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Back Cover: Pompilio's Garden

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Photo by Carl Hiebert, PWS&D

A close-up photograph of a person's feet on rich, reddish-brown soil. The person is wearing dark, possibly black, boots. A wooden handle of a spade is visible on the left side of the frame, resting on the ground. The soil is uneven and appears to be a garden or a field. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

Pompilio's Garden

Pompilio's face is leather bronzed
and creased so deeply
his eyes fold in when he grins —
his brown picket teeth lean out
from his lips in a wince.

In the sharp sun, he leans on his weary spade.

The topsoil now under his grimy soles —
once yards up the hillside —
is what's left of his stone-jumbled garden,
washed down the mountainside again
by the same hurricane gale
that embedded the last thatch straw from his roof
into this palmtree bark.

His foot is cut by a shard from
his own earthen wedding jug,
pitched against the corrugated tin tangle.

Like a mule he will pack the topsoil
back up the hillside by next season;
like a gnarled stump, he'll curl
fingers into muck, root for moisture,
stand bent but sturdy in the wind,
sigh, pray on this incline
to sustain his family
on rock, onions and beans.

— *Katie Marshall Flaherty*