

The path of Mount Carmel the perfect spirit nothing nothing nothing
nothing nothing nothing and even on the Mount nothing
—From the sketch of Mount Carmel
by St. John of the Cross

Compared to the purity of St. John's abnegation even Eliot, even the
Gita are a little noisy:

Descend lower, descend only
Into the world of perpetual solitude,
World not world, but that which is not world . . .

“Burnt Norton”

In the dark night of all beings awakes to Light the tranquil man. But
what is day to other beings is night for the sage who sees.

Bhagavad Gita 2

Ascent or descent, these are equal metaphors and do not occupy the
hero of the void, the eremite—the true eremite, of course, living in the
maw of night, not the romantic version who keeps a mossy stump and
shrives the agonized voyager. What occupies the true eremite is the
perpetual paradox that for our good he must raise a paean to nothing-
ness, sing the *via negativa*, but without words, with only melodious
silence.

White Monkey Man

Once I thought that these trees which you have just passed beneath
would be my final friends—my lollop-leafed old dowager pricking up
to the gossip of the rain, my deft mason with fronds that trowel in the
breeze bright mortar of the sinking sun, and dozens of others—hunky
matrons whelmed with gorgeous parasites, agonists enfolded in vinous
serpents, thin-boled saints sweet with bird song. Until very recently, in
fact, their limbs could still tempt me toward a brotherly embrace.

But to begin more plainly. I was an American. I came on a large ship
through that tormented canal where guns glisten and planes roar in-
cessantly. I found in the city far east of here a handsome esplanade with
thatch shops and smiling black shopkeepers. I bought wooden heads with

brass earrings and distended lips. I bought zebra shields, spears, hairy amulets, and God knows what all. Thus laden, I stepped into the exclusive S..... Club, where ceiling fans turned slowly without disturbing the images in glistening teak, where billiard balls labored exorbitantly across the felt and their clatter rose like the subaqueous echoes of jostled bones. I sat at the bar. I spread like a rank polyp, my souvenirs, my new khaki twills, my hapless speech, my wealth, my miseducation, my swagger. The membership of that arrested life could not bear it. There were words, challenges, a scuffle. I remember that at the end there rose from the pile of souvenirs at my feet in the foregarden sheets of the *London Times* into the evening breeze, swaying and plunging like storm-tossed gulls. I lost everything. I could not return to the ship. I walked toward the center of Africa.

My blessed intermediary between that club and this chapel was a goatherd. I walked almost to his face in the sundazzle of noon before he saw me, and yet his eyes were keen. Let me explain. This black man had never learned discrimination. The sky was a blue goat with a golden roving eye. The mountain was a dark goat with a white horn. Before him spread the hairy flanks of the great green goat. The staling of the sky goat forever puzzled him—its clarity, its deliciousness, which he supped from his palms with the greatest curiosity. And there was, of course, his own herd from which he took milk and meat and skins. It was for him a single being. He knew nothing of number, though some mornings he would arise delighted to discover its body slightly larger, its voice enriched by a new bleat. There was for him, therefore, only goat and self.

What was I then, that day at noon, lunging across the great green goat with blistered eyes and swollen tongue? What he must have seen first were the festoons of rags, paler than the vines and mosses of the forest. I fell on my knees before him. He raced about his hut like a mad man. I did not move. He dashed at me and retreated. I did not move. He made a small hole in my thigh with his stave. He tasted the blood gingerly. He kneaded my head and limbs. He inspected my genitals. He became calm. I was him, or part of him, or a shadow more palpable and persistent than all others. He put milk and meat in my mouth. He put skins on my body. With a stone blade he whittled me a stave.

For a long while I thought I would make with the goatherd the last motion of my days. Rejected by the clubmen, denuded by the whispering forests during my westward trek, self-abased at the feet of a black, I a white man from the world's greatest nation learned to ape a mute and thus earned the boon of wordless harmony. Or so I thought in my ignorant posturing, little noting that I had fashioned the very idea of this profound peace from words. And yet all things around me seemed to

concede. Every morning came still, every noon sun-drenched, every afternoon full of breeze and bent grass and the patter of rain. Every night the stench of the black man's hut flared my nostrils and enfolded me, a mother ranker and riper than the deepest dream. Imagine a boat at anchor on a sea of a world that has just ceased to turn—the time of the last flutter of breeze, the last undulance of shadow upon the water, the last creaking and wearing, the threshold of the ultimate silence.

Then one night we were sitting by our fire turning on whittled skewers tender gobbets of little goat. The smoke rose up through the low dome of firelight to sweeten the moonless sky. And I drifted off. My gourd of milk sat beside me untouched. My skewer, forgotten, dipped into the fire and the fat flared. I tipped it up, and blew the flame away. But my goatherd began to watch me. Remember, I was only his shadow—on the slopes less agile, at a nanny's udder less dexterous, but always docile and faithful in my limitations. This fatal night, though, my goatherd began to watch me closely. He chewed, and watched me. I chewed, and watched him, made the same rolling mastication, stripped the charred meat from the skewer with the same acute hooking of the fingers—faithful mirror. But it was too late to repair the broken image. When he finished eating, he came to me. He twisted his finger in my ear, and then in his own, in my nostrils, and in his own, traced the curving blade of my teeth almost with fear, and then his own. Downward he proceeded with the greatest deliberation even to our toes, mine blunt, his almost prehensile and furnished with nails as sharp as scimitars. My heart sank. His eyes widened and brightened horribly. "Mmum?" he said. "Mmum, mmum, mmum." I was other. I was named. And the fatal word fever was upon him. I put my hand firmly over his mouth, but he nipped my palm with his teeth. He laughed and in his laughter found another word. "Hrar, hrar, hrar." And I saw all the horror to come—rolling glottis, darting tongue, frictive teeth, heaving chest. I coiled, repulsed, and when he touched me again, I sprang at him and struck him down. I heaped words upon him while he lay frozen in fear and fascination. "This is hair," I said, tore a handful from his head, and threw it in his face. "Ear!" I pulled his lobe until he yowled. "Eye, nose, mouth, throat, chest, belly." I poked and buffeted him mercilessly, but he did not move. I wept and roared. "At least no abstractions, my friend! Words of the flesh only. Hip and thigh, butt and penis. And for that, myriads. Rod, roger, dodger, pricker, pecker, peter!" I stripped the skins from his body and pounded and kneaded the words into his flesh. "Now," I shouted in his face, "I name you Amon. You are worded, sentenced, doomed." He groveled before me by the fire, babbling. I kicked him and strode off. When he pursued me gabbling piteously I turned and flung him down and ran off into the night.

A long diet of berries and tubers will produce blood lust in a man. The eye quickens to every animal movement, the body leans, the fingers flex, the mouth remembers the savor of flesh. So, after months crossing the great grasslands and skirting the shore of a wide lake, I entered this secon forest with ravening entrails and the same day burst upon this clearing at the hush of dusk. At my approach the monkeys deserted the chapel in a rush, streaming from the windows, whispering and chittering. They seemed scarcely to touch the ground in the clearing before swinging up into the trees. The sound of them slid quickly into the murmurs of the evening breeze. Were they watching me? I opened the door. I walked straight up the aisle, stepped over the rail and stopped before the altar. There was the key still in the door of the tabernacle amid fragments of a golden painting, irradiations, no doubt, from a glowing chalice. What did I expect as I turned the key? A paten of fleshly wafers, a flagon of blood? I'll tell you what I found. The skeleton of an infant monkey crouched there, skull toward the door, waiting for the father who never came with remission from that airless dark. Then it collapsed. The little bones tumbled down into a heap and the skull rolled onto the altar, onto the shreds of a fair linen that might have been the cerements of a desert king. A puff of acrid dust flew up. I grew faint. The clatter of dry bones against my hunger was too much for me. I fell to the floor.

The first thing I noticed when I awoke was that my bowels were quiet, and have been ever since, though the air here is filled with a species of little wren-like birds. I could snare any number of them. I arose that time in the gray of dawn. A sly scampering at the windows marked the departure of the monkey spies. And then how many days it was before we reached accord. How many hours I sat motionless to prove my harmlessness, how often walked about the clearing with arms outstretched to show my brotherliness, how often buried my head and wept in destitution.

One morning a banana struck my shoulder, a bruised and blackened one, but I pretended that it was my day's only sustenance. I howled with joy, I crammed the fruit into my mouth wildly until the pulp sluiced from my lips. This antic behavior was mistaken. I soon learned the essential quietness of my monkeys—their eyes like cat's eyes, easily closed to the illusions of the world. I would find them swaying somnolently on a limb, one arm grasping a branch above with precarious carelessness. Or I would find them grooming each other abstractly, the search for fleas and lice done, but the fingers still moving through the hair caressingly. While I was among them I often fell asleep under the gentle tingle of my groomer's nails. In fact, for a time I was certain that I would pass away entirely into the quiet shade of Old World monkeydom. But it turned out that my initiator and mentor was also the agent of my rejection.

I mean the great old grandfather almost four feet tall, grizzled and bearded, who after all my piteous and antic overtures came at last into the chapel and delicately touched my lips. I thought: the world that passes through such softly padded fingers must be suave beyond the subtlest eroticism. The old one stood beside me and with an arm longer than mine waved gently. Hundreds then swept in over the window sills swiftly and silently. But I will tell you how far my heart was from understanding. I expected some kind of preternatural mimicry—that one would mount the pulpit, another stand with arms extended beneath the cross, another dispense bananas, others crouch in the pews fingering the decaying prayer books, and so on. Nothing of the sort. Mothers suckled their babies on the altar rail. The young played above in the exposed ceiling joists. The elders sat meditatively in the aisle or glided slowly across the tops of the pews. I stayed beside my Nestor, whose slowly reeving eyes taught mine to see the meaning. The chapel was a tree again, the severed members, pierced by nails, made whole again by the healing glissandos of our brothers and sisters. Thus passed a whirring time at the end of which so surely tree became the chapel and so surely monkey I that when the old one led me out amid the gay-solemn procession of our hundreds across the clearing and to their favorite emyatta—marvelous old blossomer with a quarter of the western sky in his arms—the trunk fit my feet more naturally than had the hewn altar steps.

In a forking of limbs I wove my bower of jungle reeds. All went well. From my half-closed eyes every color fled except the lingering yellow of the bananas, the verdance of certain tart leaves I chewed, and the copper flesh of the giant beetles my monkeys cracked for me. The wind and the rain kept decent silence beyond my canopy of leaves. The sky withdrew—day and night an eyeblink, and the year with its piddling wheel of heavenly bodies seasonless. All around crouched my brothers and sisters like dark angelic sentinels, my old one always at the foot of my bower. And so a second time I thought in my ignorance that the motion of my days had ceased. Had I not found at last the peace that passeth all understanding?

Well, pride propelled me from the monkey world. One night a pretty sleekcoated monkey girl slid down the moonless dark of our emyatta and into my bower—gently, not a trace of yahooish lust. What brought her to me? Certainly not the temptation of a pale, tailless, and almost hairless body, nor the prospect of being caressed by unpadded fingers. She was not heated. Perhaps I had groaned in my sleep or made other signs of deprivation, and my old mentor had sent her to me. If so, it certainly would not have been for sex—I see that now—but only for comfort, for animal warmth. Yet when I awoke in her embrace, the first thing I not-

iced was that he was gone from his accustomed place at the foot of my bower. And for a time I did not easily forgive him that, because if he had been there, I would not have acted as I did. I would have lifted her gently and set her on a limb outside my bower. Or at most I would have untwined her arms, given her a mild spank, and sent her scampering away. But in his absence I panicked. All my peace seemed undermined by the presence of this little animal, because none had entered my bower before. So, you see, I had unconsciously held aloof from them. And in that fatal moment my secret denial of my sisters and brothers was revealed and judged. Starting from sleep, I heaved the monkey girl off me and flung her down a limbless space, against the hairy trunk of the tree, where she scrambled screaming until at last she caught hold and saved herself from death by falling. "Get out!" I shouted. The words rent the air like an angry thunderbolt. A moment of profound silence followed, then a great chittering and rustling went up around me. The monkeys fled, never to return. The last to go was my old one. Perhaps he had been near me all the while, watching. His soft eyes saddened as he hoisted himself up mournfully and disappeared into the night.

Of course I called after them. "Come back! Come back!" and when the last sound of their passage through distant leaves died away I wept bitterly, wept myself to sleep. But when I awoke in the great empty emyatta, I resolved—careful, however, not to exonerate myself falsely—that human and animal companionship were not for me. Inevitably they involved distracting entanglements. So, as I said, I became a lover of trees. At first I personified them, peopling the forest around the clearing with many characters comic and heroic. But these personages obviously were merely the pitiable imaginings of a creature unable to conceal from himself his own loneliness. In time, I grew quieter and wiser. Instead of insisting on making them members of my kind, I sued for admission to theirs. I learned to enter like light the veins of the leaf, learned to course down the limbs and into the thick bole. And I even began to make out dimly the web of dark roots curling around the gently beating heat, before my descent was interrupted.

One day I was squatting under my emyatta in deep meditation, all my weight centered low on my haunches. Slowly my toes began to curl down. The hair of my testicles seemed not to hang but to burst up through the dust like tiny seedlings. I experienced the fullest prefiguration of tree-ness I was ever to have: my arms reached up, my feet and fundament rooted.

Then a disturbance struck my ear. I opened my eyes reluctantly and looked up. There stood a frizzle-headed tribesman of the Willumpa, who live on the grassy plains to the east. He was making a placatory murmur,

eyes wide. I rose up, half conscious, aware only that I must escape that stupified gaze, leaped by old custom and practice onto the trunk of the emyatta and scaled it in a trice, leaving my admirer below aghast.

Discovered, I stayed hidden in my bower, descended stealthily in the dark to gather bananas, leaves, and beetles. But late every afternoon the little birds grew quiet, so I knew the Willumpa were lurking about. And soon they ventured out into the clearing, built fires, beat drums, chanted my name. "Ballala! Ballalal!"—white monkey man. So I was a god—a god withdrawn, until one night my worshippers performed the ceremony of my incarnation. Then I appeared. Who can bear to watch one's self mumbled like fly-blown flesh in the mouth of ancient religion? Here is how it was.

My devotees built a fire much larger than ever before, and chanted my name incessantly. Several of the younger men extended the call to mimicry, wearing ragged pieces of white skins and furs, mounting on their heads animal ears. They danced about, chittered monkey-like, and practiced a desultory wantonness, grooming and titillating each other. The tempo of the drums increased. The cries of *Ballala, Ballala* rose to a kind of plaintive keening. The dancing mimics lifted their arms to the skies. Then suddenly a herald came running into their midst, sweating and breathing hoarsely. "Baba ai ja! Baba ai ja!" He comes! And after a period of stillness and silence, he did come, Ballala, into the circle of fire-light, god of snowy splendor. Behind a painted pallor his face passed through disdain, lust, blasphemous egomania. This, I thought, is the primal albino whose uncontrolled passions drive dark men to devotion. His arms, lengthened by subtle appurtenances, were in the awesomeness of their arc the very emblem of insatiable craving. He also had an immense tail, and control of it. Not by any arrangement of strapping and bondage, but by thrusting it deep into his bowels. His legs were hairy springs, his feet prehensile.

Drummers, chanters, mimics, all made low obeisance, but he paid them little mind. Instead, with a grand sweep of his arm, he motioned out of the shadow of the chapel door a figure that joined him in the fire-light, his divine mate, as unlovely a creature as I have ever seen—black from the waist up, white from the waist down, human above, monkey below. It was also hermaphroditic. The genitalia were male, but rough breasts as of papier mâché had been strapped above. The two divinities stood together for a time, monkey man and paramour. The chanters and drummers bowed. The mimics joined hands and formed around them a swaying circle. The monkey man towered above all, casting a long shadow which crossed the clearing and reached even to the chapel wall.

Then began an erotic pursuit. The motley spouse broke from the circle

of mimics and minced coyly about the fire while Ballala made hot and hornéd pursuit—all to the great delight of the Willumpa tribesmen, who chanted moonily while the drummers beat a rhythm that rose and fell like the palpitations of a love-stricken heart. That was enough for me. Perhaps until that moment I had harbored unconsciously some blasphemous dream of true apotheosis, after which I would create a cult, teach the Willumpa the meaning of shade and silence—who knows? But their worship sickened me. I grasped a hairy vine my monkeys used to swing on, pushed off from the trunk, and began a long arcing descent through the deep shadow of the emyatta. Ballala never saw me, though a tribesman, spying me as I first swept with tremendous velocity into the firelight, shouted a warning. I struck the false god with my heels in the very center of his belly. The force of the blow sent him wheeling through the fire, scattering burning wood and live coals in every direction. The hairy extensions of his arms flew out into the dark. His silvery pelt fell among the flames, hissed, and made a black smoke. His tail, torn loose, lay near him not far from the fire. Blood spurted from his anus. I knew from the pain in my feet that I had burst his belly like an overripe melon. So much for self-appointed gods.

On my return swing, down over the dark chapel roof, I hoped to catch Ballala's hermaphroditic partner in blasphemy. But he and all the rest had fled in terror, streaming out through the woods toward the grassy plain and leaving the slain god behind—at least for the moment. "Go!" I shouted after them. "Go! Go! Go! Don't come back!"

I climbed the rope back to my bower. In the welcome silence that returned in the wake of the fleeing Willumpa I slept, though during the night my legs stiffened from heel to hip. Early the next morning several fearful tribesmen crept into the clearing and, making to the trees fearful obeisance, took away Ballala's corpse. Bury him, I thought, but he will not come up. And I also thought that it was time for me to leave, take my stiff legs into the jungle, give up clearing, chapel, trees, all—old scraps of a personal history that veiled my final goal. But something held me back, something in the air, something in the tenuousness of the songs of the little birds. It told me that I was not quite finished there.

I resumed my daily routines until one morning I awoke to find my previous day's feces removed from the bushy covert behind the chapel where I always carefully concealed it. The next day, hiding again in my bower, I caught a glimpse of light fabric in the trees. And the morning after that I awoke to something novel indeed—in the center of the clearing a woman in khaki shirt and pants just finishing, with the help of a Willumpa tribesman, a small pyramid of stones. She topped it with a white flag on a stick, and then the two of them left the clearing. From my

high and steeply angled vantage I could observe little more than she had yellow hair and seemed of medium stature. A lady anthropologist, I thought, from the blond north, come to unravel the dark mystery of Ballala.

At midnight I descended to the clearing, opened the stone pyramid, and plucked out the message I was sure was there. By the light of the half moon I read: "I am desiring to speak with you. If you come by the kirk and make a loud sound, I will come also." Then I knew what I wanted. I sharpened a stick with my teeth and punctured one of the purple berries that hang in profusion from the stooping old tree behind the chapel. On the back of the lady's note I scratched: "Bring pen, paper, ink." The liquid dried slowly, fragrant and velveteen, as though the words had always been lurking in the fruit. So I would leave a parable in writing, of one who learned to go beyond flesh and words. I hid my message in the pyramid and watched from my bower. Before dawn she took it away and brought the things I had asked for. A second note was attached. "I am desiring much to speak with you." But I did not think about that. I began to write the story which you now have in your hand. By the next night I was done, and slept deeply. About midnight, however, I awoke to the sound of the lady singing softly in the chapel. "Come to me, thou. Come to me." I rolled my papers up, tied them with a vine, and descended. The half moon was low in the sky and the chapel therefore dark, but still I could see the faint glow of her whiteness. She was sitting on the altar step. "You have come," she said. Then all was silent again, the little birds asleep in their nesting places.

I walked forward several paces, and she stood. I stopped, because she was naked. "I am naked," she said, "to be like you. We can speak one and one, like."

I stepped forward and offered her the scroll. The smell of her, at once musky and soapy, flared my nostrils. Desire and repulsion contended in my bowels.

"In this night I cannot read. Tell me what you write."

But I did not speak. I had resolved that the last word of my manuscript was the last word of my life. Remember the words in the club and my answers to the pitiable gabble of the goatherd. And twice since, remember, I had fallen among the trammels of speech, cursing the innocent monkey girl and the foolish Willumpa. The lady would have to understand that there must be only silence between us—except for the manuscript, which I offered again, but still she did not take it. "Tell me slow, you write your life of the dark of Africa?" I did not answer. "It is not too difficult thing for me if you cannot speak with me now. I tell you what we do, because you know more than what is on the pages." She

paused. She leaned forward and searched my face. Her breath filled my nostrils, stirring in me again the pull between attraction and repulsion, and piquing me to look more closely. She was perhaps 40. She had slightly protruding ears that held her light hair neatly back from her wide temples and forehead. Her eyes were pale even in that darkness, probably extraordinarily light blue or gray. Her nose was narrow and wingless, her mouth small, her chin sharp—a German or a Scandinavian as I had suspected. But if she was an anthropologist then she was one with a special, perhaps mystic, dedication—to come naked to a rendezvous with the violent white monkey man. But actually at that moment I was not thinking of that. I was thinking of the whole world of persons I had left behind, the millions of shining faces, each one individualized so that I could pick this one out from a sea of others. I stepped back from her.

She said, "You can not escape man. We are your species, not the monkeys."

I wanted to tell her that, despite the error of the foolish Willumpa, I had not been a monkey for some time. More recently I had been a tree, but in the future I would not be that either. I would be a thing that rose and fell imperceptibly on the slow breathing breast of the jungle. All of which I had tried to write down, so I offered her the scroll again, but she did not even lift her hand. Instead, she said, "This is what we have to do. We have to return . . ." I must have started, because she smiled and said, "We will not put iron on you like the old wild man of Borneo. You will speak and teach to ones that can understand these things." A vision of that came with sudden vividness to my mind's eye like a painting. I was sitting in some kind of amphitheater or academic hall crowded with listeners. And I alone was not in modern dress, but wore a white robe. And even that folded about me with a temporary look, because I was naked man, naked to our primordial essence, the guru of devolution, the one who had made the long descent down the trunk of human, animal, and vegetative, who after this brief appearance among the civilized would return to the jungle, to the ineffable threshold of total silence, but not without leaving behind in the world words and disciples capable of quieting at least the loudest clamor of man's inconsolable heart.

"You have been at the center of this," she said. "It is great temptation to remain. But you have to come to teach." She held her hands out. "If you desire I will remain with you." She stepped down from the altar. I commanded my body to turn and run. I actually felt the torque in my spine, but I scarcely moved. The fingers of my hand slipped open and the scroll fell to the floor.

What happened then surprised me, surprises me still, because in strict logic, in strict justice, my fall and my ecstasy ought to have unraveled

all my months in the forests and propelled me, laughing cynically at myself, back to civilization. But that is not what happened. As my consciousness began slowly to return, I perceived that I was netted. It was only her limbs and her hair of course, but it seemed to me a white net and her face above me the fleering face of the trapper. I roared and struck out like a wild beast, broke free, slashed her face with my beetle-bronzed nails, and heaved her violently against the alter rail. She cried out and then lay still whimpering, "Do not. Do not thou."

As full consciousness returned to me, I knew she must be thinking that she had encountered some impossible paradox: a feral man who writes. So, although she had tempted me toward the destruction of all I had recently learned, I pitied her. And I thought that violence should not be her last knowledge of me. But at my approach she shuddered and cowered so piteously that I left her as she was. I picked up my scroll, and then the thought came to me that the finished manuscript would take the place of the rejected caress. Perhaps it will, perhaps not.

So I returned once more to my bower.

It is light now as I write these last words. A while ago several Willumpa, led cautiously by a grizzled elder wearing an elaborate necklace of authority, searched the clearing and entered the chapel. Some minutes later they led the lady forth gently. She was clothed again, and able to walk, though somewhat unsteadily, so I had not broken her body. I was glad of that. But at the end of the trail to the grassland she stopped and lifted her face to the trees. I have never seen a look so baleful, so loveless.

And so, whiteman, my story ends. I leave it for you here in the chapel, in the tabernacle. Do not come with theories, nets, and guns, searching secretly ravening for my body, just as I on my first day here craved the wafers of flesh and the flagon of blood. You will not find me in my bower. Your expeditions will not find me in the jungle, I will have passed the far edge of your sight.

Consider, whiteman, that in your world, which I came from, there is a great multitude of objects, and also mirrors—polished teak and words—to multiply this multitude. Fortunately all my objects were stricken from my hands and lay on the garden floor that fateful day. Then, as you have read, there was a world of goat, which is an insufficient reduction. Next there was a beauteous monkey world of fruited light and shadow, but it was corrupted by human fears and desires—my own and those of the cult of Ballala—and is therefore an insufficient reduction. There was also the populous world of personable trees, but that was mere animism, and is therefore an insufficient reduction. Nor is even the descent to the heart root of the vegetative world sufficient reduction. I leave today

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.