

Jungle Walks

Mark Penny

The gods of asphalt and pure dirt
Do not disdain each other's tread.
The jungle's feet
Stalk through the city like lost deer
Or bears
Or monkeys.
There's no line
That says this corner is for man,
This for the simians.
Among the trees—
Tall, twisted, stringy, aged trees
And young—
The tea stand,
Razor wire,
The chin-up bar all creep.
Small gardens grow
Deep in the thickets,
Secretly,
Like rough roots seize a wall
Downtown.

There is an island
Called a hill
Lapped by a restless liquid town,
The green of Eden
Long before the Fall,
The green of leaves,
Self-willed,
The darkest green the sun can feed.
To this hill they flee
From offices,
From wheels,
From lists of things
To do,

To buy,
To be.
I flee there, too,
By night at times,
To breathe the darkness of the leaves,
To hark the heartbeat of the stars.
Yes, of the stars.
It shakes the windows like a scream,
A werewolf scream.
I hear it answer in my throat.
I shed the trail,
Claw through the kitchen-curtain veil,
Crawl with the snakes,
Who also scrape their skin
On rocks and jagged moments of the trees,
Climb with the monkeys,
Talk with God,
Who blesses every atom
With itself.
Long-fallen leaves
And bits and pieces of the earth
Slip past my citified veneer.

Then I go home
And wash the jungle off,
Not out.