

**JEFFREY SCHWANER**

**WHILE THERE ARE NO GIBBONS CRYING IN THE TREES OUTSIDE MY HOUSE AS THERE WERE IN ELEVENTH CENTURY CHINA, MEI YAO-CH'EN NEVERTHELESS SHOWS INTEREST IN THE MONKEY-LIKE SONG OF THE PILEATED WOODPECKER CAREENING FROM TREE TO TREE ON MY STREET, AND SINCE HE NEVER WROTE A *SHIH-HUA* OR STATEMENT OF POETICS AS MANY OF HIS SUNG DYNASTY PEERS DID, I ASK HIM WHAT HE THOUGHT ABOUT THE NINE MONKS OF THE LATE T'ANG DYNASTY WHO IT IS SAID WERE UNABLE TO WRITE A POEM WITHOUT THE WORDS *MOUNTAIN, FLOWER, GRASS, SNOW, FROST, STAR, OR MOON* IN IT, AND WAS THAT A GOOD THING OR A BAD THING, AND IN RESPONSE HE WRITES THESE LINES IN VERY SMALL CHARACTERS ON PAGE 219 OF MY COPY OF THE *KAUFMAN FIELD GUIDE TO BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA***

Who can stop the monkeys in the trees from chittering and screaming?  
They will do it anyway, no matter my mood as we drift past the trees

overhanging the river. A thousand years later I hear their echo  
in a great crested bird here—he finally stops his crazy laugh

to pulverize tree bark on his way to pulling out a bug.  
I feel through my brush the vibration.