

ROGER NASH

## ON THE RIVER AMAZON

A narrow river, still close to its source,  
grabs glacier-melt ambitiously.  
Waves jostle one another on the spur  
of each moment, like dancers' legs  
in mud-brown trousers of the giddiest foam.  
At my elbow, ants process down a tree  
monastically, never distracted from their immediate  
commandment: carry jigsaws of leaf-cut  
sky to the ground. At noon, the river  
blazes like papa's money jar  
broken open: red-bellied  
piranhas click in the scattered currents,  
newly coined, shedding scales  
of copper and bronze. Here and now,  
it's the "Urubamba," small headwater;  
a continent away, the world's largest  
river, roaring "Amazon" at the sea.  
How to get from here to there?  
A melody sways from pan-pipe to flute;  
a condor, from terrace to terrace up the mountains,  
amongst maize wearing sandals of gold;  
this hour, day, life, to the next,  
past scattered villages on washed-out banks.  
The pollen of strange alphabets spreads  
on brightly feathered poems that sing  
each to their own kind. No one  
shared tongue to talk us to that distant  
future. The condor passes silently again.