

on my last leg west. Imagine what I foresee—a jungle so wide that every place is its center, so dayless and dreamless that its moments all congeal into a perpetual present. I know that when I first enter it, I will be in agony, even I, surely among the best prepared of all men, for in that silence of silences my heart will thunder, and my bowels will rumble and quake. But I will lie down. I will replicate that silence.

So all you will ever have of me are these papers. Perhaps some few of you—old men on the verge of sleep, young men in the sweetness of their first dreams—will read them and understand. If so, I welcome you in these twilight hours, journeying in your imagination from the hiving city, passing under the high horn of the goatherd's mountain, walking the grassland and the lake shore, crossing the chapel clearing under the suspirous trees, and entering at last the slowly welling silence of the jungle.

POETRY / SIMPSON, PLUMLY, WRIGHT, EDSON,
STRIPLING, MORGAN

Peter / Louis Simpson

1

At the end of the lane a van moving slowly . . .
a single tree like a palm rising above the rest . . .
so this is all there is to it,
your long-sought happiness.

2

On winter nights when the moon
hung still behind some scaffolding
you thought, "Like a bird in a cage."
You were always making comparisons . . .
"finding similitudes in dissimilars,"
says Aristotle. A form of insanity . . .
Nothing is ever what it appears to be,
but always like something else.

3

One has been flung down with its roots in the air.
Another tilts at an angle.
One has lost a limb in the storm
and stands with a white wound.
And one, covered with vines,
every May puts out a mass of flowers.

4

Poetry, says Baudelaire, is melancholy:
the more we desire, the more we shall have to grieve.
Devour a corpse with your eyes; art consists
in the cultivation of pain.
Stupidity reassures you; you do not belong
in a bourgeois establishment, it can never be your home.
Restlessness is a sign of intelligence;
revulsion, the flight of a soul.

The Tree / Stanley Plumly

It looked like oak, white oak, oak of the oceans,
oak of the Lord, live oak, oak if a boy could choose.
The names, like ganglia, were the leaves, flesh

of our fathers. So Sundays I would stand
on a chair and trace, as on a county map,
back to the beginnings of cousins,

nomenclature. This branch, this root . . .
I could feel the weight of my body take hold,
toe in. I could see the same shape in my hand.

And if from the floor it looked like a cauliflower,
dried, dusted, pieced back together, paper—
my bad eyes awed by the detailed dead and named—

it was the stalk of the spine as it culminates at the brain,
a drawing I had seen in a book about the body, each leaf
inlaid until the man's whole back, root and stem, was veins.