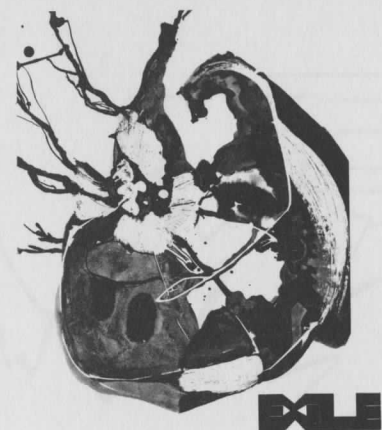




EXE



Take thought:
I have weathered the storm
I have beaten out my exile.
- Ezra Pound



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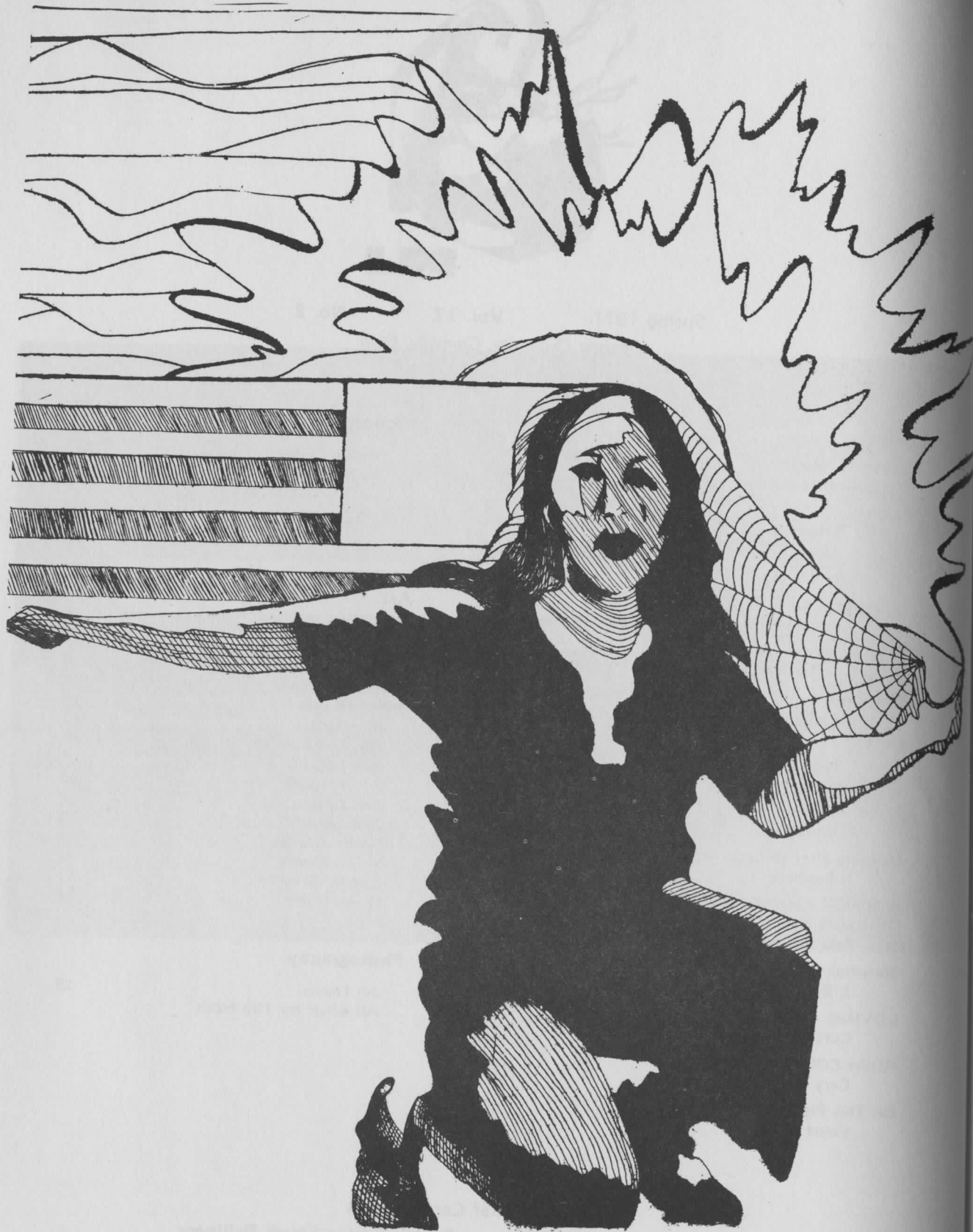
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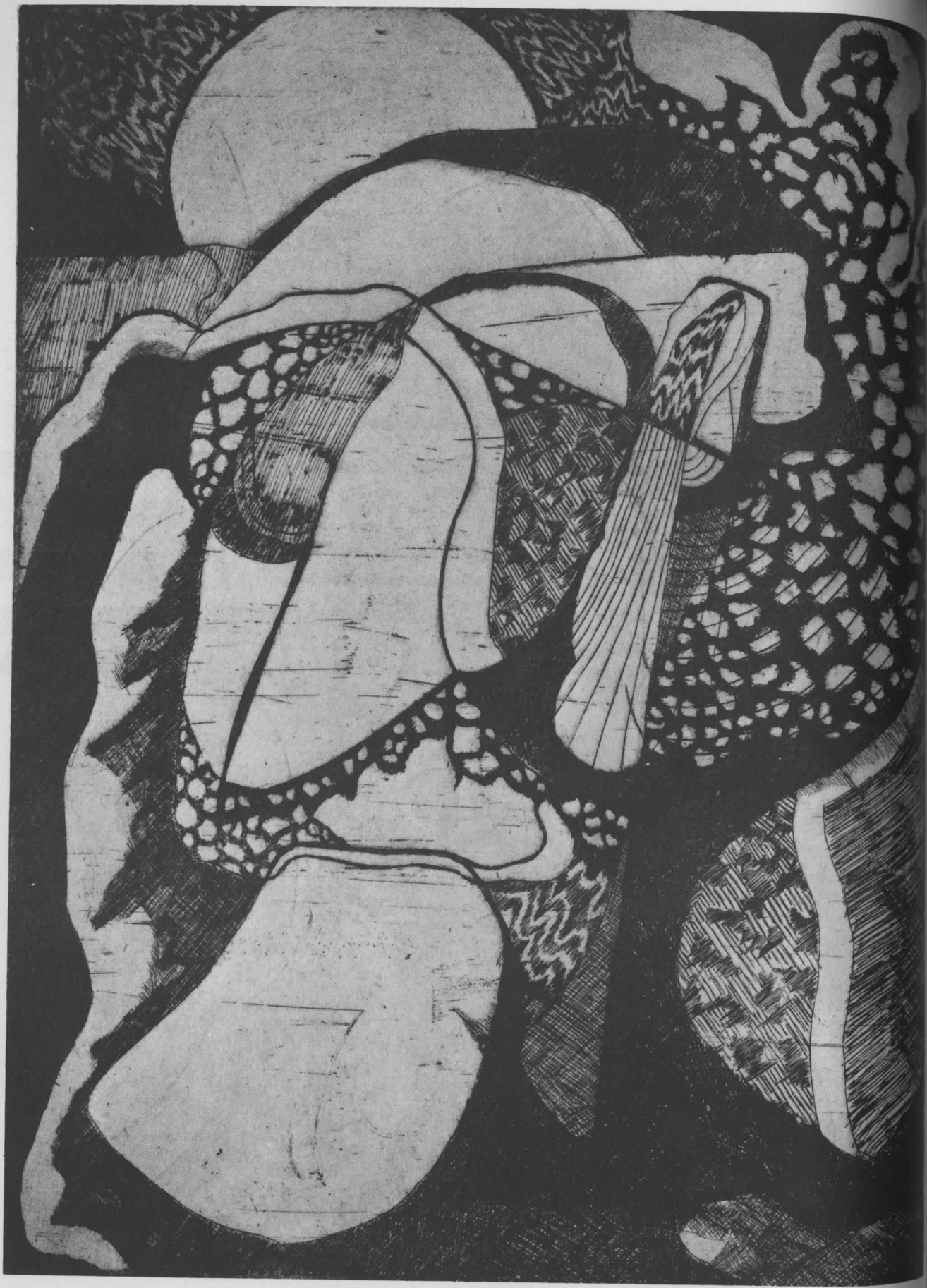
GRAMMAR LESSON

"I am raining" is impossible in French;
English too, he implies,
but I know the truth, and it is
je pleux.

I am raining in my soul; teardrops falling,
washing away the color in me
like dye that hasn't set,
streaking, fading, flowing away
leaving the pale of a brilliant seashell
taken from the water.

And je me pleux,
I rain on myself, alone,
railing against the world,
against myself,
against it all.

- Julie Lockwood



She got up from the chair and poured water on the fern, watching it spill down one of the sides of the bowl.

"I suppose you want to write a novel of manners or something."

The boy remained seated in his chair and smiled at her. He pulled out a pack of cigarettes from the inside breast pocket of his jacket. While he was busy with the lighting, he thought to himself that she was very pretty for a woman of her age and means.

"I knew your father, Charles. I knew him when he was without a job and without much to recommend except his good looks. You look very much like him."

She smiled at him, not catching his eye. The room needed tidying up. There were some partially eaten biscuits on a table next to the bed, on the same table a tea pot with tea that had been in it for several days, and many filled ash trays. She moved easily around the room, casually picking up the most obvious of the full ash trays, emptying the butts and ash in the basket next to the chair in which she had been sitting, and handed one to Charles.

"Your father never smoked."

He looked at her then, pulled his chin toward his chest, and acknowledged this woman's previous gift for private amusement. He looked out the window at the afternoon sun between the buildings and the trees. They were probably quite old. Their leaves seemed to be slightly sooty. Everything around him seemed to have been in its place for a while.

"I haven't seen my father for a few years. I don't seem to need him much anymore."

The courtesan returned to her chair and looked at Charles's hand which was placed casually on the small table between them. Nothing was said for a while. Charles removed his hand, suddenly growing conscious of its casualness and circled it around the rungs of his chair. He looked around the small room. The bed was unmade, the orange sheets went nicely with the blue bedspread, he thought. There was a jar of some kind of ointment on the table next to the bed. She caught him looking at it but continued to sit in her chair. From his seat he could see another room that looked like a kitchen. Perhaps that was the edge of the table there by the door, perhaps the corner of the stove. He imagined that the lighting was poor. Probably just a light bulb hanging from its socket in the middle of the ceiling. He could not imagine his father in a place like this.

The room in which they were sitting was much more suited to the absentmindedness of this woman's occupation. The colors were warm. The brown carpet on the floor, splashed with Oriental throw rugs around the bed, dresser, and middle of the room where they were sitting, made the room seem intimate and secretive. There were flowers and plants everywhere; three ferns, two of which were by the bed, one very large one sitting in a ceramic urn on the floor, several sprays of forsythia arched out of a black bowl set on a pattered piece of teak, some shiny pebbles tossed around its base, and a large, long-leaved plant which stood by the door leading into the other room. Charles did not recognize it. It was not exotic, but a handsome green and white striped plant that seemed a little too abundant in the small room. The lighting was dim, no light being on except for the one on the table next to them. Its shade was a soft orange and it had a brass stand. It looked old, well used, but not shabby.

Her taste ran a little to the medieval. He imagined that

she would probably have a record collection of old church music, chanting and sadly solemn. There was something reminding him about the room, something in the long folds of the drapes over the window, something in the collapse of the sheets.

"I was thinking of the novel I was going to write. It never seemed to get started. I had a good idea --"

"Do you have trouble starting things, Charles?"

He had been looking at her while he spoke, but now he looked down.

"I mean that I have started several things in my life that I never had a chance to finish. I was going to be a ballet dancer when I was younger, but my family could not get enough money collected between us to send me to school. I had three sisters and they all needed money too."

She looked directly, her head slightly bent toward him, and gave an almost imperceptible shrug of her shoulders. Her hands were folded in her lap.

"I don't know. I think I'll stop writing for a while and go to Europe and work. I don't know anyone over there but I speak French pretty well."

"Couldn't your father help you with a job? I had heard some time ago that he's a wealthy man now. A lawyer in New York."

"That's true. Yes, he might be able to help me, but I'd like to do it on my own. I've been looking after myself for quite a while now. I think I'd make a good grammar teacher."

He gave a rueful laugh.

"I don't think people have much use for grammar anymore, Charles."

"Maybe. But in France teaching English means teaching Grammar. I don't know. I don't think I'd enjoy it, but I'd only teach for a little while until I could find something better."

She seldom looked at Charles, but now he bent his back into the chair under her stare. She moved her eyes through his dark hair. It was coarse, and curly at the ends. She remembered a leanness like his, tall, angular, and with an arrogance in his stance. She remembered that a man of his height seldom met people eye - to - eye; to look at something he would turn his entire body, not moving the head, and probably smile. It would not be a warm smile, merely one of convenience. She remembered eyes like Charles's and the intensity of their stare.

"Does your father know you're here?"

"No, of course not. I told you that I seldom see him anymore." He paused. "I wish you would not talk quite so much of him."

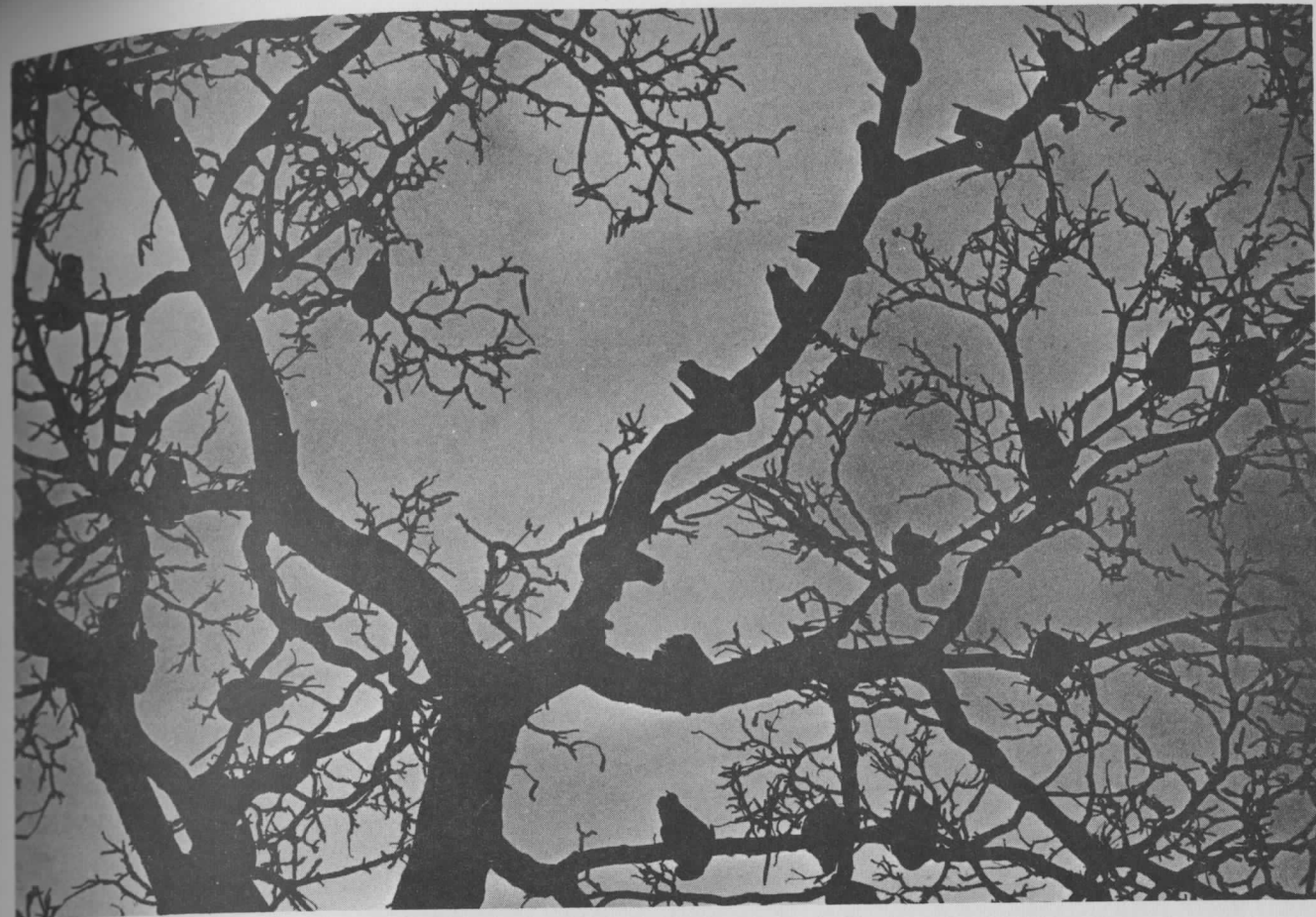
The words were out before he had given heed to this woman. He had not spoken them to her, but to the wall on the other side of the room. He leaned slightly forward and looked at her. She was looking at the table.

Both of them sat across from each other and listened to the quiet of the room. He thought that he would like some tea.

"I came here today because I knew that you had many friends in Europe and I thought you might be able to help me."

She looked up quickly and pushed back the chair with her foot.

"Yes, I do. I used to live over there and I would be glad to give you some names. I don't think these people could help you find a job, that you'll have to do for yourself, but they know about places to live, and would be willing



to give you a room until you found one of your own."

She stood up and walked toward the kitchen.

"I'm going to make us some tea. The afternoon's getting on, and I always like to drink tea at this time."

He stood up with her and walked around the room while she went out into the kitchen. He could hear her putting water in the kettle. She did not speak to him then, but continued getting out another tea pot and the cups. He walked over to the forsythia and looked at the pebbles around the bowl. Picking one up in his hands, he touched it with his tongue. He noticed that there was a small collection of sea shells on a black lacquer tray with a magnifying glass beside them. Holding up the glass to his face, he minutely looked at one of the shells. Its surface was furrowed with tiny lines circling along the width. He had seen a shell like this before, only much larger, at the sea shore one time when he was little. His mother had picked it up from the sand and asked him to hold his ear to the shell's hollow. She told him that he would be able to hear the sea rolling around in there. He thought he recalled her saying that it was a chambered nautilus.

He became conscious of the quiet again. There was no noise in the kitchen. He was not even certain if she were still there. He walked back and forth in the room, placing one foot toe-toe in front of him. There was nothing he particularly wanted to think about, but the silence made him feel as if he should be deciding something. He walked over to the wicker table by her bed and picked up the jar of ointment. He saw upon closer inspection that it was an old apothecary jar partially full with a white lotion with tiny silver specks in it. It was perfume.

There was a ring on the table next to the place where the jar had been.

She came back into the room and placed a tray with two cups, saucers, spoons, cream and sugar, lemon, and the tea pot on the table in front of the two chairs. He had moved away from the bed and stood near the table. She sat and poured the tea, offering him his cup as he took his seat. There was a pad of paper and a pen alongside the tray.

"I'm going to write out a list of names for you. I can't remember the addresses of a few, and others have moved, I'm sure, but I don't think you will have difficulty finding any of them."

"Thank-you. I think that will help alot."

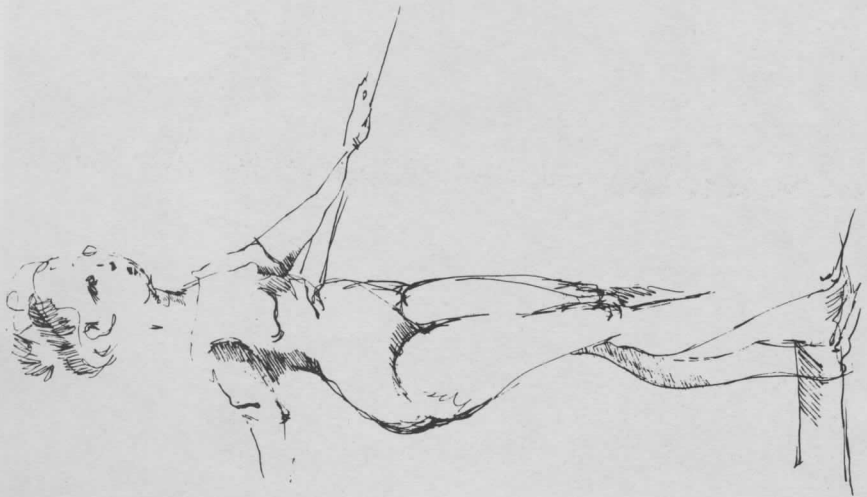
She put the pad on her lap and bending toward it began to make a list of names. Charles looked at the top of her head. Her hair was still quite dark and looked nice with the paleness of her skin. She wore her hair up, a few curls falling toward her chin and toward the nape of her neck, without ornamentation or a consciousness of its effect. She seemed familiar and soft. Aware of his looking at her, she glanced up at him.

"None of these people are in teaching, so I'm not sure if they can help you at all, really. But here is the list and they will not mind if you call on them. They have been old friends of mine and will be glad to help you out."

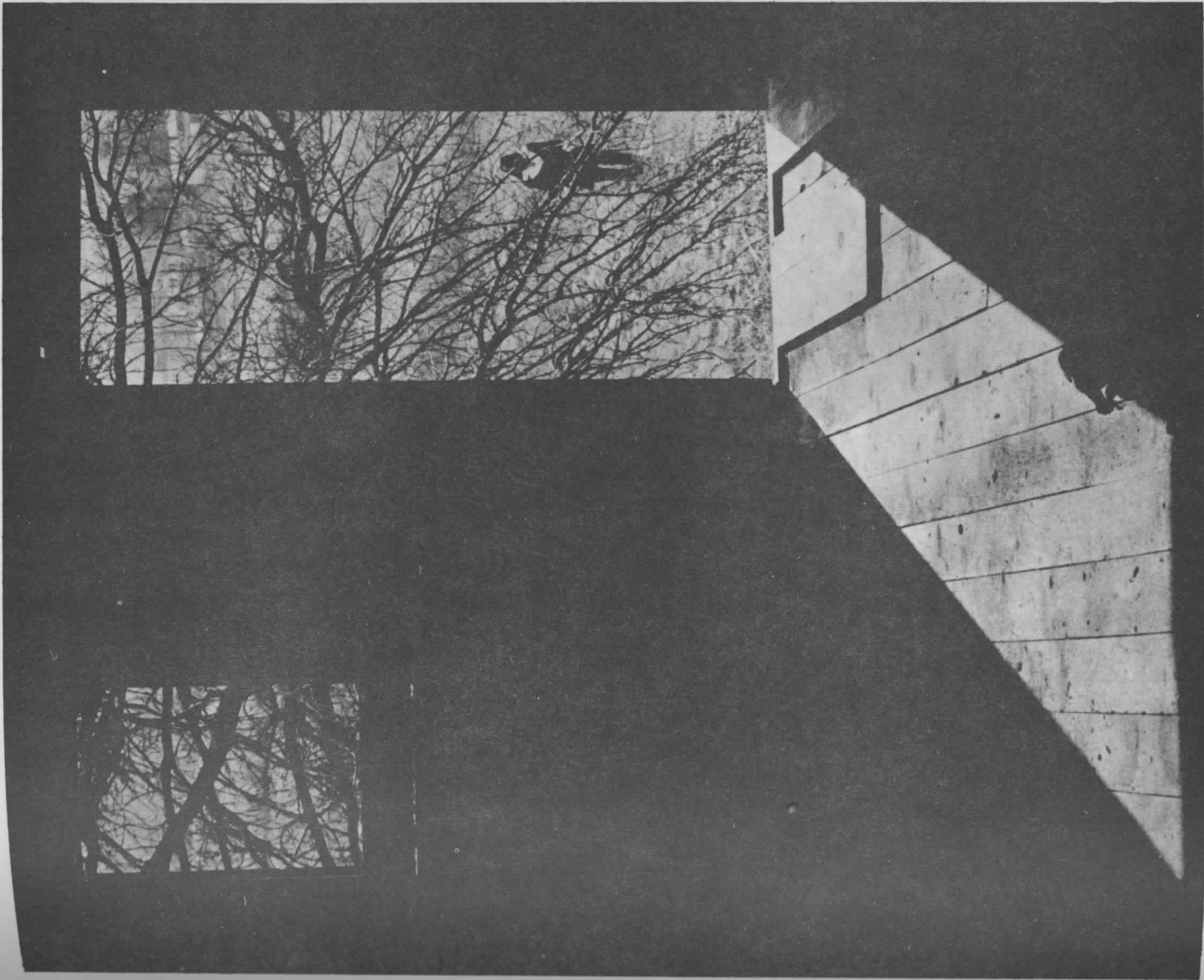
She handed him the list, picked up her tea cup and watched him read it. There was no expression on his face. Finished reading, he put the list in his pocket and took out his cigarettes. Offering one to her, she took it and waited for him to light it. She put it in her mouth, just at the last minute, and blew out a small puff of smoke.

"Charles, why are you really going to Europe? What

(Continued on Page 31)



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(RARE)

someday, when you're busy
alphabetically filing anxieties
in your head
I'm gonna sneak up behind you
And crack my soul open to you
on top of your head
like an egg---freshly laid

It'll mess you up

Make you cry
"oh shit"

inside
wet surprise
And we'll labor and pant
together to try
and clean up the honest slime
sticking in slippery threads
in air tight spaces

praising each other
with meaningful glances (rare)
as the pretty pictures we tacked on each other
fall down

- Alice Merrill



NOVEMBER LEAF

A chlorophyll-rusted arrowhead,
spaced in a cog-crown of mercurial form,
the solitary leaf loosened itself from
its barked moorings,
stirring, shifting
in wavelets of sound hissing through the
zigs and zags of the dark, sombre branches
to plummet
like a flatboat drifting in a heady, whirlpool sea
of autumn breeze,
swishing on a vacuous corkscrew transport
to an earthprick of death.

- J. Barmeier

IN RETROSPECT

I remember
curly blond hair
that wouldn't stay combed,
gray-blue eyes,
straight brows,
and the smile that snared me:
all pieces of a puzzle,
but the putting together,
the solving,
is what's beyond me.

I remember
the birthday, and
Monday's Child
Fair of Face was true.
I looked at that face,
the right ear,
the nape of the neck,
the crooked fingers, for a year.
I left, but it was
you who changed.

You're a handy past
to bring up,
when the need arises;
you're a memory
in formaldehyde
I'll slowly dissect.
And if I wince
once or twice, it's
only from habit.

- Julie Lockwood



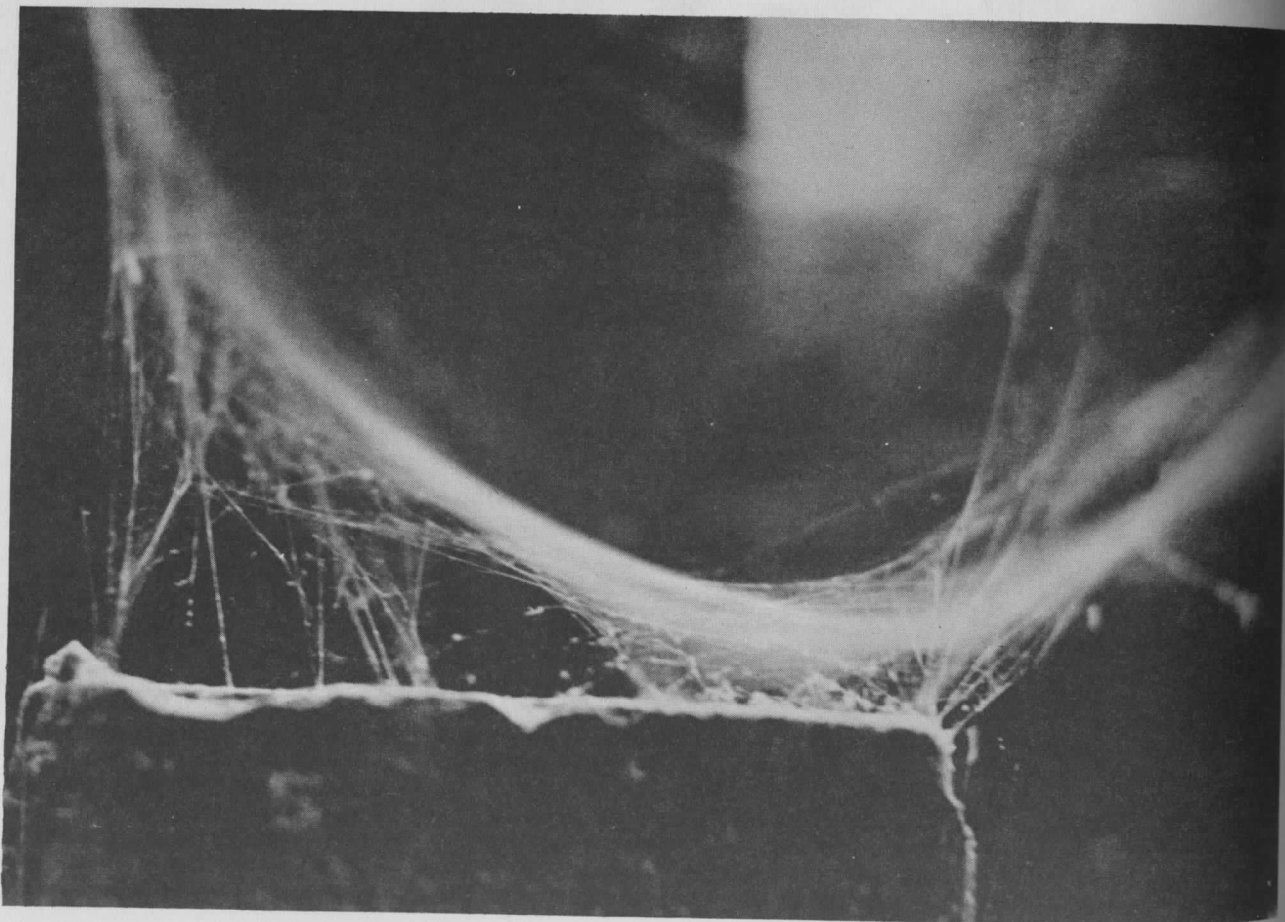
WEAVING

From swishing skirts and threaded hair
The women spin their creamy fiber
Stretching bark-moss fingers and knotted nails,
Bending eyes and brushing heads from side to side.

Soon they will touch one another, their work is so close.

Then they will stop, take tea
And creep again into work,
Like seeds in a ball of cotton.

- Alice Merrill



SPETSE

The King comes
to the island
in a motorized chariot
(the only piece flaming is his)
Looking for a queen
he finds two
hardened
disciples
who put up their nets.
Anointed
in night's juices--the ritual dance begun--
smiling, blubber-soft
simpering King--
They do him right
then roll him on the rocks.

- Cary Anne Spear

VIEW FROM A GARRET TO INFINITY

Yesterday
blimpfingered with softness
I spread
caresses around the roses
of you mouth, touching
their petals like a
sheath of feathers
lightly
kissing
the ground.

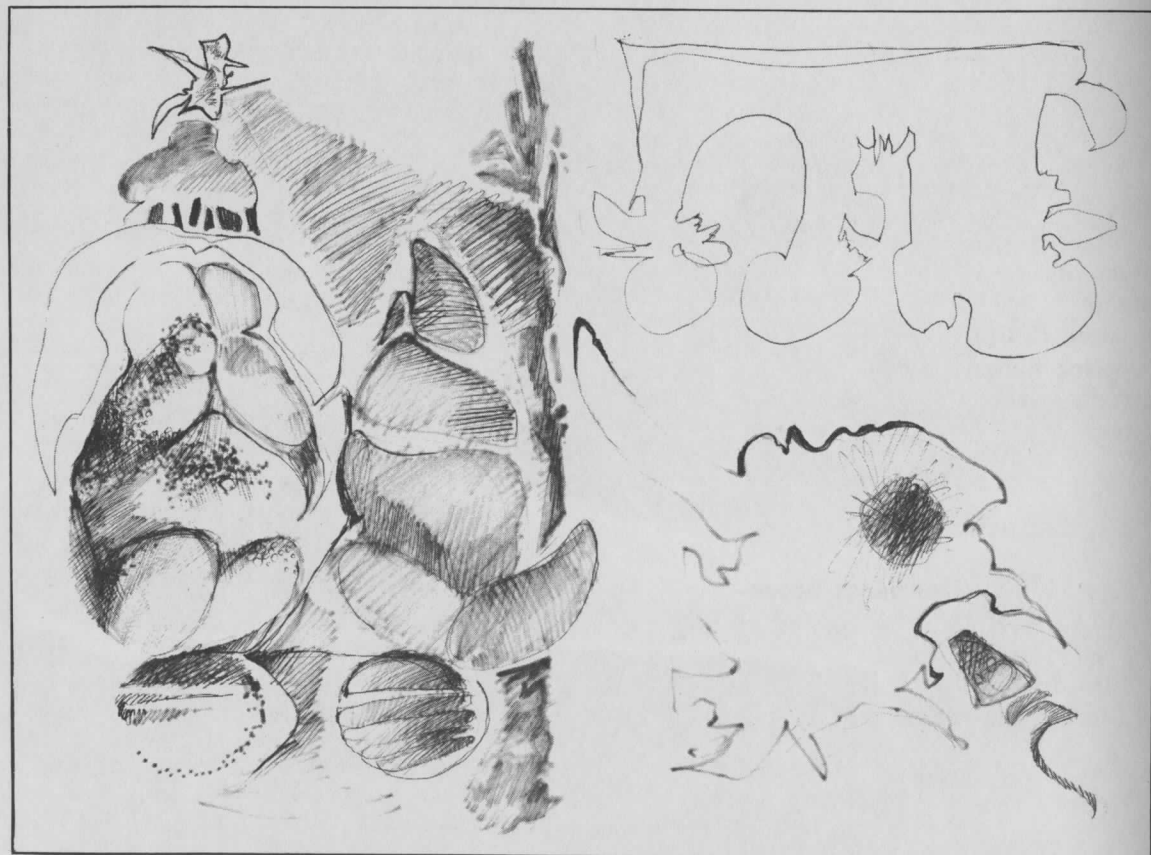
We floated to Venus
and back
in the springfaced afternoon;
a covey of swans
lifted us over the sun like skyranes

And on whitewinged plateau watched
a velvet alcove
of exotic winds
tracing circles over the red oceans
of your hair

Dusk parted temporal seas
and the coagulation of our bodies;
I boarded a wooden ship
and sailed
into your bloodtressed sunset

Never to return
Until tomorrow

- J. Barmeier



MORNING AFTER REFLECTION

Yesterday
My hands encircled
your flagship
a nebulae
one foot across

The earth flew
into the suns of your feet,
a veil of stars on your
cheek,
thundering
sunclaps of light
danced endlessly
on the mountains
of your face.

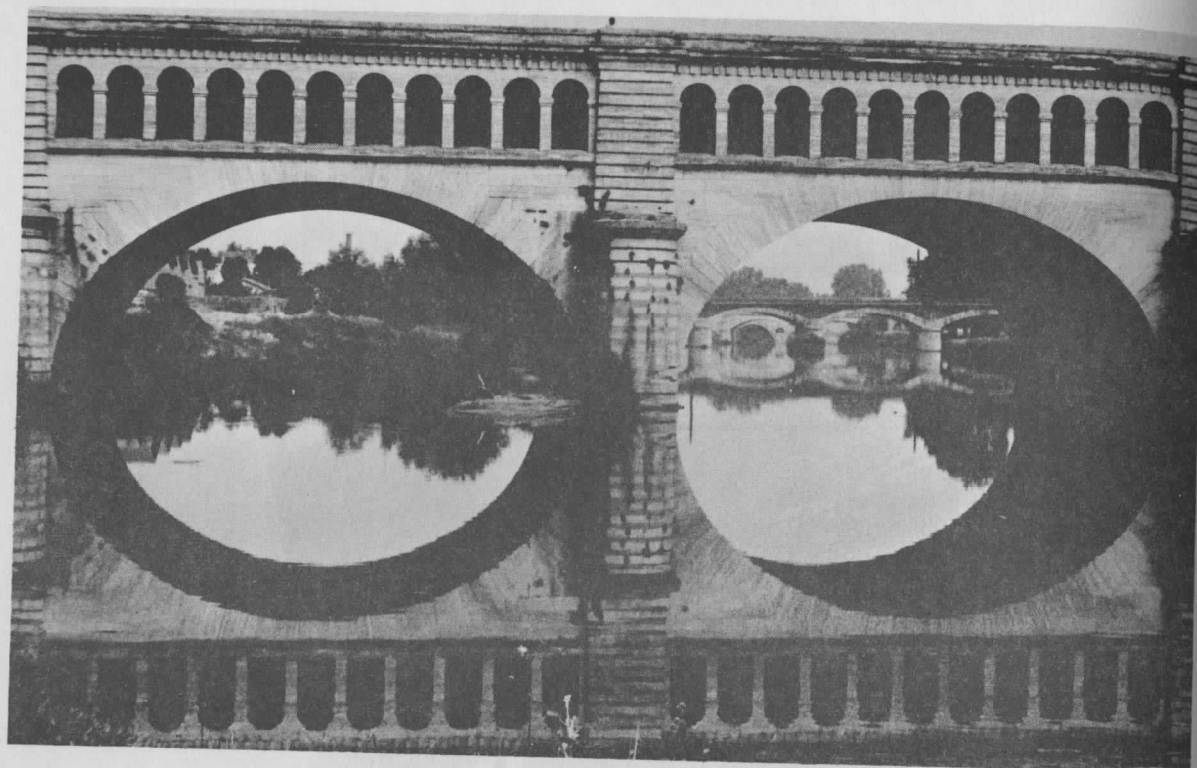
Daybraked
when nightclouds whitecapped on waves of
Zephre's black breath.

And
darkness
swallowed the ravenflow ribbons
of your hair: shoulderlength blowing
to eternity like kite-string in March

Now
I wish that you had
stood on the sky with your hair hanging
into the oceans
the stallions would have flowed into the seas
like trees

- J. Barmeier





CYPHER

TO GOD
If you have form'd a Circle to go into,
Go into it yourself & see how you would do.

- William Blake

What can be thought must certainly be fiction.

- Nietzsche

There was a man who had been sleeping. He awoke naked. He felt bare skin against smooth hardness, and a shock went through him. It was the icy birth-shock of unfamiliarity, for he knew full well that he should not have been naked and the surface under him should not have been hard. He was instantly terrified. His eyes snapped open, gaped to meet the mystery, to embrace it and reduce it, but all they took in served only to compound it, doubled and redoubled, until it was a crushing weight upon his consciousness, and doors began to slam in his brain, in refusal, in denial, and his breath was caught away from him. He cried out and slumped back into darkness.

Fear crept through him before consciousness. He was fully awake long before he opened his eyes. He was preparing himself. He again felt the hardness under him, felt himself naked, and knew that the nightmare had been real. Somehow, he was no longer where he had been. He was here. Somehow, he had been plucked out of the world he had known and dropped here. Here? Kidnapped? Imprisoned? He tried to remember if there had been violence, a struggle. He could remember none. All his memories were suddenly quite vague. Nebulous, unwieldy, like smoke already dissipating, they were more like brief spasms of feeling than images, intimations that he could not put into words. He stopped trying and forced his mind blank. He wanted to see, nothing more. Not think. Not react. Not now. Just

in the tower of shapes before him. They were piled unevenly, like an attempt of child's blocks to become a skyscraper, brightly-colored like those, too; glistening brilliantly, mostly reds and greens, an occasional surprise of blue or yellow, a different shade for each face, so stark, so piercing against the slick, tenuous white of the dome walls. He must have circled the cube-tower three times before he thought of approaching it, touching it. It could mean death, he realized -- wired for killing shock, glazed with contact poison -- a hundred possible deaths, instant or prolonged, accidental or keenly intended.

Intent. The thought arched into his mind and hung there, a star against black night waiting to be assigned a constellation, a place, a connection. Intent. The work of a mind. That was the quick fear of familiarity he felt in the thing -- it was the touch of mind in it. It was placed here. It was arranged and colored and faceted -- by a mind. There was the reek of intelligence, of conscious intent to the thing; it was the threat of knowledge that leered from the precise angles, the delicate foursquare balances wrought in the tower. The dome, seemingly geometrical though it was, might be natural -- a cave, a water-sculpted hollow, a work of Nature. But this. The color, the brashness of the angles, the scream of design, the promise of message, of invested meaning in its very presence -- it all had the sure scent of Man. Or something like Man. And that meant that he was in no wise merely a victim. He was a subject.

All this skittered like smashed ice across his mind -- instant, nerourial, but riding on the melt of its impression, leaving behind the liquid cling of fear. It was a fear above and beyond the dumb alienness of the dome, the place-without-exit so totally oblivious to its own impossibility that it transcended fearfulness. He blinked against the light and stretched out his palms to the tower, green and red glaring through the pale spokes of his fingers. It commanded reverence. It might kill him. Yet it must be touched. It cried out, demanded to be touched, its limits discovered. Almost to the apex of the dome it reached -- one final, topmost red cube glinting mute in the palm of the arching white. He took a step towards the tower. It might kill him, the touching of it. Surely so known a thing, so mind-wrought a thing, eternal and silent and precise so that in the midst of the mindless sterile whiteness it seemed the embedment of all thought, the pin-point of consciousness -- surely so unfathomably whole a thing would instantly strike out and destroy at being touched by the hot confusion of man. Yet it seemed haughty in its wholeness, in its calm existence, mocking him in his ignorance till his anger superceded his fear. He extended a finger and touched it to the green face of a shoulder-high cube. He still lived, still breathed, and there was only silence. The cube had a plasticine slickness, but was as cool as metal. He challenged it further with the press of his whole hand, testing its edges, sensing its density: so it was a true cube, and not a box, solid to its core. He tapped several of the cubes softly -- all yielded only the opaque sound of mass and solidity. The cube-tower's weight must be enormous. And it would yield him nothing.

No entrance.
How had he gotten here?
He turned instinctively to the thing in the center of the dome.

It was a tower of colored geometric shapes, a pile of assorted cubes that occupied several square feet of floor space and reached almost to the white apex of the dome. He instinctively circled it, viewing it from every angle, fascinated, awed, stricken too with a bright fear from some part of the thing, a fear not originating in the sudden strangeness of this thing that was happening to him, but rather in some opaque, insidious familiarity that he felt

white-soaking light -- but it had no source. There was no point where it was brightest, no point of emanation. It seeped instead from the walls and floor, left gapless from wall to air, glinted with unnatural evenness from the cubes in the center. There should have been none, but there was light. By some beneficence? He imagined waking to this place in darkness, discovering his prison, the cube-icon in its center, all by touch in black, silent air. He would have lost his mind. What blind, taunting kindness had granted him light?

The air. The second thought that hammered hard after the miracle of the light. The air. He had been conscious now for at least an hour, breathing heavily, rapidly in his fear, yet the air remained bright and pure. The dome was at all points sealed -- no ports or vents, unless hidden in the tower. How could he long breathe in that narrow lens of atmosphere? He would suffocate. There was a cramped squeezing in his chest, as if the whole crushing weight of the assembled cubes were miniaturized and focused on his heart. He felt a hot, white pressure from the slanting walls, and his head ducked instinctively as he moved. He measured his breathing, tasted for the taint of death-stale air. But it remained pure. Perhaps the dome itself was porous and translucent. He ran his hands across a white expanse of it; the surface was warm and gave a suggestion of shallow softness -- like a thin coating of rubber. It was slightly wrinkled under his close eye, tiny revulents of texture that reminded him -- God, yes -- reminded him of human skin. And tiny pores, yes, almost microscopic, the pores of his breathing and of his life and nourishment. They were keeping him alive, then. Subtle, minimally -- brilliantly, he had to admit -- they were keeping him alive. His anger mounted inside the mystery of who and why.

He circled the wide circumference of the dome again, through the sourceless light and air, on learning feet and with eyes reluctantly adapting to this impossible scene. But why impossible? What was it that had gone before that made all this seem impossible? He strained against the inertia of mind that sealed his memory, sealed it as firmly as his body, here within the dome. There were only visceral whisperings, intimations, inklings, of other bodies like his, other faces, moving in other patterns and places, remote, bizarre as this had first seemed. The weight of it, the inertia of the present, was so tiring. He stopped and sat down, his back to the slanting, white, warm wall.

The demon-thoughts, the questions, could not be trusted. They crept out of the crevices of his brain like small, malicious animals. They would not stay hidden, would not stay away. Even when dormant, they squirmed in the dark convolutions of his skull, kicking, prodding, like blind, unborn things. Early they were afraid of his ego -- he could intimidate them, rail them into silence. Now they were not afraid, now they taunted him with the bold knowledge of his impotence:

Who held him here?
How had he come here?
Why was he kept alive?
What was the purpose of this place?

What was the meaning of the cube - tower? What was its function?

Why, out of all the fellow - creatures that he sensed his likeness with, those beings beyond remembrance that he sensed in other times and places -- why, out of all these (for he sensed that they were many) had he been chosen for this private space, this solitary psychoplasm? What in him was deserving of this terrible uniqueness? What sin or glory so great to earn this silence, this light, this impenetrable mystery, the unanswered scream of his

life in the midst of it?

He was coldly aware that not until he stooped expecting answers would he know peace.

The man in the dome gradually ceased to think of time in segments; hours, minutes were lost to him. The light was constant, and days were counted only by the intervals of his exhausted sleep. And even those lost clear definition; sleep molded into wakefulness imperceptibly, as smooth as the cast of light in the dome. Time began to move in waves, in unsegmented pulses, like long thrusts of blood through pale veins, gushing and ebbing, but always continuous, always with the contracting force of a vast white heart, a static rush, at all points the same, beginning and end. And in the center, the monolith that time could not touch, oblivious and therefore eternal: the tower that cast no shadow. He envied it, hated it, worshiped it, cursed it, beat at its hard angles till his fists bled, fell on his face before it in love and awe. It made no answer. It gave no sign. If it had, he would have been instantly free of it. He could have turned, and forgotten, and concentrated instead on the wall, on escape. But it remained silent and gripped him, relentless.

He awoke from unremembered dreams and began the time - pulse with his usual exercise -- ten laps around the cube - tower, clockwise, five more walking circuits, counterclockwise. He stopped, breathing shallowly, hands on naked hips, waiting. For what? Waiting as he had for a time now lost to mind, for the answer, or at least for a change. He had long since counted all the facets of the cube - tower; there were forty-seven cubes in all, two hundred and eighty - two faces, hypothetically, but, due to the irregular positioning of the cubes in the tower, only two hundred and thirty-five were immediately visible. Ridiculous. Useless knowledge. Yet the counting had kept him sane. He had measured his small world inside the dome completely, given what he had to work with -- his feet to measure the circumference, thereby to estimate the diameter. His eyes to gauge the height, his touch to sense the thickness of the walls. All of it had kept his mind at bay, occupied, unemotional. But now he knew all he could know about the dome and the tower. All his measurements were finished. Now he needed change. And none came. He wondered what he was supposed to do now. He felt like asking, out loud, and the thought made him feel pitiful, like a child, and his eyes brimmed with tears. But his hands stayed on his hips, and he did not speak. He would wait a while longer.

He wondered often about food. In all his time in the dome he had eaten nothing, and he had never known hunger. Yet hunger was a thing, was it not? He had expected it, awaited it, as if it were something he had known before, in the vast, blank wash of prior time. He wondered if they fed him secretly, while he slept. Intravenously? On impulse he checked his arm for needle marks. None. And he passed no waste, not even in sweat -- another mystery. They -- or he, or it -- were very clever indeed. He gradually stopped thinking of the dome - makers, his captors, as "they;" they began to coalesce into a single entity, a single object of all his awe and fear and hatred. And he had midwived many answers to the fanged questions that slept now in the soft convolutions of his brain. It was an experiment, he told himself, a test. If he survived, if he remained sane, if he was sufficient unto the challenge of the dome, he would be rewarded, he would be somehow praised, somehow blessed. He was a rat in a maze of circular white and angled, monolithic color, and the Experimenter watched to see if he was worthy.

For what?

Ah, the small animal-thoughts were mischievous, always breeding more and more of their kind.

He remembered the time shortly after his beginning here, when his mind had left him and he had run the circle of white around the cube-tower in a blind panic until his legs buckled like straws and he pitched against the arching indifference of the wall and beat it with his fists and flatted palms and screamed in a voice that he had almost forgotten, beseeching the silent colors of the cubes for death, for an ending, for a new beginning, for pain, for joy, for torture, for reward, for pity, for vengeance, and none -- through the echoless white air that allowed no shadow -- none came. And he had leapt wildly at the tower, thinking to climb it, to scale it to the sealed apex of the dome and somehow push his way out, to crack the white ceiling of his universe and spill out, to crash into chaos, to take the Experimenter unawares by the suddenness of his folly, the violence of this rat, or at least to scream out from that dramatic height the objective of his spirit, to cry havoc from out of the long night of his soul. He mounted up, hands and feet roughly irreverent on the shining faces of the cubes, limbs aching in unaccustomed strain, till, halfway up, his foot flipped on slick plane of green and sent his eggshell skull glancing against a sharp corner of the tower with an impact beyond pain. And he dimly remembered his fall to the hard white floor, the tiny puddle of stark red blood that formed on it next to his head as he watched without interest, and the single, tiny track of like color that drooled down the face of a cube high up on the shadowless tower.

Other answers: the dome was a stage, he told himself, an entertainment, clever and perverse, for some amused Playgoer who watched from the other side of the wall which acted as one-way glass, permitting clear view from without and only white blindness from within. He was naked under the eyes of a laughing, drunken artificer of cruel dramas, a sadistic manipulator who trapped his actors on the stage, imprisoned in inescapable roles. Only the Director-Audience knew the script, if there was one. Indeed, there probably was none; the ultimate in improvisational theatre.

The man in the dome laughed at this, laughed long and loud so that by his own laughter he was frightened, and he fell silent.

For the thought had come to him that he was mad. I am insane, he told himself, and all this is a figment of my madness. I am actually lying in some other place and time, dreaming these sick dreams and thrashing in my sleep like an animal, sheets sweat-drenched and dependent relatives weeping at my bedside, for I have gone hopelessly, irretrievably out of my mind. I am trapped in this hallucination, this illusion of a dome and a tower and silent white air, this impossibility, this abortion of the reality I must have once known, this perfectly convincing nightmare. And I can only wait to be awakened from this sleep of ignorance, only wait for perhaps a random hand to brush my shoulder and, unknowing, to wrench me from this place and deposit me back where I was. I cannot awaken myself, for I cannot find the hinge of the hallucination, the fulcrum of the dream, the flaw in the illusion. It is too perfect, too cleverly wrought by my own mad mind. I cannot find the flaw, the seam along which to rip it open and reveal the cheap machinery of its deception. My mind, my madness, constantly outstrips me, flanks my every advance of logic, parries my every thrust of reason till I lie paralyzed by the threat of the knowledge that my insane dreams are become my reality, that, in the end, there is no difference between

fact and illusion if I know only one or the other, and never bridge the chasm between the two. It makes no difference. I have no comparison. I am alone. No one knows my thought. No one sees my actions. In my prison, I am infinitely free. In my freedom, I am infinitely imprisoned. God, I am surely mad.

He began to have dreams, textured, twisted, vivid, and he was able to remember some of them after he woke to the unending light of the dome. These he tried to preserve in memory -- they became to him somehow very precious. Some he tried to retain in picture-images, some in brief jabs of emotion or waves of sensation, some in melody and inadequate song. Some he spoke into being, and filled the white air around the cube-tower with flights and volleys of words. Sometimes he felt he was confusing dreams with memory of some actual events, or memory with premonition, but he knew that in the final analysis it mattered little, that his moment of existence in the dome was the pivot of it all, and the only ultimate reality. So he ignored the sources of his dreams, and only sought to nail them to his waking consciousness, to envisage and sing and speak them into being. And after a while his visions filled the white arch of emptiness around the tower, and he would sit motionless for long pulses of time, staring without seeing at the dome or the colored cubes, eyes fixed on horizons quite beyond the stark circumscription of his reality.

He saw, and the seeing gave him voice; the voice of madness and of dreams, the voice of lives he had never lived, of fellow-beings he had never known, the voice of death and time and even of love:

"... birds mating on the horizon. A sign for me, an emblem, a mysterious medallion, a good omen. They augured well for the time I had spent with Beatrice and for my own future in the electrified field of love's art. But as I walked on between funeral cypresses and felt the weight of the sun, and the sweet ache of solitude that rose up in my chest like those same rays striking heart and lungs and all the viscera untouched by sun in all the lifetime of a man, I found myself wondering if even I might not give way to primitive thinking and believe that in that brief twining of that dark feathery pair I had witnessed the conception of the seed of distrust and death for Beatrice as my wife, her uncertainty and mine clasping each to each and closing the ring of doom around the fragile

embryo of our sweet mutual dream. It was like the time I had made love to her, and at the height of my own passion, she had clammy cleared her throat while counting the tiles in the ceiling. . .

And Heather, the spying, egocentric one, for more than eighteen years most obviously true to character and to her color yellow in the act of kissing; she had spent those years kissing each letter she wrote, each book she enjoyed, kissing flowers, shadows, dead birds, dogs, old ladies, attractive men -- as if only by touching the world with

her open lips could she make it real and bring herself to life. So even while I was grunting my approval and pleasure, which was the only way to reply to any of her questions, she had already found the hollow of my temple with her small, tight, eager mouth, and I imagined life draining from me, her hands left holding the white bone casement of my skull, and I could only smile more broadly at the thought of her lavishing one of her brief floods of compassion on the cold features of a lifeless relic. It was like her to leave her jasmine scent perfuming the mere skeleton of some half-known man; to her, no expenditure of her own affection was ever wasted. Yet, with my usual pleasure, I noted her straight legs, her narrow calves

stretching with a kind of girlish muscular determination to reach me, her hands spread wide and pale and resting on the black marble. Even motionless she appeared already to be wheeling and running on naked white feet toward her next confrontation with bright light, old stones, new lovers. . ."

He stopped and listened to the bright fall of echo. What did the words mean? Where did the vision come from? He could not imagine; he only knew that he cherished it, that he spoke it and what had not existed before became real. Or, in a different pulse, a different mood:

"... philosophy must steer between the Soylla of the abstract and the Charydis of the concrete. We must therefore discover some method of investigation which allows the mind at every step to lay hold of a clear physical conception, without being committed to any theory founded on the metaphysic from which that conception is borrowed, so that it is neither drawn aside from the subject in pursuit of analytical subtleties, nor carried beyond the truth by favorite hypotheses. . .

"... guilt comes to the amoral man not out of the performance of acts, though he may know them to be unethical or socially deleterious, but out of words attached to those acts. It is not until he is called, or calls himself thief, liar or murderer that the bolt of guilt strikes him. Left to abstract, asocial thought and concrete action, he is unassailable. . ."

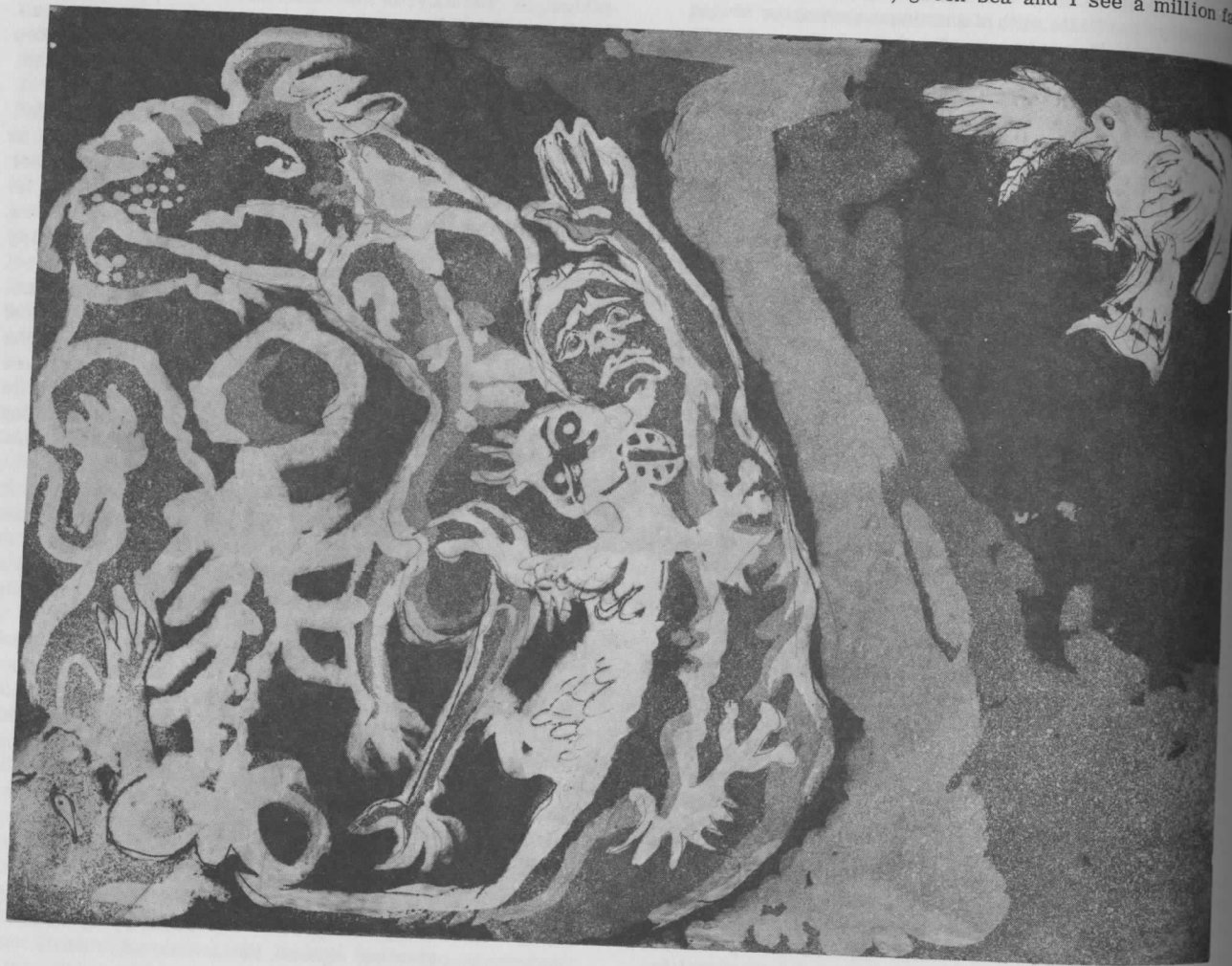
His dreams were eloquent beyond his conscious thought, their worlds vast and interpenetrating beyond reason or remembrance, as if drawing for their scope and power upon some immense, heaving sea of experience; and he imagined the dome at the bottom of that exterior sea, the crushing weight of its waters just behind the arching white wall, with only the dome to protect him from that roiling, suffocating power, that intense ocean of undreamed emotion and un-lived event that boiled just beyond the confines of his small, white world, communicating its fury down through the pressure of its mass, even through the strong walls of the dome and into its pale atmosphere, curling in his nostrils as he slept, curling in his visions as he dreamed, coiled like tightened muscle in his words as he spoke the dreams into reality. He thought the thought often: the impenetrable dome at the bottom of a violent sea. It made him feel warm and safe in the moments before he slept, in the moments of his anticipation of dream. Perhaps the dome was not a prison, but a refuge, a shelter; not a curse, but a blessing from some unnamed beneficence. The thought rolled in his brain like the thick waters that he imagined around him, rocking the primeval cradle of consciousness, drawing it down on swift green currents to the soft place of dreams. And while the vision remained, he was comforted.

Time moved now in immensely long, green waves that almost forgot to break and begin their cycle anew. The erect pattern of the cubes had become as familiar as a father's stern face or the lacing of lines in the palm of his own hand. He had learned to sleep easily in the constant light, to paint night on the inside of his eyelids, to evoke the dreams from the dim contortions of color that flashed and swam there. He slept as often as he could, sometimes straining against the inertia of wakefulness, forcing sleep to come. At such times it was slowest to engulf him, its darkness most dreamless. And it was dream for which he hungered; in the absence of physical hunger he grew ravenous for dreams, to devour them, gorge himself on them, then to roll bloated with vision up into consciousness, to cage dream in the reality of the word, the song, the right image. He loved his dreams, coveted them, hoarded them and toyed with them like

miser's jewels, running them over and over again through the fingers of his thought, listening to their crystalline ring as they poured into words:

"...once upon a time I was more than face. Someone said my name, I answered at once. How the face has blotted out the name -- the word, my name, turned out to be only accidental, only a sound, and the face something I can rely on -- in any mirror I see the same face, the same face, it never dissolves into dots like television or photographs viewed too closely. It is permanent. It is a narrow, kindly, suspicious face, the hairline holding like a recalcitrant forest, the teeth still excellent. My face.

"My wife says my name now. She whispers it, moving toward me. I embrace her. She is not quite awake and has no idea who is embracing her. Slick fabric, blonde hair and skin like cream, I am amazed by it. She whispers my name, but it is no absolute claim on me. She falls asleep again, dreaming. There are gentle hollows about her eyes. A tender stream of saliva in the corner of her mouth, her breathing shallow and intimate. I slide out of



bed and walk to the door, to the stairs. The stairs go on forever, up and down. Students live in this building, like me. Back and forth we run from the university's underheated or overheated buildings, up and down many flights of stairs, our backbones as well as our legs elastic and energetic and still youthful, though we are all breaking down. We carry armloads of books and notebooks with our names inked in them, in case they should get lost. Some of us even carry small metal boxes with five-by-eight cards in them, inked in with bibliographical items and abbreviations and information in code, our names inked carefully on grimy adhesive tape stuck to the outside of the boxes, in case they should get lost. My name is . . .

"Outside. April? Yes, it looks like April once again. A few weeks ago it was unmistakably winter and I was at home. It was winter and my father was mad, tramping in fitful, hyperbolic paths through the house. He worried me. Even my wife sometimes worries me. I am uncertain of her name. Elizabeth? Beatrice? What worries me most is that there is a world beyond the world I see that is simultaneous with it. Yes. The stairs lead up till I am overlooking a vast, green sea and I see a million faces

in its turbulence, hear a million tiny voices in the swell of the water, and yet no one else is concerned. The beach is deserted. The terrace beneath me is solid and the sky arches with pale assurance above my head, and yet I have the feeling that there is another world simultaneous with this one -- its dimensions precisely matched with this one's, its outlines absorbed in it. . . .

"I return to the room, to bed. I lie there, motionless. There is nothing. Everything is silent. And now it occurs to me that I have at last entered the other world: I have passed over into that secret world, that prior world. And what is it, really? I am in it, lying on a bed in it, and yet I don't know what it is. This stair leading to the sea is my entrance to that other world, which has been hidden so long by familiar colors and shapes -- and in this world nothing is familiar, nothing is safe. I think to myself: Now your world is vast, your horizons are flattened out forever. There are no horizons. You can never leave this world because there are no horizons, no boundaries, no end to it.

"I lie there quietly, at peace . . ."

He spoke on, and each word echoed briefly through the white air of the dome. The cubes listened, mute and unmoved. His voice rose and fell, like a tide slow and sure, and at times there was silence while he waited for more of his dreams to come back to him. At times the silence was long, and still he sat quietly, patient for the renewed touch of memory or sleep. His muscle atrophied, his joints grew stiff. He no longer went for runs around the tower, but sometimes he addressed the cubes conversationally, sometimes with the old reverence, always speaking of his dreams:

"...there is a boy of dark hair, narrow face and slender limbs. He runs across plots of park grass, miniature baseball bat in hand. His grandfather follows at a proud distance. The boy is not more than four years old; his eyes are close to the ground in his small stature and he sees white clover in the grass, patches of blighted brown, the tiny explosion of a startled locust into the air. There are blimps on the horizon, gravid and grey, in a sky of sun-bleached clouds hung against electric blue. A shaggy collie passes, attended by its young mistress. The leaves of trees are upturned, silver-veined, in anticipation of distant rain. The streets are lined with cars like inverted bathtubs; the boy can identify each of them by name. He does. His grandfather smiles and leads him on, down sidewalks hard and white and somehow comforting. . . .

"The boy goes with his aunt to the Institute. Instruments of science hang from the ceilings and walls. The floors glisten quietly, unprovokable by small, insistent feet. A white rocket, castrated of its chemical fire, sits aimed at a chandelier high overhead. Sparks crackle from a silver dome to a man's hand and he is miraculously unharmed. The naked skeletons of mastodons rear up on metal supports, tusks suspiciously shiny. The boy sits in darkness in a round room and hears the hum of hidden machinery. The air above him grows brighter, revealing a domed ceiling from which emerges a sea of stars in all the magic of night, this night - without - sky, this world-in-a-room. He is awed and delighted and a little afraid. . . .

"His aunt takes him to a wedding. A man stands in black, a woman in white, talking quietly with a second man. Then the man in black kisses the woman, in full view of all who have gathered there. He does not seem to be embarrassed. The boy decides that he will never marry. High up on the wall, a stained-glass window lets in the light of the sky, tinted to many shades of color. There is the suggestion of a picture in the pieces of glass, but he

cannot tell what it is. The organ begins to play through great pipes that look like the bars of a giant's prison, dwarfing the cross that hangs below. The music rolls and thunders so loudly that he feels the wood of the pews tremble. . . .

"His aunt takes him home and bathes him in a tub of scalding water. Soap burns his eyes. When he is clean and dry, she asks him to lie next to her on the couch. He does, and she presses him to her body. It is warm and perfumed. It is strange and familiar. . . .

"The boy grows. The surplice of childhood falls from him and leaves him naked and confused. He is thin and unimposing and cannot win his peers. So he turns to winning those older, wiser than himself. His mind hones itself against the many abrasive edges of persons and things that touch him. It is a strange, strange period of his life. Or is life itself strange? It is, certainly, different from what he had expected, but how could he have 'expected' anything of life? To what impossible unknown was he comparing it? It is of course all he has ever known, and yet it is alien. It does not sit right in the marrow of his bones, as if the atoms of his cells have been forced into life, to assume the posture of a state unnatural to them. Which, in a way, he supposes they have. Perhaps that explains it. His every tissue, brain, muscle, blood, bone, remembers the lifeless chaos out of which it has been wrested in the instant of conception. His body remembers death, of which his human intellect is powerless to conceive. . . .

"He learns to pray, and cannot unlearn it. The silence and the darkness of the night calls his voice out of him, calls his hopes and fears out of him in the murmur of words into the void, between himself and the invisible ceiling. He comes to cherish the words. . . .

"His family moves to Mexico, of the nut-brown eyes, of the slopes of rock beaten smooth by sun alone, of the sea that heaves close by towering green mountains, of the glistening white cities that seem to penetrate into the earth, penetrate backwards and forwards in time. And of the bullfight ring, the ring of beauty and blood and death, closed and inescapable, the constriction of life into a circular field, into an afternoon. The red of the bull's blood in the center of the ring, the brief flash of reflected green in the sword-hilt. It is to him an intimation of another world. . . .

"His family returns to America, and the boy grows. He goes to the university; his love of words persists and his love and pity and awe for man endures. He begins to call himself a man. At the university he meets another manchild, another friend among many, who grows to be strangely more. There is little likeness between them, but there is something more than likeness, a recognition of identity in a word, an inflection, a glance, an idea, till their thought begins to dare more and more, each challenging the other, raising the stakes on the gamble of will, the threat of knowledge. Both sense these things, and at last they speak of them. And somewhere, in the soft underbelly of their spirit, a circle is closed, a seam of conscious commitment sealed. The manchild sees in the other's eyes the heat of some pierced thought screaming out from the iron maiden of his mind. He loves that light and the bright chill of that inaudible scream. And as their words collide and mesh between them, their alchemies quietly proceed inside the dome of their skulls; deep in the blending swell of their voices he begins to hear that scream more and more clearly. . . .

"There comes into him, in his center, where he is all but void, a rock-hard nexus of moral sense, of the delicate balance of rightness and wrongness in all that he does, in

all that he sees. It is wholly intuitive, terribly fragile, but it is infallible. It is ever present, but it is so deep in him that the rush of his own blood quenches it, the surface sheen of all that he meets dazzles it into importance. A simple play of light in a room or the laughter of a woman can blast it into compromises. So is at once whole and utterly fragmented, as constant as a star and as infinitely mutable as its cold fire. He is singular and large and knowing, yet in his largeness he is legion, small and multiplicitous and slightly mad. He possesses infinitely and is by all that touches him infinitely possessed. He is, finally, a man, and is not content. . . .

"The man and his friend leave the university and part with a clasp of hands, words still rattling at their lips, thoughts still threatening. It is a sunny day. The man goes his way, feeling the sun, amazed by it. There is something in the thing, in the sunlight, the ultimate goseamer, the infinitely diaphanous, striking a red brick wall, rooted firm and hard beyond the care of man -- the light, the stuff, invisible till striking, existing only in its act, to strike and, striking, light, and the wall, existing only to stand and be stricken, and to endure the striking beyond the care of man, seeming long after and before man, long after man has tired of the sunlight in its infinitely striking fall -- still, still, the wall. There is something to the thing. . . .

"The man sees that there are no final tragedies -- only the tiny ones wrought in silence in a thousand small rooms -- as the snow falls outside, and their cries die off the close walls. He sees that his own suffering is such a tiny thing, such a private thing, and the sufferings of his world are so vast -- he weeps small tears in his own small room, and the universe rolls on, a vast, bleeding gash in the side of infinity, a festering sore on the sweet, smooth skin of chaos. . . ."

So spoke the man in the dome, quietly and fluently. The universe of his dreams expanded and became more intricate; parts that had appeared completely unrelated now seemed to bear subtle kinship to one another, events and persons and images as disparate as sea and land, fire and air began to coalesce into patterns and formulae, systems and hierarchies, like a grand mosaic of a smashed stained-glass window drifting slowly back into order, colors repeated, lines mirrored and extended. He began to see how all time and space lay open to him in this universe, how each meshing piece of the mosaic bridged another barrier of his consciousness, how all emotion and event coexisted within this universe, one leading forth and back to another, pleasure into pain, fear into ecstasy, in fascinating, less complexity, in the beauty of diversity and ceaseless conflict, the joy depending for its existence upon the pain, its mate in the mosaic, the mesh of immanent parts that held each in the sprawling grid of meaning. The suffering of his dreams made them dear to him, their pain made them noble, their randomness made him weep for them, so unstable was their existence. Unlike his, in the static, shadowless hollow of the dome, in the momolithic presence of the cube-tower. Unlike his. How he pitied and envied and loved the universe of his dreams, poignant in their brief delight, sacred in their beauty. He loved them and cherished them even in their countless miseries, their myriad twists of suffering, their hatreds and bleedings, their unnumbered deaths. For the thought had occurred to him that he would never die, that the dome was his domain and prison for eternity, that time in its lengthening pulses would one day freeze at the crest of an endlessly breaking wave and cease to be. And against that threat of eternity he plunged his ego

deep into the time-bound sea of his dreams, and there found limits, perpetual beginnings and ends, turnings and metamorphoses, hard boundaries, pungent smells and tastes, sharp jolts of sensation that delivered him back into time, back into his body, and taught his blood to cypher.

He was long beyond fear or longing or expectation; the dome held none of this for him. For there came the moment when his dreams invaded his conscious thought and became indistinguishable from it; through all his waking hours paraded the children of his dark sleep, the endless sequence of his multiform imaginings, now blotting even the dome and the tower from his sight with multilayered spectres, crowding his vision. Around him danced lovers entwined in passion, men clashing singing swords, young soldiers dying bullet-torn and unresolved, mothers writhing undelivered of life, saints and monstrous men, artisans and bright-eyed demolishers of artifices, desperate men who wrestled gods to earth in their dreams. Their dreams. His dreams. Into their hazard of encounter he delivered his spirit, into their threat of limitless knowledge he delivered his whole consciousness. They amazed and confounded him in their diversity, their complexity; they were sourceless as the light of the dome, as powerful and massive as the sea beyond it, the water that he somehow suspected to be the birth-brine of all dreams. They were worthy of worship. They were worthy of his soul.

He lay back calmly on the hard floor, and only then, at the crest of a pulse of time that seemed to him the last, long-lingering contraction of a great white heart, the uniform light of the dome, that had never in his timeless presence there failed or altered, began to fade. And in the arms of the closing darkness, that did not surprise or frighten him, he dreamed or saw the great walls begin to buckle inward, and the huge weight of the green sea above rushing in to embrace him.

. . . the child. The child. It began with the child, and ended with him. All things were made new in him, and all things were laid to waste by him, in that fiery constriction of time through which all life passes, unborn moments rushing to birth, crowded and burning with friction, through the waist of the hourglass, while his primeval mother sweats and screams in labor. . . .

The son was born in Detroit, on a sweltering night in an August shortly after the closing of the second Great War. His mother was a long time in labor, and his soft, vulnerable head was oddly distended at birth, so that the physician had to take the mutable stuff of the skull in his hands and mold it and give it proper shape. And when he had finished he had made a handsome child. And the child cried and wailed out his indignation at the world, at having been cast into the awful flux of it. For even then, deep in the cleavage of the cells of the heart and the blood and the bone, the ancient memories were stirring, and the new life was robbed of its pure beginning. The new life recognized the life-in-flux and set it with blind revulsion, and the child cried into the hot night of the city.

Many were crying in the city, many men and even the machines men bent to their will cried muffled and hot into the city-night, like any other night, and yet like all nights through all time. In the night, in the darkness they made love and ate and hungered, played cards and slept in their lovers or with their backs to their wives, stared at ceilings and prayed silently, lips moving, to the darkness around them, to the darkness that hung between the buildings, the darkness between the stars, There were millions, yes. And there was no one but the child, the son.

The boy grew.

- Keith McWalter



A MINOR CHANGE AT DENISON U.?

I shook hands with them all
trying to say my name 47 times
in a row
without missing
I tore up my name before the next
getting a new one inside each
luckily the same

I laughed at jocks
drunk on Wednesday night
and cussed vomit on sides of sinks

I glanced at freaks
sitting in a circle
eating acid from a plate
and talked to their empty staring

I bitched about
the food
the cold
the days until Thanksgiving
the days before Christmas

Why had I come?
I went to the Market
to forget the question
but it got up with me
coating my headache
What was college?
Was it all a joke?

Poets under glaring lights
exploded tiny black marks into
Cambodian villages
breaking waves
transistorized flowers
silent snow
southern fields of sweat
Words became worlds
A peaceful man
laughing at his own baldness
gentle persuaded:
"Write on, write on."

Reading books
not noticing pages going by
as before
Eating up ideas
Thinking
Time sliding along
smooth and easy
no longer jerking-
a taxi in city traffic

From despair of escaping
forgotten Friday nights —
excitement of creating
renewing the mind
as showers cleanse woods
washing waste down tiny creeks
leaving their colored signatures

- Pete Porteous

did you lose?"
The suddenness of the question startled him. He looked directly at her, took a puff of his cigarette, and moved his feet from where they had been crossed under the chair. He put one of them on his knee, the sole of his shoe turned up toward the kitchen door, and placed the other in front of him. He looked at it for a while, then looked at her again.

"Nothing. I just wanted to get away. I wanted to go to Europe before I had a steady job or something. I don't want to start working right away."
"You'll be working over there."

He was quiet. She continued looking at him and then moved a hand to the back of her head, picking up a few strands of hair from her neck. She placed both of her hands in her lap. Her head was tilted a little to one side.
"I lost a girl."

She picked up her tea cup from the table and placed both her hands around it, letting them still rest in her lap.
"That's why I want to get away. I feel as if I have nothing more to do right now."

"I lost someone once too. I even went to Europe. Lived there for a couple of years and then came back, having lived my fill in the meantime. After that, I went back every five years or so."

"Did it help? Your going to Europe?"
She settled back in her chair and took a sip of the tea. Turning the cup in her hands she looked at his mouth and slowly, just the corners going up, smiled.

"No Charles. It did not help. I still think about him. I knew him when he had no money, no family that he was close to, no position. He's wealthy and successful now. But I still think of him. I knew the woman that he married."

"Well, I'm going to give it a go."

The words didn't seem right to him. He continued, softly, "Thank-you for the list. I want to write to these people before I arrive."

"That won't be necessary. They won't mind."

He put his cup down on the table in front of him and stood. Holding out his hand to her he said,

"I think I'd better be going now. I want to thank you for the afternoon, your company, and for the tea. I'll come and see you when I return."

She too stood, extended her hand, and walked him to the door.

"You do look very much like your father. It gives me a shock to see someone so similar to him. I used to know him quite well." She paused. "Is he happy, do you think?"

He answered shortly, a little distractly,

"Happy? Good God, yes. He's settled and he's happy. I hope not to be as settled as he."

She opened the door for him and watched him take his tallness through the frame. He turned to give her a short wave of his hand. She closed the door and returned to the chair. Pouring another cup of tea, she looked at the chair where he had been sitting. There were letters in the dresser drawer. She left them alone. The room needed cleaning up; the bed needed to be made, the ash trays to be emptied. She left all as it was.

- Holly Battles

HUNTER

Tomorrow,
my mind will cast back,
throwing a line into the sun
for some mythical recollection
of the forest
of your hair

Like a slender leaf hugging the salt tide,
you are

consummated
on the mirrortwists
of my eye

- J. Barmeier



SNOWFLAK

From aerial foyer pushed
into the swirls of cumulus nimbus heaven,
a pigmied hexagon of ice: delicately sutured
cobwebs of crystalized winter

fell
ten thousand feet
like

that

stewardess on page forty-six
of the New York Times,
smashed frozenwhite on a midwestern plain.

- J. Barmeier



Loving Negative Ten

My sweet Jesus, what's wrong with you
 I want your body but I don't love you
 Sex is creation
 creation, creativity: energy which
 is and always is and never is not
 so when you don't get laid
 you grab your number two soft
 phallic penis pencil and violate
 a clean sheet of paper
 Your energy is diverted. subverted
 preverted and sublimated
 so instead of pure pleasure a poem
 exists.
 The virginal poet panders pure energy
 in the hope of an end that will be plain desire
 The desire exists!
 Christ, you probably read poems before you
 sleep each night.

Loving Negative Nine

How Do I love you
 let me count the ways
 I love you in position six
 twelve and ten
 I love you Saturday night
 and Sunday morning instead of church
 and I love you with the dreams
 of future loves.

Loving Negative Eight

I see you on the quad daily
 everyday at the same time
 and we both smile. Hello.
 Suddenly I start to see,
 more often I run into you
 and slowly I get to know
 that you are capable of love
 Yet why do I bother myself
 and slowly I get to know
 You are capable of sex

Loving Negative Seven

It is very late at night
 and I'm very very tired
 I would leave, go home and go to bed
 This party is dul
 and I'm too stoned to have a good time
 But there are still a couple
 of girls here. They must be thinking
 the same as me.

Loving Negative Six

I hate to harp
 on one point forever
 but I really do love you
 I really do you know
 I will admit that I
 did not love you at first
 but we have gotten so good
 in bed
 that my love grows and swells
 as you warmly embrace it.

LOVING

Loving Negative Five

You write of love
 but you are moved by hate
 I'm sure you will agree that
 love is a plus
 a something that is there
 while hate is an absence
 a hole in the void
 So you write of love
 and your highly sublimated
 high level relationships
 but the source of these
 pusedo-plus-presences
 is your lifeless life in a sexless void

Loving Negative Four

Hetero
 Homo
 boys and girls together
 or all at once for that matter
 Love, you say, is more than sex:
 Love of Mother
 Love of country
 Love of fellow man.
 The only thing you can't ball is a flag

Loving Negative Three

Lust is movement
 perhaps the secret
 of perpetual motion
 like a pendulum
 back and forth
 in and out.
 Don't you wish
 you could do it forever?

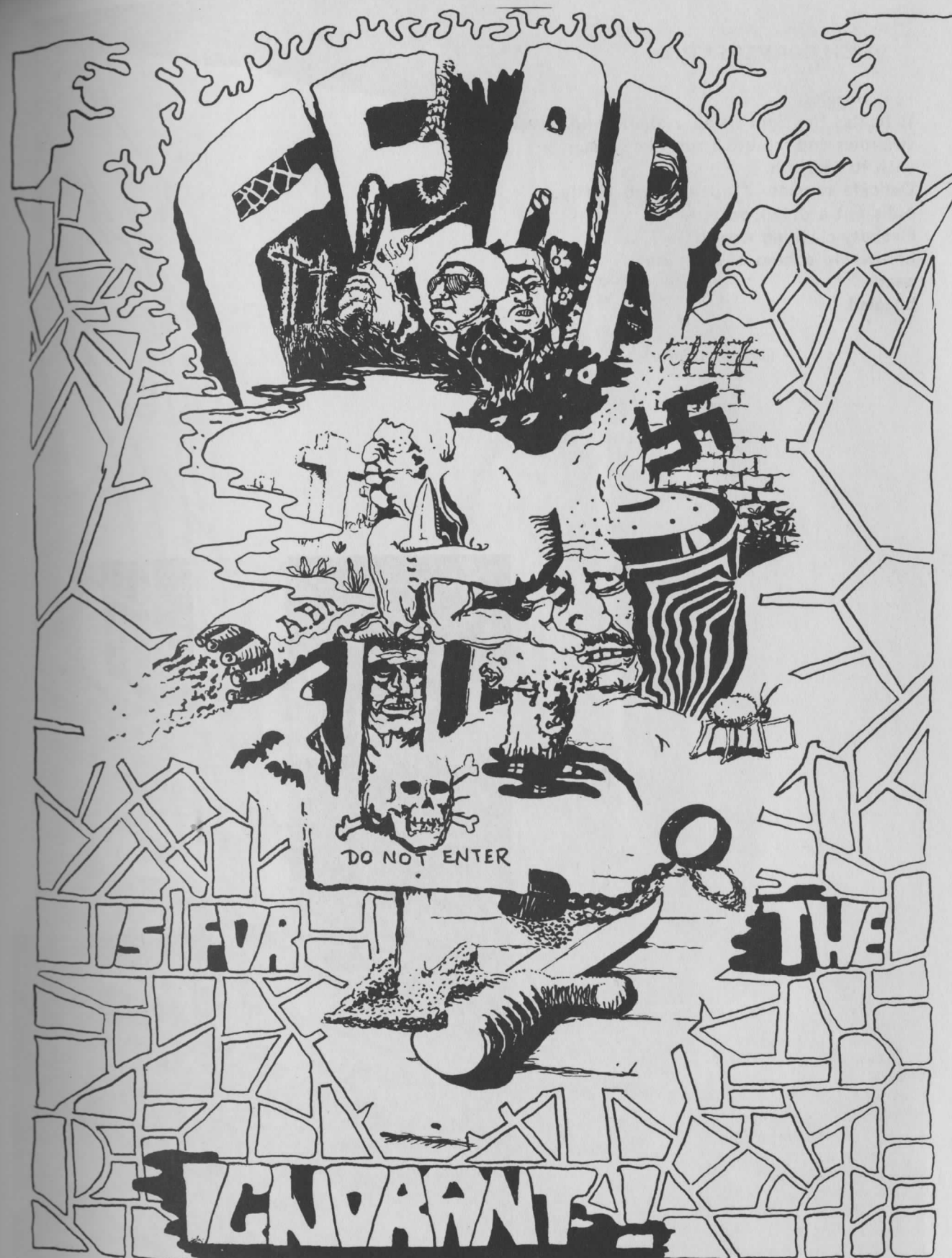
Loving Negative Two

I Love you
 your body protects
 you from the rath of
 my hopefully non-castrated
 humility
 I can tolerate you
 the nausea won't kill me
 but we can't have a relationship
 because I must remain superior.
 I love you

Loving Negative One

You look at me and say you love me
 and you hope that I will define love
 so you can have sex while I have love
 Your stupid superiority really is
 too much. Frustration is only mine,
 while you make sure you have your pride.
 Did it never happen in your head,
 the thought in yours was also in mine
 I don't care for your love
 your sex is all I want.

Zero Loving: Fuck-you.

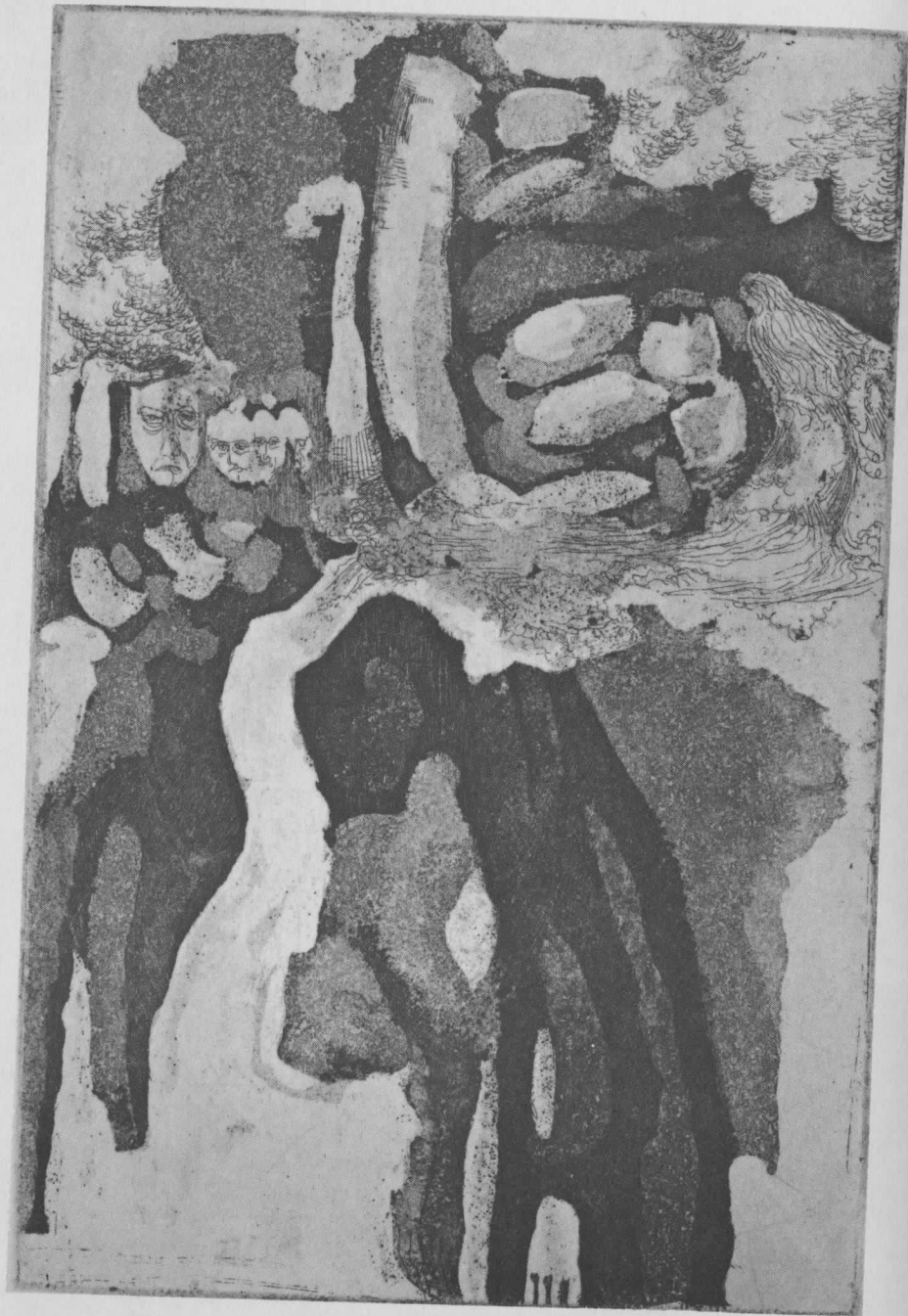


IRISH CONVERSATION

Peat boggles.
It tickles the sight of an asphalt-blind traveler,
swallows cool clouds from our speech
with its warmth.
Delicate surgeon--it opens hearts deftly,
pulls out a drawl, softens
clackety-clacking words,
billows on echoes of bogging
peat
boggled.

- Cary Ann Spear





ON THIS PLANET

Once I was twice as old as you
When you were tiny two
And I was four
 making a flower-crown
 in a paddy field
When you were on the other side of
 this planet; nine thousand miles apart
You were running
 across the lawn
With a big red balloon
 filled with dreams untouched
Didn't I feel
 the foot-steps of your tiny feet
 right under my feet?
Once I was twice as old as you
When the moon was
 singing a lullaby for you while
 the sun was high
 over my head

Since then
The sun has made a daily journey
 not knowing how many times
And the seasons repeated patiently
But the time flew backwards
When I crossed the Pacific
And I met
For the first time
That little boy with a balloon
Now grown tall and strong
Yet it must be you
Didn't I feel
 the foot-steps of your tiny feet
 right under my feet?
When I was twice as old as you
On the other side of
 this planet

- yasue aoki

