

I searched systematically until I found them under the banyan tree by the swan lake. But it was nothing so neat as a mensur scar that the image in the placid water revealed. It was a deep-rooted cicatrix joining mouth and eye, emblem of morbid empathy. She leaned upon his shoulder so that the black of her hair seemed to touch the scar like the soothing shadow of a velvet drug. Then a swan disturbed the image, slowly sailing through the banyan roots. We shared its stately passage. We raised our eyes and acknowledged each other. I called to them. *I am almost sorry to see it end, my friends.* They did not rise to flee. They did not answer, but I knew that fear had not frozen them, and I thought we should exchange farewells. *You have been the very best of all my career.* Still they did not speak. Their silence piqued me. *Did you think it could end otherwise? You the androgynous pit and I the fallen fruit of autumn?* They continued to lean against each other as though they made an inviolable image of unity. That angered me. *Did you think that you would prevail? You the two-headed fate and I the talismanless captain you ate?* They did not move, did not speak. *I have other instructive metaphors for the obstinate—webs, magnets, maelstroms. What will you?* They clung together, serenely speechless. And so I thought, let them die there, unenlightened. I aimed carefully and fired twice. . . .

[Canonization]

So I have killed the sterile and the sowers. I have killed the too kind. I lean against the earth's precession and she turns more evenly down new invagant ways. Yes. Our network of agents has greatly expanded. Our speed and efficiency are vastly improved. Who would have expected this fine bustle of activity to sweeten my advancing age and cap my career? I had often been lonely and cynical. But now my taxonomies of quarry, with only minor revision, are official. My reports are canonical. And even these more personal notes can be released, I am told, quite soon, when opposition to the program of my masters has become negligible.

Void

Senda del Monte Carmelo espíritu de perfección. nada • nada • nada • nada • nada • nada • y aun en el monte nada

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