for instance, lives the heated
silence, the damping that reconfigures
your stubborn will. Where is the knotty
affair, Brenda's skin, braids, juice? Now long
forgotten? Sanded away,
gnarly roughness, the knuckles gone
bad, once brave & strong. Where has joy
replaced pain, weeds choked
out by the colored tulips gaily
parading outside your museum-house.

That statuary glares
in the steamy afternoon.

Oh: but where oh
where rests the memory
of hands held, your great love glossed
& secret, the glance, a touch: where
lives your past, your real, inner past?

THE POET SPEAKS: *As I sit in relative safety in a surfing town on the west coast of Aotearoa New Zealand, a dual citizen, I see US Second-Amendment debates creeping in to public rhetoric. "Open carry" has not been suggested, but really, such a crazed concept likely will excite some citizens. The apprehension of that possibility combined with the gentleness of Neruda brought forth Sobrero. Brenda wondered why Sandberg and Brenda Ueland's fervent love affair is so secretive.*

AUTHOR BIO: I live in New Zealand, a transplant from California for 14 years. I've published in *Chelsea*, *Sonoma Mandala*, *Mayhem*, *Negative Capability*, *Midway Review*, among others.

