

1968

The Silent Piano

Louis Simpson

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Recommended Citation

Simpson, Louis. "The Silent Piano." *New Mexico Quarterly* 38, 4 (1968). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmq/vol38/iss4/4>

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LOUIS SIMPSON

THE SILENT PIANO

We have lived like civilized people . . .
O ruins, traditions!

And we have seen the barbarians,
breakers of sculpture and glass.

And now we talk of "the inner life,"
and I ask myself, where is it?

Not here, in these streets and houses, . . .
so I think it must be found

in indolence, pure indolence,
an ocean of darkness . . .

in silence, an arm of the moon,
a hand that enters slowly.

* * *

I am reminded of a story
Camus tells, of a man in prison camp.

He had caryed a piano keyboard
with a nail on a piece of wood.

And sat there playing the piano.
This music was made entirely of silence.

LOUIS SIMPSON

THE PHOTOGRAPHER

A bearded man seated on a camp-stool—
"The geologist. 1910."

"Staying with friends"—a boy in a straw hat,
on a porch, surrounded with wisteria.