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*John Nash : Paintings and watercolours.*

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JOHN NASH: PAINTINGS AND WATERCOLOURS.

RODERICK JONES

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY OF THE COUNCIL  
FOR NATIONAL ACADEMIC AWARDS

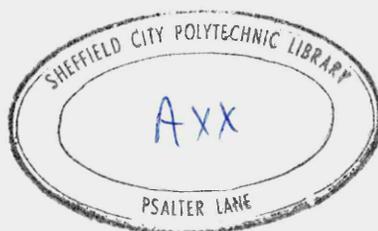
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Much of the material contained in this thesis is based upon a series of conversations which I had with the artist during the last years of his life. I am most grateful for his enthusiastic help and kindness in allowing me, during my frequent visits to his home at Bottengoms Farm, to work on a certain amount of material which was in his possession.

Since this study of the artist was written, the complete John Nash papers have been deposited in the Tate Gallery Archive, alongside those of his brother Paul.

My thanks to the supervisors of the thesis; to Professor Alan Bowness of the Courtauld Institute, from whom I have learned much, and Trevor Brighton of Sheffield City Polytechnic for his scrupulous reading of the text and much needed correction of my often wayward spelling and syntax. I am also indebted to the author and critic Ronald Blythe who had not only written perceptively on Nash but, as a long-standing friend of the artist, provided me with many valuable insights into his character. My thanks also to John Lewis whose book on Nash's illustrations and Andrew Causey of Manchester University whose doctoral dissertation on Paul Nash have made my task that much easier; to Richard Carline for providing me with technical information about his brother Sydney's working method which I could not have obtained by any other means; to Paul Lavigneur former faculty librarian at Sheffield City Polytechnic and his successor John Kirby and his staff for dealing so patiently with my interminable requests for the most inaccessible material; to Sarah Fox-Pitt and her staff at the Tate Gallery Archive; to the staff at the National Art Library, South Kensington; to the many friends and patrons of the artist and the professional staff of galleries, museums and libraries too numerous to mention, for their kindness, generosity and enthusiastic assistance; and finally to my wife for her invaluable advice and unflagging support.

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## OBJECTIVES

It has not been my intention to produce an exhaustive study of the work of John Nash. Rather, the thesis represents an attempt to construct a new critical framework - by revealing certain themes and strands within the work itself and certain patterns of influence and associations in relation to the contexts of modern British and European painting - which effectively demonstrates the value and significance of Nash's achievement. The concluding section of the work is devoted to a detailed examination of the critical writing, which seeks to establish the basis of the obvious discrepancy between the work and its evaluation.

## A NOTE ON METHOD

There is always a danger that a monograph of this kind will turn into a crusade which attempts to rescue the neglected genius from the oblivion to which he had been condemned by indolent and short-sighted critics. Mindful of this and as a result proceeding cautiously I have continually referred back to the work, with its inherent weaknesses and strengths, and used it as a testing ground for those of my assertions which could be regarded as being in any way novel or contentious.

I have taken the rather unorthodox step of considering the oils and watercolours in conjunction for two reasons. Firstly, because it facilitates the development of a much-needed overview of Nash's total output which, in turn, enables the characteristic pattern of his development to be revealed. Secondly, the approach is justified by the fact that Nash himself attempted, as it were, to eradicate the distinction between the two categories; to infuse his oil painting - which he thought of as the superior and almost obligatory medium for a professional artist - with the spontaneity of his watercolours. Because of the dearth of relevant primary source material and other factors, the work which Nash executed before 1939 is difficult to date with any degree of certainty. The crucially important records of the Goupil Gallery were destroyed in the London blitz of 1940 and Nash's personal sales record stops abruptly in 1929. In addition the works are often difficult to identify by their titles which are highly repetitive and often rather anonymous in character.

The dated works, of which there are comparatively few, fall into two categories - those dated at the time of execution and those dated retrospectively. It would seem as if the practice of retrospective dating was largely confined to the commercially successful last ten years of Nash's

life when dealers in particular were naturally anxious to establish the dates of the much sought after early works. Such dating is reasonably easy to discern, since it differs widely from the character of contemporary dating and often carries a 'circa' suffix. Although this kind of dating is understandably unreliable it nevertheless provides a rough guide which enables work to be more accurately dated by using other source material.

I have used as many of these paintings as circumstances have allowed although they do not, by any means, represent the total number of Nash's dated works. I have supplemented these with other works which can be dated with a reasonable degree of certainty on grounds either of style or other available information.

A few works of rather more doubtful identity and date are included on the strength of either their exceptional quality or the important role they play within particular lines of development.

I have included in the thesis only about half of the four hundred or so works which were originally considered.

Introduction: Early Life

John Northcote Nash was born in London on 11th April, 1893, the second son of Carolyn Maud and William Harry Nash. Nash's father was a barrister who later became Recorder of Abingdon. His paternal grandfather had been a Buckinghamshire landowner of some substance and although the family fortune had been spread necessarily rather thinly between his surviving ten children on his death, Nash himself was nevertheless afforded all the privileges of an Edwardian middle-class upbringing. Nash's father was controlled and undemonstrative in character though by no means remote from his children. His mother was less so although she too exhibited a natural sense of reserve. The sense of propriety and correctness which Nash inherited from his archetypal Edwardian father appears to have been something of a family trait. According to Lance Sieveking: '(Paul) Nash carried out everything that was required of him with a thoroughness and efficiency which obviously satisfied something in him that had been cultivated by his upbringing. His brother John . . . was just the same.'<sup>(1)</sup>

On account of his father's dwindling practice and a rather serious illness contracted by his mother, the family moved out of London to Iver Heath in Buckinghamshire in 1901. Despite the move Nash's mother grew steadily worse and she spent the rest of her remaining time in nursing homes of one kind or another until her death in 1910. Consequently Nash and his sister Barbara were thrown *into* the company of servants and his 'knowledge and interest in

1. Lance Sieveking, The Eye of the Beholder, Hulton Press, 1957, page 49.

plants was stimulated by an excellent governess, whose services were shared with a neighbour's household.'<sup>(1)</sup>

During this time Nash seems to have had little contact with his elder brother Paul, although John's rather aesthetic appearance must have struck Paul as the latter's autobiography suggests: 'I was not supposed to be sensitive. All that sort of thing was vested in my brother Jack, who was delicate and had silky auburn hair and very wide open eyes.'<sup>(2)</sup> The competitive character of this reference to their early lives is typical of Paul's general attitude to his brother. (See below)

### School

Nash had a conventional education; he attended Langley Place preparatory school first as a day boy and then from 1905 as a boarder. In 1909 he went on to Wellington College where he remained until the summer of 1911. Public school education was still at that time a fairly brutal affair; the birch was still in use and new boys were still subjected to severe bullying from the hardened inmates. Wellington itself had a justifiable reputation for toughness even by Edwardian standards; the accent, in Nash's dormitory especially, was on sport and outdoor activities of all kinds. He did not suffer as his brother had done in similar circumstances however, and after the obligatory period of bullying he felt that he 'was beginning to emerge as an individual.'<sup>(3)</sup> By means of what Nash himself described as 'innate cunning'<sup>(4)</sup> he was able to avoid distasteful things 'I went in for the Botany prize at Wellington, in order to avoid cricket. Some sports had to be played and I chose

1. John Nash, The Artist Plantsman, Anthony d'Offay, 1976.
2. Paul Nash, Outline, Faber and Faber, 1947, page 49.
3. Conversation with the artist.
4. Ibid.

Fives. With freedom to ramble and collect specimens, I spent two agreeable summer terms.<sup>(1)</sup>

### Early Influences

From early in his life Nash saw watercolours by Edward Lear in the collection of his aunt Augusta Bethel. They must have impressed since he made a point of seeking out further examples of Lear's work which were to be found in small London galleries before 1917. Lear's Nonsense Books were also a feature of the brothers early lives which must certainly have encouraged and perhaps even have engendered John's interest in comic drawings.

Paul Nash obviously provided the most important link with the world of art during these early years. Between 1907 and 1910 Paul designed a number of book plates in the Rossetti/Crane manner which strongly affected his younger brother. Although John became, to use his own word, 'saturated'<sup>(2)</sup> with the Pre-Raphaelites, they must have been relatively short-lived as a major influence since his style never even approximates to that of the Pre-Raphaelites.<sup>(3)</sup>

He became greatly excited by the work of Cotman, De Wint and others of the English Watercolour School which he saw reproduced in a bound volume of Studio magazine at Iver Heath. Again he was motivated to the extent of visiting the Victoria and Albert Museum fairly regularly to see more of their work. By the summer of 1914 Nash would have seen further examples of the school - Girtin, Crome and Cozens -

1. The Artist Plantsman, op.cit.
2. Conversation with the artist.
3. The only evidence of possible Pre-Raphaelite influence is seen in the subject-matter of two early watercolours which were exhibited at the d'Offay Cowper Galleries in April 1973: Balaam and the Ass (13) and Biblical Scene (14).

### Early Maturity

According to Paul Nash: 'Jack left Wellington with a fair all round reputation and the distinction of winning the Botany Prize.'<sup>(2)</sup> Prompted by a natural desire to be independent and to assist with the family budget, Nash was anxious to gain employment.

Various careers were suggested, but, having failed to gain a place at Oxford, Nash joined the staff of the Middlesex and Bucks Reporter some months after leaving Wellington. Paul Nash said of his brother that: 'He showed one quality, the mentality of a scholar' and in addition: '(his) dark fine profile and scholarly, slightly elaborate manner of talking'<sup>(3)</sup> were greatly admired.

John's humorous writings, which he had developed out of his journalistic material, were rejected by the publisher Grant Richards but he was encouraged to continue with the drawings which he was executing on his trips as reporter into the Buckinghamshire countryside.

Although Paul gave John a great deal of assistance at this time the relationship between them was far from straightforward. In particular Paul's attitude to his brother was manifestly complex and contradictory. On the

1. Nash, one feels, was excited by the medium itself, by the variety of technical procedures employed by members of the school. There is no evidence to suggest that he was subject to any specific influence to the extent of modelling himself on any one artist.
2. Paul Nash. Original manuscript of Outline, the National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum, London.
3. Paul Nash, Outline, op.cit., page 118.

one hand Paul's fierce sense of family loyalty and responsibility as the elder brother prompted him to give John a great deal of support and advice. On the other hand Paul's extreme ambition, which made him jealous of the success of others, prompts one to see this protective and supportive attitude as a means of influencing, and thus effectively controlling, the activities of a rival.

There is considerable evidence of Paul Nash's equivocal attitude - his account, for example, of his brother's career is interesting in this respect:

About this time he began to make what was known in the family as 'comic drawings'. They were quite casual at first, drawn on odd pieces of paper usually from father's revision books in pen and ink and consisted of various sorts of ludicrous happenings or series of absurdities not unlike James Thurber has invented at a much later period in another country. Gradually these drawings took on a more purposeful look. Watching them closely as I did I became aware of something more than an original 'comic' vision which Jack undoubtedly possessed. They began to show an intrinsic sense of plan and decoration. More than this the incidental features of the comic events, especially forms of natural objects in landscape for instance, even some animals seem to be drawn with an intuitive understanding which made them extraordinarily convincing. I noticed these developments with growing interest. Then, one day, I came upon a small sketch made on Jack's excursion as a reporter, a little view of flooded meadows under a night sky with a hedge of trees mounting in the foreground. The moment I saw it I was convinced my brother was an artist and must be given every chance to work out whatever talent was in him. I remember the excitement of this discovery and feeling so confident that I could not be mistaken that I told my father that there need be no more speculation as to Jack's career, he was going to be an artist . . . from that time, Jack continued to grow as an artist with surprising speed. There was no question of him

being hurried, he hurried us as this history will presently show. (1)

In early June Paul Nash sent a parcel of his brother's drawings to his friend Gordon Bottomley who responded enthusiastically:

We think he shows real promise - considerable promise. I don't know how the instinct for draughtmanship entered your family, but it is there and it would be useless to try and chill it. He has not only a good sense of decorative disposition of his masses, but his blacks have a beautiful quality, and his pen touch is crisp and clear and delicate and exquisitely balanced . . . In facility and lucidity and directness of expression, and in his faculty of keeping his material untroubled he has advantage over you; but of course it remains to be seen if he can preserve these qualities when he has as much to say as you have. (2)

Paul Nash replied on the 12th July:

I was right glad to have your splendid letter, you have a seemingly inexhaustible store of generous words. Jack is very much set up for the rest of 'is natural', as the vulgar have it, upon your high praise - I don't mean it has swollen his headpiece for he ever expresses a mild surprise at any appreciation upon his drawings, which he does at odd times on odd bits of paper when he has nothing else to do. I, from time to time, raid his desk or the waste paper basket or the corners of the room and collect odd bits of paper rather like a park keeper in Kensington Gardens, and after a sorting of chaff from grains, tho' to be sure it's all chaff, I select the best and cut them into a decent shape and mount them. At first Jack used to be so delighted at the good appearance of his drawings when mounted that he fully believed that it was entirely owing

1. Paul Nash, Manuscript of Outline, op.cit.
2. Letter of 7 July, 1912. Published in Poet & Painter, being the correspondence between Gordon Bottomley and Paul Nash, Oxford University Press, 1955, page 37.

to the way I set them up and drew lines around them; gradually it has dawned on him tho' that it must be he that has done a good drawing - this is a pity because he now becomes a little too conscious and careful, with the result of his designs are not so naïve and simple . . . I myself have no doubt he has a most interesting self to develop, and work to produce, but how and in what direction I really am not certain.(1)

Obviously Paul had not by that time encountered the drawing which convinced him that his brother should embark on an artistic career. He must have come across it soon after, however, since John's job as a reporter came to an end in August. Paul might well have been alarmed at Bottomley's 'seemingly inexhaustible store of generous words' and in particular by the suggestion that John was in some ways more gifted than himself.

His letter seems to cast some doubt both on John's commitment and his ability. The picture that Paul paints of John as a lackadaisical doodler is certainly at odds with the facts, for by this time John was producing landscape watercolours (see Plate 3), he had already submitted work to the New English Art Club (see over), and he was discussing the possibility of professional training with Paul.

The letter also suggests that John's naïve talent was rather lightweight, more suited to the production of comic drawings and the like. Paul's criticism of the lack of naïvety and simplicity, which is, in fact, so evident in the work of this period, suggests that he was applying criteria which are perhaps more applicable to comic drawing than to landscape painting.

1. Letter of 12 July 1912. Published in Poet & Painter, *ibid*, page 37.

Paul might well have felt that comic illustration provided a suitable career for his brother that was sufficiently different from, and considerably below that of painting in the hierarchy, not to pose any kind of threat to his own career. Certainly, Paul encouraged his brother a good deal to work in this field. He brought some of these drawings to the attention of William Rothenstein as early as 1910. If the extant examples are typical then Rothenstein's apparently very favourable response must have been more to the formal character of the drawings themselves than to their humorous content. John frequently exhibited humorous drawings during his early career (until the early 1920's) and they were quite extensively published in magazines and elsewhere after 1918. In 1919 Paul commented on his brother's early talent as a comic illustrator which John had by that time become; writing under an assumed name as art critic of The New Witness he described some of John's drawings as 'the work of a genius'.<sup>(1)</sup>

Paul Nash continued to have doubts about his brother's artistic abilities; they were confided to William Rothenstein's son - Sir John Rothenstein - just before the Second World War. According to Rothenstein: "(Paul) said with deliberation, 'It was I that encouraged Jack to be a painter and I'm still not sure that I did rightly; I don't know whether he has the painters' imagination'".<sup>(2)</sup> We may suppose that this view expressed in private is closer to the truth than the later public, and probably more politic, statement that 'There was no question of John being hurried, he hurried us as this history will presumably show'.

1. The New Witness, 19 September, 1919.
2. Sir John Rothenstein, Modern English Painters: Lewis to Moore, Eyre & Spottiswoode, London, 1956, Page 23.

All this would be unimportant were it not for the fact that John's attitude in terms of expectation and achievement would necessarily have been affected by Paul's continuing, and not entirely disinterested, influence which also had a clearly discernible effect on the critical evaluation of the work itself. (See chapter 12)

Paul may have had additional reasons for urging his brother on in the field of comic drawing. In May 1912 he wrote to William Rothenstein concerning John's submission to the summer exhibition of the New English Art Club: 'Jack is sending too - a pair of drawings of some humour; calculated to disturb even the gravity of Tonks but they are charming designs also'.<sup>(1)</sup> Which suggests that Paul was using the drawings as a promotional device, a subversive ploy to draw attention to the work of the two brothers (which were often hung together at this time), to precipitate comment and even, in the context of the New English Art Club exhibition, possible controversy.<sup>(2)</sup>

#### Claughton Pellew

After leaving Wellington, Nash was drawn, by degrees, into the world of art and artists. He met a number of his brother's Slade friends who occasionally came to stay at Iver Heath, among them Ben Nicholson, Eric Kennington, Rupert Lee and Claughton Pellew. The latter was a romantic and rather mysterious figure whose precocious technical ability as an artist and deep love of nature greatly impressed the Nashs.<sup>(3)</sup>

1. Letter dated 14 May 1912. National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
2. These drawings were submitted on Paul's advice. Conversation with the artist.
3. According to his niece, Pellew was passionately interested in country life and the close, almost ritual, association between country people and their natural surroundings. As an artist he was greatly influenced by Millet, Segantini, Blake and Palmer.

The striking composition and confident handling of the small drawing of 1914 (Plate 1) is evidence of Pellow's accomplished style.

While staying for a weekend at Iver Heath in the autumn of 1911 Pellow tried to interest Paul in certain features of the countryside, particularly hay ricks and corn stooks. Paul said of this instruction 'At first . . . I was unable to understand an almost devotional approach to a haystack and listened doubtfully to a rhapsody on the beauty of its form. Such objects, and indeed the whole organic life of the countryside were still, for me, only the properties and scenes of my 'visions'. Slowly, however, the individual beauty of certain things, trees particularly, began to dawn on me.'<sup>(1)</sup>

Pellow and John Nash quickly became friends and in the autumn of 1912 they went on a walking tour of Norfolk together which strengthened Nash's commitment and helped to discipline his approach to nature. Nash was impressed by Pellow's almost overriding concern with technical issues and by the high-keyed luminous quality of his watercolours. The influence of Pellow's example can clearly be discerned in Nash's own watercolours before 1917.

But more fundamentally Nash was greatly encouraged by the fact that the demonstrably intense and romantic character of Pellow's work derived from a wholehearted commitment to the 'natural' motif, without, that is to say, resorting to invented forms of the kind that Paul Nash was using at the time. In this sense both Pellow and Nash have their roots in the work of Millet, Courbet and significantly

1. Quoted in Bertram, Paul Nash, The Portrait of an Artist, Faber, 1947, page 68.

Cézanne. This group distinguished between invention and imagination - invention, they thought, was not a necessary vehicle of expression whereas the imagination was always invoked in the process of selecting and ordering the components of the motif itself. Thus Pellow and Nash are part of a realist tradition which occupies an intermediate position between Baudelaire on the one hand, and Manet and the early Impressionists on the other.

Nash said of Pellow: 'I owe him a great debt for his encouragement and advice at an impressionable age and his more mature views opened out a new world for me which his accomplished technique in his watercolours and engravings set me a standard to be achieved.'<sup>(1)</sup>

### Training

On his brother's<sup>1</sup> advice Nash did not attend art school. According to John: 'Paul was not very happy at the Slade and he opposed me going there or to any other art school, and he used to tell me how lucky I was to begin free from the disadvantages of conventional training'.<sup>(2)</sup> Although this advice may not have been given entirely for altruistic reasons Paul, nevertheless, to some extent, felt that his brother's<sup>1</sup> natural talent<sup>(3)</sup> would have been stifled and eventually destroyed by conventional training - the advice would have been given in the light of his own experiences at the Slade with its mortifying curriculum of incessant life and cast~~e~~ drawing.

1. John Nash, Forward to a Commemorative Exhibition of Paintings and Prints by Cloughton Pellow, The Assembly House, Norwich, August - September, 1967.
2. Quoted in Rothenstein, op.cit., page 236.
3. Paul had informed John that he possessed a certain naïve talent. Conversation with the artist.

John had already attracted some attention and he may even have sold work by the summer of 1912 when he discussed the possibility of training with his brother Paul. Consequently, he was sufficiently confident of his own abilities to accept Paul's advice. Nash said later: 'I was feeling rather pleased with myself and thinking perhaps that I did not need any training.'<sup>(1)</sup>

John visited the Slade fairly regularly at this time and he had some reservations about it on his own account. According to Alvaro Guevara who was a student at the time: 'John (Nash) said that had he not been to public school he would have found the affluence and snobbery alarming.'<sup>(2)</sup> Although he later regretted this lack of formal training, his 'foundling status' was a positive advantage since he was taken up and fostered by a group of artists who represented some of the more forward-looking tendencies in English art in the turbulent years before the First World War.

Impressionable and most of all receptive as the situation demanded, John took advice from all quarters - from sympathetic collectors like Sir Michael Sadler and Albert Rutherston, from gallery directors and owners like William Marchant and Arthur Clifton, and most of all from a group of practising artists which represented a glittering array of talent - Rothenstein, Gilman, Gertler, Sickert, Gore, Pissarro and others.

The decision not to attend art school was quite a daring one for someone setting out on an artistic career

1. Conversation with the artist.
2. Quoted in Latin among the Lions - Alvaro Guevara, Diane Holman Hunt, Michael Joseph, 1974, page 51.

in 1912 when notions of professionalism were more heavily subscribed to than they are today. Nevertheless, it provided Nash with the necessary qualification to enter this radical circle since the freshness and innocence of his vision had not been corrupted or sullied by insensitive and backward-looking art school practices. On the other hand, it justified those of the artistic establishment who saw in his work only the struggles of a naive amateur.

### First Exhibition

By the late summer of 1912, Nash was committed to an artistic career, but apart from having a watercolour - Allotments - accepted by the New English Art Club in May 1913, he did not exhibit on any large scale before November of that year.<sup>(1)</sup>

By October 1913 he was sufficiently highly regarded to be invited, along with his brother, to contribute to a book of drawings and paintings by the younger generation of English artists. The book was later intended as a companion piece to the famous Georgian Poetry under the same editorship of Sir Edward Marsh. Although preliminary discussions took place early in 1914 to decide on the format of the publication, no work, as far as I can determine, was specifically produced for it.

In November 1913, Paul and John Nash held a joint exhibition at the Dorien Leigh Galleries in South Kensington which attracted a good deal of attention. William Rothenstein persuaded a number of important and influential people in the art world to visit the exhibition, among

1. According to records which Nash himself kept during his early career he sold twelve watercolours and one humorous drawing in the following year, 1913.

them Gilman, Sickert, Bevan, Fry, Rutherston and Sir Michael Sadler, the latter two making purchases for their collections of modern art. The response was almost wholly favourable; even Roger Fry gave his approval. Paul reported to William Rothenstein and noted that: 'Jack's work made a real excitement.'<sup>(1)</sup>

What was it about the character of the exhibition that obviously caused such excitement? According to Frederick Gore: 'The watercolours which (John and Paul Nash) first showed appeared to do to the letter what advanced artists and teachers had been advocating for years (and still seems the hardest thing to do) to draw exactly what you see regardless of academic system or stylistic conventions . . . In England where watercolour painting in particular was overloaded with technical mumbo jumbo, the Nashes' directness and simplicity effectively demonstrated the virtue of innocence.'<sup>(2)</sup> This may explain why John's work probably received more attention<sup>(3)</sup> since it did not, to the same extent, exhibit the mannered and languidly elegant character of fin de siecle painting which was still very evident in the work of his brother - instead it seemed to express those qualities of directness and innocence of which Frederick Gore speaks and about which Nash's contemporaries were so enthusiastic.

### London Life

Events began to move quickly for Nash after the Dorian Leigh exhibition; within a few months he made contact with and gained the approval of all the radical groups which

1. Letter dated circa mid-November 1913 by Anthony Bertram. See Nash/Bottomley, op.cit., page 66.
2. An Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings by John Nash C.B.E., R.A., /exhibition catalogue/ introduction Frederick Gore, Royal Academy of Arts, 1967.
3. John sold more work than Paul. Paul commented to Bottomley: '. . . Jack has now sold seven and I four, tho' in value my four make nearly as much as Jack's seven'. See Nash/Bottomley, op.cit., page 67.

were active in London immediately before the First World War. Arthur Clifton of the Carfax Gallery bought one of Nash's watercolours - Football Match - from the Dorian Leigh exhibition, with the result that he was drawn into the circle of radical young painters associated with the small gallery off Jermyn Street - Stanley Spencer, John Currie and Mark Gertler. His work was liked by Gilman, Ginner, Bevan and Gore and he became associated with the group of painters centred on 19 Fitzroy Street and received the approval of Sickert, Pissarro and Wyndham Lewis.

In December 1913 he and his brother were invited to join the Friday Club, to which Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant belonged at that time. In the same month he was invited by Spencer Gore, who was president of the Camden Town Group, to exhibit at Brighton.<sup>(1)</sup> Early in 1914 Nash visited Italy on the proceeds of the Dorian Leigh exhibition, staying at a villa just outside Florence. He visited the Uffizi Art Gallery and did several sketches of the surrounding countryside of which two at least were worked up into finished watercolours on his return to England.

Nash's friendships were not confined to those artists whose work most closely resembled his own however - he knew the Vorticist painter Frederick Etchells very well at this time<sup>(2)</sup> and he was particularly sympathetic to Wyndham Lewis whose precise quality of line drawing he greatly admired.<sup>(3)</sup> He also seems to have established a rapport with Mark Gertler on the basis of their same dual commitment to tangible reality on the one hand and to design on the other.

1. At this now famous exhibition entitled Work of English Post Impressionists, Cubists others arranged by the Camden Town Group Nash showed five watercolours and a humorous drawing - About a Pig (95).
2. Etchells later published Nash's Poisonous Plants in 1927
3. Conversation with the artist.

One of the remarkable things about Nash was his ability to run with the hare and the hounds; to establish and maintain contact with different individuals and groups who were themselves sometimes bitterly opposed. Thus his friendship with Gertler continued at least until the middle 1920's - they exhibited at the same time at the Goupil Gallery in October, 1921 and they held a joint exhibition with Gilbert Spencer again at the Goupil Gallery in 1926 - despite Nash's close friendship with his fellow London and Cumberland Market Group members, Gilman, Ginner and Bevan whose work Gertler deplored. According to Christopher Neve: "In November, 1915, when he exhibited at the London Group Show held at the Goupil Gallery, (Gertler) was brutally critical of fellow exhibitors who included Gilman, Ginner and Bevan. 'All the pictures except my own were composed of washed-out purples and greens, and they matched so well that it seemed almost as if the artists all collaborated to create a harmony at the show.'"<sup>(1)</sup> Nash was on the fringes of the Bloomsbury Group in the 1920's, he knew Duncan Grant well and sometimes visited Garsington for weekends, despite his brother's feud with Roger Fry.

Nash became a founder member of the London Group when the Camden Town Group was expanded in late 1913 or early 1914; he showed with the Group at the first exhibition at the Goupil Gallery in March, 1914.<sup>(2)</sup> During the first few months of 1914 he was exhibiting fairly regularly - in February he showed at the Friday Club,<sup>(3)</sup> in March he exhibited at Leeds with his brother,<sup>(4)</sup> in May at the Whitechapel Gallery<sup>(5)</sup> and in April at the New English Art Club.

1. Quoted in Country Life, 2 June, 1977, page 1506.
2. He showed three watercolour drawings and About a Pig (55).
3. A watercolour The Holly Tree.
4. A watercolour Italian Landscape (Plate 5).
5. At this large and very important exhibition entitled Twentieth Century Art. A Review of Modern Movements Nash showed a watercolour Landscape in Norfolk, (182) and two humorous drawings (181) and (183).

Although Nash was as much appropriated by as thrown in his lot with the radical artists before the war, as a member of the London Group his work was either impugned or, as was more usual, ignored by the critics. Most of them saw modern English art as a passing fashion - arriviste in character and having little relation to the national life. Many forecast, rather paradoxically, that it would be swept away by the war - the fact that it survived the upheaval was proof to some of its marginal social significance and essentially unBritish character.<sup>(1)</sup> Yet modern art was generally regarded with suspicion since it opposed the artistic, and thus by implication, the social and political establishment. Paul and John Nash were hardly mentioned in reviews before 1916. John was rather exceptionally singled out for praise, together with Spencer Gore, by the art critic of The Times in a review of the first London Group exhibition in March 1914.<sup>(2)</sup>

### The War

With the coming of the war, the brothers felt the need to make themselves in some way useful to the war effort. To this end they harvested in Dorset in the autumn of 1914 and subsequently trained as ambulance and Red Cross men. Soon after, Paul enlisted and John came up to London early in 1915, taking rooms in Marchmont Street opposite Russell Square tube station.

By this time he was closely associated with Gilman, Ginner and Bevan in the Cumberland Market Group into which they had gravitated when Gore died in March, 1914 and the Fitzroy Street meetings came to an end. However, the Group

1. This view persisted among some critics. Writing in The Studio in June, 1937, William Gaunt describes Nash as 'not so modern as to be unEnglish'.
2. The Times, 12 March, 1914.

continued to meet on Saturday afternoons in Bevan's studio above the Cumberland market where pictures were shown, discussed and sometimes sold before tea was taken. Nash would often go on to the Café Royal which was at that time an important meeting place for the radical artists and writers of the capital. His continuing contribution to the war effort made for a rather bizarre existence - during the day working as a volunteer, making tents for Mappin and Webb at the White City for two pence per hour and in the evening and at weekends frequenting radical art circles as one of the younger British painters. In February 1916 Nash became a clerk at the Ministry of Munitions' 'Offers of Service Department' where he remained until August 1916. Although circumstances forced him to vacate his rooms and return to Iver Heath he nevertheless remained in contact with the London art world and often stayed over at Sir Edward Marsh's flat in Judd Street.

#### Harold Gilman

By April, 1914 some members of the London Group, notably Gilman and Ginner, felt it necessary to pin their colours to the Realist mast to distinguish themselves from others of the group who were pursuing a more modern course.<sup>(1)</sup> Consequently, Ginner published an article in The New Age entitled Neo-Realism which was subsequently reprinted as the forward to an exhibition of work by Gilman and Ginner held at the Goupil Gallery in April, 1916. This article could be seen as the manifesto of the Neo-Realist School in general and of the Cumberland Market Group in particular which held their only exhibition at the Goupil

1. According to Alan Bowness: 'Gore might well have thrown in his lot with the revolutionaries had he lived, but Gilman and Ginner found it necessary to take a firm stand under the banner of Neo-Realism in 1914'. Decade 1910-1920 /exhibition catalogue/ introduction and notes, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1965.

Although Nash was a founder member of the group he by no means wholeheartedly subscribed to the dogmatic and doctrinaire aesthetic of Neo-Realism. Nash obviously appealed to Gilman and Ginner because he accentuated the abstract qualities of colour, pattern and line to produce highly decorative though strongly constructed work which effectively demonstrated the process of seeing nature through the temperament.

Gilman was anxious to disseminate his Neo-Realist doctrines - which were, in essence, anti-academic and pro nature - to the younger generation in particular, and he had certainly been conveying these ideas to Nash from early in 1914 when Nash began to frequent the Fitzroy Street meetings.

How did these ideas affect Nash? According to Frederick Gore: 'On his side Nash needed to take from other painters at that moment, not ideas or aesthetic influences, but practical advice . . . Nash's new colleagues saw painting as a job to be properly learnt.'<sup>(1)</sup> Gilman's influence as Gore implies, was largely of a practical and technical nature. There is no evidence to suggest that Nash was radically affected by Gilman or any other member of the Cumberland Market Group. Indeed, Nash himself said that he was rather startled by the work of the Camden Town painters <sup>(2)</sup> and his work clearly indicates that he was never completely won over by English Post-Impressionism. He did not really approve of Gilman's work, in particular, with its heavy, painterly, clearly individuated and systematic matrix of

1. Gore, op.cit., page 5.
2. Conversation with the artist.

brushstrokes, bright colour and blunt realism which contrast with his own broader, more decorative and lyrical effusions.

Gilman's is a public art form; by drawing attention to the material reality of painting it declaims the existence of the artist who, to some extent, imposes his will on the public. Nash had some misgivings about this promotional aspect as a general characteristic of modern painting. By contrast his own work is accessible rather than thrusting, it invites inspection, it reveals a common and thus shared experience; it treads a kind of subtle middle-ground between the kind of painting which plays up the role of the artist and that which attempts to eradicate him altogether by presenting a reflected image of the world which it represents. The Nashes commitment to nature was such that: 'each in his different way became important and central to the main course of English painting after the war',<sup>(1)</sup> when the self-conscious concern with method and form, which characterised much pre-war painting, to some extent waned in the widespread re-discovery of the English landscape.

The importance of Gilman's influence lay in the fact that his professionalism consolidated and rationalised the procedures which Nash had, to some extent, already adopted, by providing more powerful and refined technical means. From Gilman, Nash learned to transfer the drawings - which, as a result of Pellew's influence, had become the basis of his painting - to the canvas by means of rigorous squaring. He began to use undiluted paint, since Gilman believed that linseed oil tended to dull colours. He was made aware of the fact that white is never a neutral colour but always, to a greater or lesser extent, suffused with the colour of an

1. Gore, op.cit., page 6.

adjacent area, and he began to make black from a mixture of red, green and blue which gave, according to Gilman, a richer effect.

### The Paintings

While still at Wellington, Nash began to embellish the letters which he sent to his family with comic drawings of the day-to-day events of school life which he had found amusing. Paul encouraged him to develop his evident talent in this field and An Accident, chalk and wash, (Plate 2) of circa 1912 is generally considered to be one of the earliest surviving examples of comic drawing which Nash frequently exhibited during his early career. This drawing is clearly not intended to be anything more than a humorous and light-hearted piece with the amusing, caricature-like figures set in a very simple context.

His output was soon augmented by watercolour landscapes which were initially drawn from memory and rather romantic in character,<sup>(1)</sup> but, at Paul's suggestion, Nash began to work directly from the landscape motif. As Nash's earliest extant landscape painting Cross Roads, Gerrards Cross (Plate 3) of 1912 is perhaps typical of the work which was attracting so much attention at this time, for although it would be foolish to suggest that it represents nature 'regardless of academic system or stylish conventions' (see Gore, Page 12) it does nevertheless appear to be refreshingly emancipated from the conventions of contemporary landscape painting. Indeed, it seems curiously unaffected by the various styles of the landscape tradition. Yet at the same time the painting is reasonably competent, despite the rather cramped and confused disposition of the various components, it does not exhibit those obviously winsome naïv-

1. No examples survive.

ities of primitive painting. The rich sonorous colours which are reminiscent of Pellew and startlingly unconventional - though by no means incompetent - tonal arrangement are to be noted. Nash was gaining the approval of his contemporaries by striking exactly the right note of unaffected self-possession in his work.

The large drawing Allotment Gardens, ink, crayon and watercolour, (Plate 4) of circa 1912<sup>(1)</sup> occupies a position somewhere between An Accident (Plate 2) and Cross Roads, Gerrards Cross, exhibiting some of the naivety of the former with the competent handling of the latter. In this very detailed work Nash has painstakingly recorded and carefully presented a great variety of plant forms by using extensive counterchange. Beyond the elms in the middle distance on the left - which are strongly reminiscent of the trees which were occupying his brother at this time - is a pellucid landscape of great subtlety and economy. The clarity and brilliance of the watercolour is, as Gordon Bottomley intimated to Paul Nash, 'rather like Piero della Francesca.'<sup>(2)</sup>

This quality is again evident in About a Pig, chalk and wash, of circa 1913<sup>(3)</sup> although the caricature description of men and animals and markedly linear construction are very similar to An Accident. Nevertheless one is constantly drawn to the limpid and evocative landscape setting

1. Probably executed at the same time as Allotments which was shown with the New English Art Club in May 1913, and sold to Sir Michael Sadler.
2. Letter of 17 July, 1913. Nash/Bottomley, op.cit., pp 59-60.
3. Nash exhibited the painting at the Dorien Leigh Galleries in November 1913. It was bought by his brother and is now in the possession of Ruth Clarke.

along the fence which curves into the composition.

The brilliant clarity and strong colours of Italian Landscape (Plate 5), which Nash painted early in 1914,<sup>(1)</sup> might well have been inspired as much by the landscape paintings of Augustus John, Derwent Lees and J. D. Innes—which Nash probably saw in exhibitions of the New English Art Club and Camden Town Group—as by the Italian countryside itself. Nash's colour is characteristically less aggressive and more atmospheric however, despite the strong tonal contrasts. This accomplished piece testifies to the rapid progress Nash was making at this time.

The Threshing Machine, pen, chalk and wash, (Plate 6) of 1914 and Steam Ploughing, pen, chalk and wash, (Plate 7) of circa 1915<sup>(2)</sup> are, in some senses, exercises in technical handling and compositional arrangement. Both are ambitious works which depict complex machinery with figures in a landscape setting and both have the character of coloured drawings, since the colour fills the spaces between the bounding lines without obscuring them.

The plough share in the smaller of the two drawing

1. The probably retrospective signature which is not typical of the period casts some doubt on the date of 1915. Nash visited Italy early in 1914 and he exhibited Italian Landscape at Leeds later that Spring. He also exhibited another watercolour of Italy, The Courtyard Coreggi with the NEAC in May. The decorative treatment of the forms and strongly linear character of Italian Landscape are closer to The Threshing Machine (Plate 6) of 1914 than to the looser and more naturalistic landscapes of 1915 and 1916.
2. Steam Ploughing was shown with the London Group in November, 1915 (44). It was likely executed in the late Spring of that year since it is dated 1915 in the catalogue. It was shown at Nash's one-man exhibition at the Goupil Gallery in October, 1921 with the date 1915 (90).

Steam Ploughing has been closely observed and carefully executed though not accurately described. This share which runs into the picture and parallel to the furrows looks unnaturally elongated and incongruously large towards its right extremity since the perspectival character of its wedge shape associates it with the distant traction engine. The focal point of the picture on the extreme right is reinforced by the smoke which issues from the foreground traction engine as it contributes to pleasing composition of harmoniously integrated parts. In the same way the figures seem sufficiently at one with the machinery which they operate to off-set their rather stiff archetypal character.

In contrast The Threshing Machine seems disturbingly obtrusive upon the marvellously evocative landscape in which it is set. The quietitude of this landscape, with its bare trees, empty sky and slanting winter sunlight, has been shattered by the appearance of this alien, grotesque and faintly comical machine which lumbers awkwardly and noisily through the gate in its conspicuously bright orange coat.

Before the war, Nash often sketched the countryside near Cheltenham and Gloucestershire Landscape (Plate 8), an oil of 1914 is, in part, derived from sketches done in the area around Cleve Hill which particularly attracted Nash as it later attracted his brother, who painted some of his last watercolours there.

Given that it must represent one of Nash's first attempts at oil painting it is a considerable achievement. It is a composite work in the sense that the middle and backgrounds are derived from the Gloucestershire motif whereas the foreground is derived from a different source. The composite quality is clearly evident; the foreground is not satisfactorily related to the rest of the design since the contour which divides the foreground from the middleground is unnaturally sharp. The shadow which continues this con-

tour at the bottom right of the design has obviously been added to assist this integration, but in this it has not been wholly successful and as a consequence the relationship between foreground and middleground is not clearly articulated. The ideographic character of the foreground, which suggests that it is imaginative in origin, serves to underline this disjunction.

The delineation of forms and paint texture are tentative and experimental in character. Nash has obviously struggled to articulate both the overall structure and to represent the foliage of the central tree, and further struggle is indicated by the evidence of extensive over-painting.

What the picture lacks in terms of structural clarity and cohesion it makes up for in the strength and inventiveness of its two-dimensional design. The large tree in the middleground is placed on the central vertical axis of the painting. This centrality is reinforced by the almost vertical contour of the cloud immediately above it which is only broken by the wedge shapes of the shadow of the central tree and the cornfield at the bottom of the composition. The vigorous pattern of light and dark landscape forms is continued into the unusually dramatic sky. The contours of the clouds themselves seem to mirror those of the trees below so that the former appear as reflections of the latter. The dramatic and incisive rays of the sun are starkly contrasted with the organic forms of the landscape.

The strongly contrasted green, blue, yellow and grey colours of the painting are very much in accord with its vigorous and dramatic character. The two trees immediately to the left of the central tree in the middleground are ambiguously related since one is placed literally on top of the other. The passage can be read in two different ways; either as two separate trees, the larger behind the smaller;

or alternatively, as one tree with two groups of foliage. This picture is prophetic in the sense that it utilises a number of devices which frequently appear in Nash's later work; for example, the use of two or more motifs to construct an individual painting and the introduction of a rectilinear component as a stiffening member into a composition which is predominantly organic. The audaciously symmetrical design, strong tonal contrasts and dramatic use of vibrant colours of this painting point to Pellew's powerful and continuing influence. The dry quality and deliberate and sometimes heavy-handed application of the paint which is so characteristic of Nash's oils may be attributed as much to the influence of landscape painters like Manson, Clausen and Rothenstein whose work he must have seen at the New English Art Club exhibitions and elsewhere as to the direct influence of Gilman and Ginner.

Nash returned to the farming theme with the relatively large Threshing (Plate 9) of 1915, but now using the new, and judging by the awkward conception of men and machinery and simple bright local colours, the obviously more difficult oil medium. Although the picture as a whole has the appeal of charming naïvety, it must, to some extent have represented the parting of the ways for Nash since the stiff childish forms of the foreground contrast markedly with the supple and diverse landscape components. Nash only very occasionally returned to this subject after 1915<sup>(1)</sup>; he

1. Nash produced one other picture on the farming theme in 1915 - an oil entitled The Three Carts, Royal Academy, 1967 (1). Several other examples from the period 1911-1918 are extant: Hedger at Work of circa 1914, chalk and wash, Royal Academy, 1967 (71), The Allotment of circa 1913, watercolour, Royal Academy, 1967 (75), The Reaper, ink and sanguine, d'Offay Cowper Galleries, 1973 (15), and Threshing, crayon and watercolour, d'Offay Cowper Galleries, 1973 (19).

reformulated the theme of man and nature so that man himself is present only to the extent that he leaves the marks of his labour upon the landscape itself. In considering these early pictures it is not difficult to understand why Nash was thought to 'keep a pretty toy shop convention . . . in landscapes'.<sup>(1)</sup>

Trees in Flood (Plate 10) of circa 1915 was the first of Nash's pictures to enter a public collection when Sir Michael Sadler presented it to the Leeds City Art Gallery in 1915.<sup>(2)</sup> This is an elegant painting which exhibits a high degree of technical expertise in the handling of the watercolour medium. The brilliant, saturated greens and strong, tonal contrasts are typical of this time but the elegant treatment of the forms and evidently linear character look back to earlier work. Despite the rather conventional appearance which stems from the informed technique, the painting exhibits, even at this early date, a number of characteristically Nash-like features: the extensive use of counterchange, the flattening effect of reflected images, the vertical accent, the interaction of components located at different fictive depths, the use of a central, though not dominant, motif and the curiously unfocused character of the composition.

Nash painted A Dorset Landscape, chalk and wash (Plate 11) at Turnerspuddle while working on an abortive project to decorate the village hall at nearby Bryantspuddle in 1915.<sup>(3)</sup>

1. The Times, 11 February, 1915.
2. In his sales records Nash noted the picture as Trees in a Pond.
3. This scheme was connected with a model village owned by Debenham of Debenham & Freebody; it was organised by William Rothenstein who invited Nash to participate. The picture was exhibited with the London Group in June, 1916 (54). According to Nash's records it was purchased by Montague Shearman. It entered the Tate Gallery in April 1940 when the Shearman Collection was sold by the Redfern Gallery.

Nash may have been transposing the high-keyed colour of his Italian pictures to the context of English landscape here. But whereas the colours of the former are skilfully integrated with the rhythmic forms of the landscape, the Dorset picture seems to be composed of deliberately stark oppositions. The vigorous composition consists of a number of overlapping wedges which enter from alternate sides of the picture and these are surmounted by a broad stretch of bracken-covered hill. The flamboyantly wedge-shaped cloud is mirrored by the landscape configuration immediately below it.

This broad and sweeping composition is, however, dominated by the aggressive character and wayward deployment of the colour which forms a patchwork of contrasted passages - warm against cold, saturated against unsaturated, pure against compound. The long, violet shadows of the stacks are opposed by the complementary, orange stubble of the foreground field; the electric blue of the sky is strongly, almost shockingly, contrasted with the warm, dark orange passages of the more distant landscape; the bright, acerbic greens of the birch trees in the centre contrast with the muted, tertiary greens of the trees on the right; and passages of blue, green, and orange are contrasted with areas of compound grey which are dispersed throughout the composition. Whatever motivated Nash here, the work itself suggests on the one hand an attitude of mind which was not content with graceful if superficial results and on the other that he was to some extent influenced by what Gertler called 'the washed out purples and greens' of the London Group.<sup>(1)</sup>

1. Nash continued to show a liking for this combination of colours for the rest of his career.

The Viaduct, oil, (Plate 12) of circa 1916,<sup>(1)</sup> is the largest and certainly one of the finest of Nash's early paintings which makes earlier attempts in the medium like Gloucestershire Landscape (Plate 8) and Threshing (Plate 9) seem tentative and awkward by comparison. The suppression of detail imparts to the painting a homogenous character which is only alleviated by the corn stooks, individuated trees at the bottom right of the design and lively paint texture of the sky. The flattening which results is reinforced by the obvious distortion of the trees which accentuates the vertical<sup>(2)</sup> and by the consistent shape and scale of the individual components which suppresses the perspective. The relative scale and painterly texture of the sky ensures that it participates in the composition as a plastic component which consequently contributes to the overall rhythmic articulation, while nevertheless still engendering a sense of space by means of the lighter tone to the left and right edges of the painting and immediately above the horizon.

The contours of each component are greatly simplified to accentuate the abstract decorative quality of the composition but their character is such that they do not abandon their form-giving role, but continue to impart a sense of structure to the overall design. The introduction of several rectilinear elements - the shallow rising diagonal of the railway which is echoed by the smoke from the train itself, the slightly steeper diagonal of the fence above the

1. According to Nash's sales records Montague Shearman bought the painting from one of the two London Group exhibitions held in 1916. If this is so it was not exhibited under its present title but probably as Landscape or A Landscape. Leeds City Art Gallery acquired the painting from the Redfern Gallery in 1940. Nash dates the painting 1916 but it was subsequently shown as The Viaduct, oil, 1915 (129) at the retrospective exhibition at the London Group in 1928 where it was also reproduced in the catalogue.
2. The setting is the Misbourne Valley in Buckinghamshire.

trees on the right and the acutely angled shadow on the embankment itself - have the effect of stiffening the composition and preventing it from becoming too decoratively flaccid. The arches of the viaduct itself are transitional components which link and smoothly integrate this cluster of rectilinear elements with the organic forms of the landscape. The enfolding forms and rich sonorous colours of the landscape give for a wistfully romantic evocation which is unusual in Nash's work.

Nash executed two watercolours of the Misbourne Valley in the same year, 1915. The similar colour and composition of The Misbourne Valley, (Plate 13) of 1915 and The Misbourne Valley, (Plate 14) of circa 1915 clearly indicate that they are contemporary.<sup>(1)</sup> Although the individual components of the former are naïvely conceived and executed Nash nevertheless exercises a tight, almost rigid control over the spatial relationships here; contours and shadows are expertly deployed to fill out the large blank passages which intervene between the painted areas. This characteristic is evident in the middleground of the latter picture. Here Nash retains the framing tree on the left but dispenses with the fence of the former which thrusts into the composition in a manner which is reminiscent of About a Pig as a crude device to establish the middleground of the composition. The development of space in the latter watercolour is consequently more dependent on the progressive diminution in scale towards the horizon, and in this it is not entirely successful. Both paintings are nevertheless significantly more controlled and achieve a greater sense of clarity than the earlier Cross Roads, Gerrards Cross the fresh colours of which they strongly recall. The curiously frontal

1. Nash exhibited a picture with this title with The London Group at the Goupil Gallery in April/May, 1919 (82).

composition of these two works which is similar to that of A Dorset Landscape of the same year, becomes a well established feature of Nash's later work.

The large watercolour Hillside Whiteleaf, pen and wash (Plate 15)<sup>(1)</sup> of circa 1916 is one of the most dramatic of Nash's early works in which the interceding spaces between the different landscape configurations have all but disappeared. The swinging curves of the foreground poplars and middleground fields, assertive abstract hillside shapes and marked vertical accent are strongly reminiscent of The Viaduct and, to some extent, of A Dorset Landscape (Plate 11). The brilliant sappy greens which recall Trees in Flood (Plate 10) and A Dorset Landscape tend to support the date of 1916.

It seems here that Nash was trying to keep in touch with the early work which had attracted so much attention at the outset of his career; he did not want to overlay his natural ability with a technical proficiency that would give for competent if rather vapid results. This may have been what Sir John Rothenstein was rather pejoratively alluding to when he described Nash's early oil paintings as having: 'a look of conscious archaism, an uncandid simplicity'.<sup>(2)</sup>

1. There is some considerable doubt about the correct title and date of this work. On grounds of style alone - in particular the direct and even schematic realisation of the natural forms - it would seem to be an early picture. On the other hand the largeness of the conception, bold treatment and specific characteristics which resemble other work (see above) make a slightly later date more likely. It might possibly be either Whiteleaf Golf links or Greenlands with Haycocks both of which were exhibited with the New English Art Club in 1916.
2. Sir John Rothenstein, op.cit., page 239.

The dramatic Drawing, pen and wash, (Plate 16) of circa 1916<sup>(1)</sup> is prophetic of the devastation which Nash was soon to encounter on the battlefield of Flanders. The curious, anthropomorphic, limb-like character of the damaged and broken foreground branches alludes as much to the death agony of the combatants as to the landscape in which they struggle. The rigidly symmetrical composition, elegant decorative forms, rather mannered pen-work and characteristic sun are strongly reminiscent of Pellé, although the strangely ambiguous tree root which can be read as a silhouetted tree in the middle distance is typical of Nash. Circumstances seem to have forced Nash into an idiom which he was later so vehemently to oppose. It is worth noting that this striking and dramatically symbolic work anticipates Paul Nash's Monster Field by over twenty years.

1. According to the artist's wife, the drawing was executed and presented to her immediately before Nash left for the Front in November, 1916.

Introduction

During 1916 Nash seems gradually to have become pre-occupied with the war. Although he exhibited during the year, his job at the Ministry of Munitions would probably have left him with little time to paint and it is likely that his output diminished, since few works dated 1916 are extant.<sup>(1)</sup>

His brother Paul had already enlisted in September 1914 and it is likely that Nash followed his brother's example and applied to join the army at about the same time. He was rejected, however, and received a medical certificate exempting him from active service on the unlikely grounds that his stomach muscles were too weak. During 1916 the manpower situation became critical and a form of conscription was introduced by the Government. Although Nash's father was opposed to the idea of both his sons on active service, John nevertheless strongly felt that it was his duty to enlist rather than be conscripted. Consequently in September 1916 Nash applied to join the 1st Battalion of the 28th London Regiment Artists Rifles and was accepted, though reluctantly, since he was small of stature.

By November 1916 Nash was in French barracks behind the lines when he commenced basic training. Immediately after the Battle of Arras which took place in April 1917,

1. He exhibited four works with the London Group at the Goupil Gallery in June of which two at least date from 1915 - A Dorset Landscape (54) and The Three Carts (97). He exhibited with the group again at the Goupil Gallery in November, showing three works, of which one at least dates from before 1916 - Figs Gloucestershire, 1914 (84).

Nash notes the sale of only 8 works dated 1916 compared with 24 dated 1919 for example.

the battalion moved to the region of Oppy Wood near the Belgian border. Nash was attached to the 7th Royal Fusiliers for what was known as 'the test of endurance';<sup>(1)</sup> he drew on memories of this event to construct his largest war picture, Oppy Wood, oil, (Plate 40). Having successfully come through the test, Nash returned to his battalion and was promoted to Lance Corporal, a position which, according to the artist himself was the worst of all possible worlds since it was not a sufficiently elevated rank to warrant any real respect by those below him on the one hand, and the lowest of the positions of responsibility which led to a considerable off-loading of duties by those above him on the other.

The following months were spent in training for the coming battle of Passchendaele. The battalion moved up to the line in appallingly cold conditions in the autumn of 1917. Nash was withdrawn before the battle however, since experienced N.C.O.'s, which he by then was, were in short supply. He was despatched to the rear and undertook a course of training on trench mortars. This was a fortunate move, since the battalion suffered heavy losses in the ensuing battle.

In October, 1917 Nash's brother Paul, was seconded to the Ministry of Information and became an official war artist. John wrote to Paul from the front, congratulating him on his appointment: 'You are indeed a wonderful man for working things.'<sup>(2)</sup>

In early November Paul Nash caught up with his brother who, by this time, had been promoted to full corporal; Paul

1. Conversation with the artist.
2. Quoted in Bertram, op.cit., page 89.

wrote to his wife on 5th November of their encounter:

I found the dear old fellow at last after a days search, looking very well, a bronzed and tattered soldier with incredible hands, all rough and overgrown with cuticle - his eyes I thought less shy, very blue and bright, thin in the face but not worn or strained, voice rather tired, but giving out the same wit and humour as of old. He was very happy and although I listened with horror and wonder to all he had seen and felt, he seemed to have been only tremendously interested, enjoying the hundreds of humorous things that happened. He confessed the sight of wounded and dying men unnerved him. (1) He said he was quite well now and not tired.

According to John Nash, his brother Paul had no conception of the realities of being an ordinary soldier; John was later highly amused by Paul's account of their meeting above.

Autumn gave way to winter and conditions became steadily worse. On the 30 December, immediately after the Battle of Cambrai, the 1st Battalion Artists Rifles went over the top. The circumstances of the attack were particularly arduous for Nash's company. The battalion had had a long spell in the front line holding the Salient at Marcoing in bitterly cold conditions with snow on the ground. On the night of 29 December, they were relieved and went to the rear in support. At daybreak the following day, they were ordered to stand to, since the Germans had broken through during the night and they were to be put into the line to recover lost positions. The journey from the rear to the front line was a long and difficult one since they were hampered by the frozen corpses of men which littered the

1. Paul Nash, op.cit., 1947, pp.208-209.

trenches as a result of the previous night's bombardment. The delay this caused meant that the company had no time to recover from the journey and it was sent into the attack immediately on arrival at the front line. The men were cut down by machine gun barrage which was no more than thirty yards distant from their position. Nash's company suffered very heavy casualties; at the end of the day, of eighty officers and men only twelve remained unharmed.<sup>(1)</sup> Nash's experiences during this attack were the basis for what is perhaps his most important war painting, Over the Top, oil (Plate 38).

Meanwhile Paul Nash had been working on his brother's behalf, trying to secure for John a position similar to his own. Paul Nash wrote to Sir Edward Marsh late in 1917 asking for help:

Can you by any fair or foul means help to get Jack home for a commission . . . It is unnecessary to speak of Jack's worth and his real value as an English artist and its a damned shame if nothing can be done to extricate him from a position where he is in the utmost danger<sup>(2)</sup>

John Nash decided to act on his own behalf however, and wrote to the Ministry of Information from the front line requesting to be considered for a position as an official war artist. In the letter Nash stresses the importance of first hand experience:

. . . artists have been sent out here who have never been in the line before, and to my mind men who have been through months

1. For a full account of the affair see The Artists Rifle Gazette, 21 January, 1935.
2. Letter dated 8 January, 1918. Quoted in Bettram, op. cit., page 95.

in these extraordinary surroundings are more intimate with them and capable of good work.(1)

This first hand experience perhaps provides an explanation for the consistently high quality of the work which Nash was subsequently to produce. It is interesting to note that in his letter Nash was sufficiently confident of the approval of Brown and Tonks as well as William Rothenstein to cite them in support of his application. Nash received a reply from the Department of Information informing him that they were at that time 'very crowded but (that) an opportunity may occur later'.(2)

Paul Nash continued to work on his brother's behalf as a letter from Campbell Dodgson to Masterman of the Department of Information testifies:

I am assured by his (John Nash's) brother that he is deeply impressed by all that he has seen and most anxious to give expression to it in a way that would be useful for propaganda purposes. To be frank I have doubts about the wisdom of employing two members of the same family and two artists who belong to the same (?) artistic group, though the elder brother assures us that the younger has quite a different outlook from his own and can be trusted to use his material in a quite different way.(3)

One may suppose that the reference to propaganda purposes was included by Paul Nash as an incentive to adopt his

1. Letter dated January, 1918. Trustees of the Imperial War Museum London. Since Nash returned to England in the middle of January, this is probably the only letter he wrote from the front to the Department of Information on the subject of his becoming a war artist.
2. Letter dated 5<sup>th</sup> January, 1918. Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London.
3. Undated letter. Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London.

brother as a war artist since it is difficult to see what justification he would have had for making such an assertion.

By the end of 1917 John Nash had been on continuous active service for over a year and in the middle of January 1918 he returned to England on leave. Just after his return Nash was promoted to the rank of sergeant. According to a letter from the War Office to James Baird of the Department of Information Nash received a telegram from them on 24 January, extending his leave indefinitely and asking him to wire his regimental number and where he was on leave from. Since, for some reason, the War Office received no reply to their telegram they were unable to inform Nash's regiment of his extended leave and consequently he was posted as a deserter.<sup>(1)</sup> While on holiday with his future wife, Christine, in the Chiltern Hills in April he was later told that the Military Police were searching for him in Manchester. He was in constant danger of being arrested during this period which made his occasional visits to London rather hazardous.

This equivocal and even dangerous position was not normalised until late March or early April. The delay occurred, one supposes, because Nash set something of a precedent. As a letter from the Ministry of Information to the War Office indicates it was assumed (erroneously as it turned out) that he would wish to return to the Western Front in his official capacity as a war artist in order to gather more information for his pictures. The Ministry of Information felt that it would be impossible for him to do this as an N.C.O. since he would not be afforded the officer privileges that they felt were necessary for him to

1. Letter dated 26 March, 1918. Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London.

work without too much difficulty in his official capacity.<sup>(1)</sup>

In early April he was transferred from the First to the Second Artists Rifles while his application was being considered. In early April, John Buchan applied to the War Office for Nash's commission on the recommendation of James Baird.<sup>(2)</sup> Before his commission to Second Lieutenant came through on 3 May, however,<sup>(3)</sup> both Nash and his brother were given commissions by the Ministry of Information connected with the project for a national memorial hall to be hung with a number of large paintings. They each had to paint one large picture and they were given a choice of two sizes of canvas, 72" x 86" or 72" x 125"; John chose the smaller size and his brother the larger. John's picture was Oppy Wood.<sup>(4)</sup>

It was intended that these large pictures should be hung in pairs so as to make the hanging more decorative. It was suggested to Nash that William Roberts be his 'partner' and he was advised to enter into discussions with Roberts to decide compositional issues to their mutual benefit.<sup>(5)</sup> Although nothing came of the scheme and the matter was dropped, it is interesting to note that the work of Nash and Roberts was seen to be compatible at this time.

1. Letter dated 26 March, 1918. Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London. The delay was exacerbated by the suspension of all further war artist appointments during the military crisis in early 1918.
2. Letter dated 12 April, 1918. Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London.
3. Contained in a letter from the Imperial War Museum to John Nash dated 21 May, 1918. Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London.
4. Paul Nash's picture was The Menin Road, The Imperial War Museum, London.
5. Undated letter from the Imperial War Museum to John Nash. Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London.

In May 1918 Nash married Dorothy Christine Kuhlentahl and they moved into rooms over a chemist's shop in Gerrards Cross in Buckinghamshire. They were not there very long however, since the brothers decided to join forces and establish themselves with their wives in a large studio, formerly used as a herb drying shed, at Chalfont St. Peter in their native Buckinghamshire at the beginning of June.

Nash worked on war pictures at Chalfont until March the following year. Paul, as ever, took charge and decided they would confine the time devoted to working on other than war pictures to evenings after tea. In this John naturally concurred, but despite this restriction he was able to produce a remarkable number of landscapes studies and paintings in the ensuing months. Since he had much more experience of front-line conditions than his brother, John was able to supply Paul with valuable technical information. Paul, for his part, gave John the benefit of his greater experience in constructing pictures of war although they were both breaking new ground as far as the scale of their large commissions were concerned. Nevertheless, his brother's already considerable body of war paintings would obviously have exercised a powerful stylistic influence on the younger Nash. Paul had probably completed the bulk of his war-time watercolours by the end of 1917. During the early part of 1918, he was at Iver Heath working for his exhibition of oils and watercolours which was held at the Leicester Galleries in May 1918 under the title Void of War.

Nash was obviously very anxious to begin work;<sup>(1)</sup> he

1. In an undated letter which Nash wrote from Iver Heath to the Imperial War Museum (probably in late May) in response to his commission for the memorial hall project he says that he has 'nearly finished a war painting'. Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London.

had completed several pictures before mid September and some of these were sent to a large exhibition of war paintings in America. They included the oil paintings A French Highway (Plate 20) and The Bridge over the Arras-Lens Railway (Plate 25) and An Advance Post, Day (Plate 22), together with the watercolours A Bombing Post in the Snow (Plate 23), An Advance Post, Night (Plate 28) and Stand To, Before Dawn (Plate 27).

By late November Nash had completed all the work now extant apart from Oppy Wood which he was 'well on with'.<sup>(1)</sup> This, despite the fact that he had fallen ill with influenza during the first week in October and did not fully recover until the beginning of November. Nash went to Eastbourne to convalesce and, as a letter from the Imperial War Museum indicates, he remained there certainly until 4 November<sup>(2)</sup> and probably later which means that he did not work for the best part of a month.

Nash's sense of urgency and prodigious output during the period between May and November is perhaps best explained by the fact that he, as we shall see, was largely dependent upon memory to recall his experiences at the front; he wished to record his ideas as quickly as possible while they were still fresh in his mind. The Ministry of Information suggested that he should go to France to gather material for Oppy Wood since this, after all, was the primary reason for his commission. Nash wrote from Eastbourne on the matter:

The trip to France would interupt rather than help me now since my design is finished . . .<sup>(3)</sup>

1. Letter from John Nash to the Imperial War Museum 28 November, 1918. Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London.
2. Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London.
3. Undated letter. Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London.

What sources of visual material were available to Nash which could have assisted in the production of his paintings? The brothers were supplied with photographs by the Ministry of Information which did at least provide them with technical information, although Nash has said that he did not make much use of them. It is probable, however, that he used live models for his designs as a request to the Imperial War Museum to visit a neighbouring military camp indicates.<sup>(1)</sup>

He had embellished his letters from the front with drawings which were usually humorous in character. Any drawings which he might subsequently have found useful would in any case have been suppressed by the censor since they could have conveyed useful information to the enemy. Although Nash made a few notes on old scraps of paper while on active service the rigours of life as an ordinary infantryman would largely have prevented him from pursuing such an activity. Drawing was in any case discouraged according to Nash, since it could very easily have been misconstrued as spying. We are driven to conclude what Nash himself later confirmed, namely that he relied largely on memory for his ideas. This makes the vividness and immediacy of Nash's pictures all the more remarkable and testifies to his phenomenal powers of visual recall.

In December 1918 Paul Nash returned to London with his wife who had suffered a nervous collapse. John Nash was visited in the following January by Bone and Yockney of the Ministry of Information. They must have been impressed since they decided to make further purchases of Nash's work as a record of the war. Nash was anxious to return to civ-

1. Letter dated 18 June, 1918. Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London.

ilian life early in 1919 but was prevented from doing so for one reason or another until March, when he was gazetted out of the service. He continued to work for the Ministry through March, however, and sent the just completed Oppy Wood to London in the middle of the month. Nash gave up his studio at Whins Cottage and his lodgings at Chalfont towards the end of March and returned to Gerrards Cross soon after.

### The Paintings

Nash's war paintings can be considered from two specific and distinct points of view. Firstly, they can be viewed in relation to his output before 1918; what effects, if any, did the changed circumstances and subject-matter have upon the overall character of his work? Secondly they can be viewed in relation to the work of other contemporary war artists; how does Nash's work compare in terms of form and content with the work of his war artist colleagues?

Changes there certainly were as far as his own development was concerned. Although the studies for his war pictures often reveal the struggle to resolve particular pictorial problems, they suggest that Nash was stimulated by the challenge of more complex subject-matter. Nash was able to deal with this complexity in an increasingly proficient manner during the period between June 1918 and March 1919, since the work becomes progressively more disciplined and structurally cohesive.

The vibrant local hues of his earlier landscapes give way to a much more expressive if sombre use of colour. Where high-keyed colour is retained it plays an important contributory role within the overall dramatic and expressive context.

One could perhaps claim, in answer to the second question that Nash's total output of war paintings is consider-

ably more varied than that of any of his war artist contemporaries, ranging as it does from the richly coloured ideal landscape of his early phase to the grim and disquieting paintings which he executed in the autumn and winter of 1918.

Like his brother, Nash was fascinated by the unreal, theatrical character of the landscape of the Western Front. He played this theatricality up to the full by choosing to paint the landscape at particular times of day and night - at daybreak and sunset to underline the incongruous contrast between the unsullied sky at its grandest and most sublime and the mangled and blighted landscape beneath, and at night when the deadly reality of conflict took on the disarming appearance of a spectacular and beautiful visual display.

Like his brother also, Nash felt sufficiently strongly about the events he witnessed for his work to have a more general application. In their own way, these paintings embody a protest against the mindless barbarity of war and in this sense one might say that they have a symbolic dimension.

Unlike his brother however, Nash was able to express these feelings in terms of human tragedy and misery, and this rapidly became his predominant concern which displaced all other interests. The landscapes which Nash depicts play only a part in the overall design, varying in importance according to the subject without ever dominating it.

As an ordinary soldier Nash was uniquely placed of all the war artists to gain insight into a world from which his war artists colleagues were barred by dint of circumstance. Since he was, as it were, at the heart of the matter, his experiences imparted to his paintings a psychological complexity which is rarely, if ever, encountered in other war painting of the time. Nevinson's first hand experiences as

a medical aid obviously spurred him to paint pictures with a strongly anti-war sentiment; Wyndham Lewis siezed the opportunity to develop his interest in the analogy between the human form and the machine and in so doing generated a vocabulary of forms which was ideally suited to the expressive demands of war subjects; Paul Nash used the devastated landscape of war as a symbolic metaphor of the human urge to destroy. John Nash, on the other hand provides an autobiographical and thus uniquely authentic account of life in the trenches.

Nash's war pictures have obviously been conditioned by the intensity of this lived experience since the bulk of them are not so much concerned with the heroics and heat of battle as with the immense hardships and deprivations of the ordinary soldier. Nash's depictions of men at war have as much to do with their individual drama as to do with the roles they play within the context of mass conflict. They snatch minutes of fitful sleep, hunch themselves protectively against the bitter cold and driving rain, wait, dream, and in that most lonely of all states their twisted bodies are scattered about the landscape as part of the detritus of war.

Nash has said of this time:

What was so awful about the First World War was the struggle, sheer physical struggle, apart from the danger. Those terrible marches and getting food and things up to the support trenches. And frightful conditions. They told upon one as much as anything . . . (1)

1. Recorded conversation between John Nash and Joseph Darracott. Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London.

One had no time to consider larger ethical questions: 'One was too much preoccupied in trying to keep alive oneself'.<sup>(1)</sup> And afterwards one had: 'just possibly a feeling of pride at having managed to endure it. And come out alive and sane, which is more than some people did'.<sup>(2)</sup> Bizarre incongruity, disbelief, survival, privation, struggle - these words seem most aptly to describe the work which resulted from this intense and traumatic experience.

Nash painted one picture at least before he joined his brother at Chalfont in early June 1918. The style and subject-matter suggest that it could have been Near Houdkerk, Belgium. (Plate 17).<sup>(3)</sup> Confronted with the task of becoming a war artist Nash might well have wondered where to begin. The answer was simple; he began by painting what he already knew well. The naïve forms, shallow space and vibrant colours of the painting are in direct line of descent from his pre-war landscapes. In painting this picture, however, it seems as if Nash were undergoing a kind of therapy, restoring his sanity and re-affirming his belief in nature.

The subject, some bean poles in a field near the camp of the First Artists Rifles, could equally represent a Kentish hop field.<sup>(4)</sup> The picture symbolises an ideal of

1. Recorded conversation between John Nash & Joseph Darracott.
2. Ibid. This is probably a reference to Nash's friend Cloughton Pellew who was a conscientious objector during the First World War. Nash was shocked by the treatment which Pellew received; he maintained that Pellew never fully recovered from these experiences and became a changed man after the war.
3. The order in which the oil paintings are considered is established on the basis of available documentary evidence and stylistic development. All of the extant works are discussed.
4. For historical information on Nash's paintings see The Artists Rifles Gazette, op.cit.

man in harmony with nature and in this sense it can be seen as a kind of counter argument to Nash's war experiences; the result of an alternative strategy. The landscape exudes order, trimness and concordance; painstaking cultivation and careful husbandry bring the twin rewards of beauty and plenty. The rich, warm, earth colours, emphatic, viridian and emerald, greens of vegetation, neat, white-washed, red-roofed cottage and intense, blue sky evoke mediaeval depictions of the Garden of Eden or some such paradise.

However, successful this was as a painting it fell short as an image of war as far as Nash was concerned and he expressed dissatisfaction with it.<sup>(1)</sup> He might well have followed up this first unsuccessful attempt with A Lewis Gun: Anti-Aircraft Pit (Plate 18). Although this is unmistakably a picture of war, its still tentative treatment leans heavily on past practice. Nash may well have felt that the incongruity engendered by this state of affairs, between the beauties of nature on the one hand and the horrors of war on the other, in fact accurately reflected front-line conditions. This anti-aircraft pit was situated at Aubrey Camp, Arras, just behind the front line at Rochincourt on the southern tip of the Vimy Ridge. Here was an enormous area covered with tents and huts where the First Battalion Artists Rifles was quartered. Interestingly Nash has stressed the vertical in the finished work in comparison with the study (Plate 19) so that the former has the proportions of a double square on end. The gunner watches the sparkle of a bursting anti-aircraft shell in the brilliant blue sky which shades from pale turquoise near the horizon to pure ultramarine at the top of the picture. The red-brown and flecked, blue-green tents make a striking pattern

1. Letter from Nash to the Imperial War Museum, 28 November, 1918. Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London.

against this blue backdrop. The gunpit itself is suffused with warm light and diagonally bisected by a mellow grey shadow. The duckboards thrust into and structure what would be otherwise a formless space. Because of the purity and joyous freedom of the context, the life and death struggle which is taking place seems psychologically as well as physically remote.

If A French Highway (Plate 20) was painted, as Nash has said, for primarily decorative reasons,<sup>(1)</sup> it nevertheless indicates his resolve to come uncompromisingly to terms with his experiences of war. The sweeping curves of the capes of the mounted French soldiers are continued into the dark blue grey sky and the lower halves of the great-coats of the marching infantry men are again composed of a series of swinging curves which suggest rhythmic movement. Despite these decorative and dynamic qualities, the picture remains spatially and structurally unresolved. The hind-quarters of the horses are unnaturally flat and twisted to the left onto the picture plane. The space between the horses and the marching columns of men is not clearly articulated, the mounted French soldier on the right seems as close to the picture plane as does the corporal below so that, in general, the forms are piled one on top of the other. The trees also serve to restrict the space since they link the top of the picture with the forms below the sky. The almost unrelieved khaki-greys and blue-greys of the picture serve to express the gravity and hardship of the situation. The lurid pink of the ruined building on the left is starkly contrasted against the dark sky, the blue helmets of the French soldiers and blue waterbottles of the marching men provide the only other colour accents. The grim faced men march on, their clenched fists holding the webbing of

1. Conversation with the artist.

their knapsacks, their collars turned up against the obviously inclement weather. Significantly, the shell bursts of the study (Plate 21) are removed in the finished oil painting.

Despite the elements of colour and proportion which A French Highway and An Advance Post, Day (Plate 22) have obviously in common, they present the very different public and private faces of war. In contrast to such resolution and grim determination as we can discern on the faces of the marching men in the former picture, An Advance Post, Day is a poignant image of sleeping men standing under a sheet of corrugated iron which arcs around them in a protective womb-like fashion.

This duty was a particularly arduous one since the men were only able to travel to such an advanced position under the cover of darkness, which meant that they had to remain in this extremely restricted space during the hours of daylight. The forms of the painting are again quite flat; the shallow space under the sheet seems to afford the sleeping men pathetically little protection from either the elements or the enemy. The sinister stack of bayoneted rifles on the left somehow contrasts with the vulnerability of the sleeping figures; the irresolvable entities of steel and flesh. The dark, grey sky and sombre colours of the picture are not so much expressive of the grimness of the context but more of the despondent state of the exhausted men themselves. The decorative, curvilinear components of these two paintings are offset by the blunt awkwardness of the overall design, which, together with the sombre colours and direct paint texture efficiently convey the seriousness of the subject.

Generally the distortions of Nash's war work give rise to a documentary realism in a way which calls to mind some

Expressionist painting of the time,<sup>(1)</sup> although it is most unlikely that Nash had seen examples of this kind of work. The analogy is not complete however, since Nash was perhaps cleverly capitalising on a genuine lack of sophistication where the Expressionists were undertaking an exhaustive and self-conscious exploration of the expressive potential of distortion itself.

A Bombing Post in the Snow (Plate 23) again depicts men in circumstances of extreme physical adversity during the long silent vigil of night patrol duty in the depths of Winter. All four men in the picture are hunched up against the intense cold, two on guard and two attempting, in vain one would imagine, to sleep. In the study of this work (Plate 24) the shell hole, which serves as the advance post is anchored in the plane of the surrounding terrain by a network of lines. The finished work itself is less structurally cohesive since the dark-toned shell hole is curiously disembodied and floats rather surrealistically above the snow-covered surroundings. This spare landscape is splendidly sinister and seems to bristle with the potential danger of the felt, if unseen, enemy. Stylistically the study - which is equally as good as the finished work - approaches that of Nevinsons' early war pictures like La Patrie, for example.

The boldly incisive subject of The Bridge over the Arras-Lens Railway (Plate 25) provided Nash with the opportunity to consider more fully the constructional aspects of design. The picture shows troops working at fatigues in a railway cutting. The First Battalion lived there for some weeks as part of the reserve line. The cutting serves as a gigantic trench system as well as a line of communication

1. Early Max Beckmann for example.

and supply. The men seem dwarfed by the great structure of the bridge which towers intimidatingly over them. Nash might well have exaggerated the difference in scale between the men and their context. The contrast between the depressingly grey cutting in which the men work and the sickly yellow-green grass of the verge at the bottom right, with the vivid greens of the foliage in the upper part of the picture, the emphatic pink of the bridge itself and the intense blue of the sky which is flecked with pale yellow of a bursting shell, seems again to be almost deliberately cultivated. The contrast could be seen as an externalisation of the oppressed view of the troops as they trudge, together yet separate, into the distance. The bizarre nature of the scene, brought about by the conditions of war must obviously have struck Nash with some force since the picture is reminiscent of the hallucinatory visions of Piranesi.

'Stand To', Before Dawn (Plate 27) and An Advance Post, Night (Plate 28) mark a distinct advance in Nash's ability to handle three-dimensional forms. Although men press against the parapet in the former picture they are nevertheless substantial forms in their own right and the general spatial context is much clearer than it is in earlier work. The latter picture is more complex and yet equally well, if not better handled, since the interlocking arrangement of solids and voids is confidently executed. In both pictures the complex foreground structure is contrasted against a narrow band of landscape which stretches away to the horizon.

'Stand To', Before Dawn probably represents the First Artists Rifles before they went over the top at Welsh Ridge on 30 December, 1917. The men, hunched against the early morning cold, stare intently towards the enemy lines. The dramatic dawn breaking on the right is balanced by the lurid light of the bursting star shell on the left. The peacefulness of this eerie scene is shattered by the intense

lemon coloured shell bursts above the breaking dawn on the right.

The intently alert sentries of An Advance Post, Night are pressed protectively into their trench system which is thrown into a relief of vigorous light and dark forms by the bursting star shell on the right. The blue-grey sky is rent by the long wedge of pale lemon light above the horizon on the left-hand side of the picture.

The treatment of the sky in 'Stand To', Before Dawn and An Advance Post, Night recall examples of Nash's brother's work like Nightfall, Zillebecke District and We are Making a New World, for example. If one compares An Advance Post, Night with We are Making a New World then clearly the latter is more overtly symbolic than the former which, by comparison, shows a much greater commitment to experienced events.

The studies for A Trench Mortar Firing at Evening (Plate 30) provide an interesting record of the development of an idea from its beginning to the finished design. Working on the basis that the earliest design would be least like the finished work and that each subsequent design would move progressively towards it, and in the absence of documentary evidence, I have grouped these studies in the following order.

Nash probably began with the study (Plate 31) in which the idea was quickly sketched out. He took the idea a stage further in the drawing (Plate 32) where the figures are more meaningfully linked together and the spatial context is more clearly articulated. At this stage Nash must have felt that the composition was weak and replaced it with a much more disciplined design (Plate 33). The almost circular composition of this study was replaced by the more open and rectangular spatial context of the study (Plate 34).

In this the loader is supplemented with a sergeant who holds the mortar on the left. The kneeling figure holding the mortar in the former study is reversed, the figure priming the bombs is shifted to the extreme right of the composition and the stooping figure of the former study is removed. In the final study (Plate 35) the figure priming is returned to his former position on the left, the kneeling figure is removed and the composition is supplemented by a figure standing at the extreme right. The design of the final study is more elongated and the trees are pushed to the middle distance and grouped on the left. The basis of this composition is retained in the final work but supplemented with the figure walking into the middle distance along the trench on the left.

Despite these deliberations and despite the fact that Nash arrived at a composition similar to that of 'Stand To, Before Dawn and An Advance Post, Night, A Trench Mortar Firing at Evening lacks the structural cohesion and psychological tension of these works. Nash was not satisfied with the oil painting of which A Trench Mortar Firing at Evening was itself a study and he must have destroyed it.<sup>(1)</sup> The relaxed evening atmosphere provides an incongruous context for the combat which is taking place. This might have provided Nash with the idea for Oppy Wood. (Plate 40) and in this respect it should be noted that the composition of the larger picture is roughly a lateral inversion of A Trench Mortar Firing at Evening.

The structure of the chaotic landscape of A Deserted Trench (Plate 36) is now expertly conceived and executed; the rectilinear elements of duckboards and spars knit together and fill out the spaces which are implied by the

1. Letter from Nash to the Imperial War Museum, 28 November, 1918. Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London.

otherwise erratic contours. In the forms of the landscape there is, at this stage, only the merest hint of that decorative quality which creeps in to and confuses Nash's last war paintings.

What Nash has depicted here is the antithesis of order and rationality; the indiscriminate destruction of man and nature by some malignant force which leaves in its wake a deranged, amorphous and venomously coloured landscape of a curiously 'fatty' consistency which seems to be absorbing the broken forms of the dead men which litter it. The strangely mute, deserted character of the work is increased by the rain falling erratically from a lowering sky which itself presses down on the scene below. This oppressive silence allows the clamour of horror and protest to be clearly discerned. Nash did not include the exploding shells of the study (Plate 37) in the final work and as a result the latter becomes much more than simple reportage. In general Nash moved in the direction of greater subtlety in his war pictures, often removing the more obvious signs of conflict of the studies from the final works themselves.

The grim, concentrated, spare, almost apocalyptic image of war presented by Over the Top (Plate 38) bears witness to the intensity of Nash's experience of this event which has engendered a palpably authentic realism of almost 'symbolic' proportions. The dead dominate this picture and bear witness to the murderous fire power of the unseen enemy. Nash provides a profoundly moving, if grisly, catalogue of variations on dead and dying men; lying face down and face up, kneeling, sitting back on their haunches, dangling grotesquely over the parapet, pitifully hunched up and twisted having slithered back into the jagged cadaverous gash in the earth which serves as a trench but which itself looks more like some gigantic wound. Nash said that the kneeling figure in the top left of the composition was a corporal friend who died instantly as a result of being

shot through the head - he slumped back in just such a way. Gore's is perhaps an accurate assessment when he says that: '(Nash) deals faithfully with the dead without rhetoric or romantic overemphasis'.<sup>(1)</sup>

Nash's obvious identity with these men imparts to the picture a newsreel immediacy and authenticity which obviates the need for any overt moralising, and in this sense the picture is an objective indictment of the kind that Manet and Zola would have appreciated. As Gore puts it: 'it is this complete innocence in John (Nash) of the high claims of art which gives his work its strength'.<sup>(2)</sup>

The men who survive to fight march doggedly on towards the enemy in a posture which is at once resolute and protective. The intensely alert yet apprehensive expression on the face of the soldier climbing out of the trench in the foreground of the picture is psychologically penetrating; he peers into the unknown, striving to discern and thus avert oncoming danger, and yet his gaze is no more than a reflex for he knows that death, if it is to come, will come unseen.

Nature has been obliterated in this painting, it no longer exists as a symbol of reason and truth. The context has been made by man in which to play out a macabre game of self destruction. The sky is filled with noxious billowing clouds of gas and smoke which are illuminated, not by the light of day, but by the livid light of the shell burst on the left; the terrain itself is a senseless churned turmoil of anonymous snow-covered material and the colours of the picture have an unnatural, almost malevolent character.

1. Gore, op.cit., page 7.
2. Ibid., page 7.

The enclosed claustrophobic quality of the space seals off the possibility of escape, there is no way back, only forward into danger and death.

While the power of this most serious of all Nash's war pictures is beyond doubt, it must be said that there is evident in the later war work a decorative quality, which, although it does not offset the seriousness of this picture certainly dominates his last and greatest war painting Oppy Wood.

Oppy Wood is not characterised by the sense of disquiet and privation of much of his other war work. Could it be that Nash had, by this time, already exorcised his most disturbing memories of war? He had obvious misgivings about the size of the picture, he was reluctant to begin it and in fact, it was the last of all his war pictures to be completed. He went as far as asking Sickert for advice on how to paint the sky which is rather uncharacteristic and perhaps indicative of his equivocal attitude. Nash began the picture in November 1918 which means that he must have worked on it almost continuously for some four months. This has perhaps adversely affected the finished work since it has a rather dry and laboured quality. The two studies for Oppy Wood (Plate 41) and (Plate 42) are rather different from the composition of the final study (Plate 43). When one considers the concise style of drawing of the study (Plate 41) then it is not difficult to understand why Nash was paired with William Roberts in the scheme for the Memorial Hall. In the final study the trees are removed on the left and the scene is viewed from a slightly higher vantage point and from slightly further away thus engendering a more expansive space which Nash must have felt was more in keeping with the large size of the painting.

Drawn from experiences during Nash's first tour of duty in the line the painting depicts two of the Artists

Rifles observing British shells exploding over the German trenches on the extreme right. The landscape is the familiar composite of broken limbless tree trunks, churned earth, muddy pools and general debris of war. But one is constantly and irresistably drawn to the sky which dominates the composition by dint of its brilliant colour and unusual design. The amazing contrast between this magnificent sky and the smashed landscape beneath, again recalls a stage design. It is almost as if the artist were questioning the validity of the scene before him, questioning even the possibility that man and nature together could summon up such a chimera. P. G. Konody recognised the force of this disjunction:

(Nash) does not force nature to partake of the mood created by the madness of man. His sunset sky, with its strange parallel streaks of roseate clouds is not portentous or threatening, but through sheer force of contrast with the ravaged, tortured, furrowed earth has an effect as dramatic as Mr. Paul Nash's storm clouds and livid flashes.(1)

This complex work is now skilfully constructed; apart from Nash's magisterial sense of design, the colours are expertly deployed. The grey and beige-orange areas of the sky find their counterpart in the grey and venetian red passage of the foreground.

The mood of relaxation which pervades this picture obviously reflected the more relaxed and optimistic state of Nash's mind at this time. As has already been stated, Nash was anxious to leave the service in early 1919. In a letter to Yockney of the Ministry of Information Nash makes it clear that:

1. The Observer, 21 December, 1919.

I have done (I hope) with war. War, and even war paintings.(1)

He goes on in a tone which reflects the delight he must have felt with the peacetime world in which he found himself:

I am staying in this lovely spot with my spouse and drawing landscapes and picking flowers and indulging in other innocent pleasures . . .(2)

In this mood of joyous return and with the maturity gained as a result of his war experiences, Nash was to paint some of his best work.

1. Letter of 20 June, 1920. Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London.
2. Ibid.

Introduction

From the time of his marriage until 1921 Nash lived at Gerrards Cross, spending part of each summer at Sapperton in Gloucestershire and nearby Whiteleaf in the Chiltern Hills, the latter in the company of Paul and Margaret Nash. The Cumberland Market Group split up in 1919 as a result of Gilman's death in the great Spanish influenza epidemic of that year. Nash began to spend more time out of London but he by no means withdrew from the cultural life of the capital as the general critical view of Nash seems to suggest. He continued to see Charles Ginner who sometimes accompanied the Nashes on their holiday expeditions in the 1920's and consolidated his friendship with painters like Francis Unwin and Bernard Meninsky. Apart from exhibiting regularly Nash worked as an illustrator and took up wood engraving at this time. He turned his hand to comic illustration in 1919 and in collaboration with the drama critic W.J. Turner he was commissioned to publish drawings in the magazine Land and Water.<sup>(1)</sup> In April of the same year Lance Sieveking published a book of comic verses with accompanying humorous drawings by John Nash.<sup>(2)</sup> This was followed in 1920 by a similar publication The Nouveau Poor by Belinda Blinders.<sup>(3)</sup>

Nash came to know some important people at Gerrards Cross, among them Percy Moore Turner, the dealer who was also a friend of Roger Fry, and Bruce Frederick Cummings

1. W. J. Turner, Drawing in the Theatre, Land and Water 1919.
2. Lance Sieveking, Dressing Gowns and Glue, Cecil Palmer, 1919. This book was expanded and re-published as Bats in the Belfry, Routledge, 1926.
3. Belinda Blinders (Desmond Coke), The Nouveau Poor, Chapman and Hall, 1921.

who wrote under the pen name W.N.P. Barbellion. Nash illustrated the Swedish edition of Cumming's best known book The Diary of a Disappointed Man. He produced work for the Sun Calendar of 1920,<sup>(1)</sup> his paintings were illustrated fairly regularly in magazines like Art and Letters and Illustration and he was involved in the production of broad-sheets for the Poetry Book Shop during the early 1920's. The comic drawings are of little consequence either in themselves or for the possible influence they might have exerted on Nash's other work.

Nash very probably began to engrave on wood during 1919, although it is difficult to say exactly when, since none of his engravings are dated. He must have been using the medium by the second half of 1920 however, since he exhibited with the newly formed Society of Wood Engravers at The Chenil Galleries, Chelsea in December, 1920. Nash played an important role in the revival of the art of wood engraving, which took place in the 1920's, manifesting itself in the production of prestigious, limited-editions.

Nash showed regularly with the London Group after the war, despite the fact that it had by that time fallen under the dominating influence of Roger Fry who was violently opposed to the 'brothers Nash'.<sup>(2)</sup> Fry had cause to modify

1. The Sun Calendar for the Year 1920. Arranged by Paul Nash with illustrations by Paul and John Nash and Rupert Lee. The Sun Engraving Company Limited.
2. Paul Nash had fallen foul of Fry before the war during the former's short stay at the Omega Workshops. Because the two brothers were closely associated, John too became subject to Fry's antagonism. Further, the collaboration between Paul and John during the early 1920's was itself a source of irritation for Fry. Fry saw them, according to John Nash: 'as a kind of performing troupe'. This irritation is expressed in a poem which Fry published in The Daily Herald, 8 January, 1920. (See Appendix)

his view of the younger Nash's work when it was singled out for praise by Othon Friesz, despite Fry's protestations, at an exhibition in 1921.<sup>(1)</sup> Fry was not completely dismissive of Nash's first London exhibition at the Goupil Gallery later in October of the same year, although his praise was perhaps a little grudging in view of the strongly structured character of some of the work.<sup>(2)</sup>

This was a period of great activity which perhaps reflects Nash's readiness to learn from others. In 1919 he joined the New English Art Club and also showed regularly at the Goupil Gallery Salons which had started up again after the war in 1919. In April 1920 he became involved in the abortive scheme to decorate Leeds Town Hall. Nash had already met most of the people involved in the scheme, apart from Percy Jowett and Jacob Kramer, although his re-established contact with Edward Wadsworth was subsequently to be of some importance (see below page 87 footnote). This kind of experience was useful if only to demonstrate the difficulty of trying to win artists and public alike over

1. Nameless Exhibition of Painting and Drawing by Contemporary British Artists. Grosvenor Galleries, June, 1921. Nash exhibited Beacon Hill, Ellesborough (53).
2. According to Fry, Nash 'passes straight from the vaguely poetical to the tasteful arabesque. The plastic reality has never obtruded itself upon his consciousness. However, he does understandably single out two oil paintings: Sawmill, Daneway (42), Sawmill, Gloucestershire (Plate 61) and Winter Scene (47), probably Winter Scene (Plate 56) which show some knowledge of what he called: 'The peculiarly exciting exercise, pictorial expression' See the New Statesman, 12 February, 1921, page 560.

Nash showed 90 works at this exhibition: 7 oils, 53 watercolours and monochrome studies, 12 wood engravings and 18 comic drawings. Most of the landscapes are either of Gloucestershire or Nash's native Buckinghamshire. Included in the exhibition were a series of watercolours entitled Wood Interior Nos. 1-7 of which at least two are extant. (See Plate 51).

to more modern forms of art. A local artist welcomed the collapse of the scheme; tending to regard modern art as a passing whim of fashion he made a plea for artists whose work was 'sound, wholesome and based on the national art tradition.'<sup>(1)</sup>

In the following month, Nash held his first one-man exhibition, a rather modest affair, at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre under the auspices of the playwright John Drinkwater. Paralleling his brother's career he became the first art critic of the London Mercury for a few months during 1921; he occasionally contributed articles to the magazine during the later 1920's. He also found time to visit France at least once and possibly Germany during the period between 1919 and 1922.<sup>(2)</sup> In May or June of 1921 he rented a cottage at Monks Risborough in Buckinghamshire while looking for a cottage further up country. He found it in the following year at Meadle which is situated at the foot of the Chilterns escarpment and he was to remain there until the Second World War.

### Paintings

Nash's development between the wars is far from easy to follow. The self-sufficient and rather hermetic approach of his pre-war years was replaced in the late 1920's by a more open-minded and inquiring attitude. In this spirit Nash sought to consolidate his art by learning from the example of others. The influences to which he was consequently subject after 1918 gave rise to a complex development which is difficult to disentangle. The difficulty arises

1. Yorkshire Post 11 November, 1921. For a complete bibliography relating to the affair see Leeds Arts Calender No. 74, 1974, pages 16-22.
2. He exhibited a watercolour Oberammagau (33) with the London Group in October, 1922.

because these influences can only be discerned with some effort, since, by skilfully transposing and integrating them into his work Nash gives them the disarming appearance of being unquestionably his own.<sup>(1)</sup> This has crucially affected the critics view of Nash since their failure to take account of such influences has mistakenly led the majority of them to conclude that he worked in relative isolation from contemporary European developments after the First World War. It is perhaps characteristic of Nash's independence that French painting exercised its most powerful influence on him during the early and mid 1920's, a period when many painters of the English avant-garde were reappraising their relationship with the School of Paris.

This difficulty is compounded by the fact that the influences are very different from one another and often pulling in opposite directions, they generate all kinds of gaps disjunctions and contradictions which inform the individual works themselves as well as their development. The radical nature of his impressive achievement which put Nash in the forefront of British painting at this time bears witness to his strength of character in being able to control and even capitalise on the conflicting and contradictory influences to which he was subject.

The effect of the war and of being a war artist could be discerned as much in Nash's subsequent attitude to his work as to the work itself. In his war paintings, Nash had been confronted by spatial and structural problems of much greater complexity than he had dealt with hitherto and he immediately began to realise this experience in the context of peace-time landscape painting. This is nowhere more

1. This is quite unlike the work of his brother Paul, where the seams which indicated outside influence are often disconcertingly evident.

obvious than in The Cornfield, oil, (Plate 44) which Nash painted in the late summer of 1918 while still employed as a war artist.<sup>(1)</sup> In its breadth and maturity of handling The Cornfield shows a marked advance on his pre-war landscapes.

As the first landscape painting which Nash completed after the war The Cornfield joyously reaffirms the life-giving character of Nature which is so noticeably absent in the majority of his war paintings. The fulsome forms, strong colours and textural variety of the painting express the resplendent fecundity of nature - the foliage of the trees on the left spurts upwards in a Fragonard-like manner, the rounded peach coloured field of uncut corn is reminiscent of a ripe fruit - the whole scene indeed is pervaded by a sense of expansion and super-abundant growth.

Nevertheless, nature is not out of control here as Andrew Causey has recognised when he says that the picture is characterised by a: 'sense of space which is broad and expansive and at the same time enclosed'.<sup>(2)</sup> Rather it expresses that harmony of man and nature working in conjunction. In this The Cornfield presents the counter argument to Over the Top - nature, not as the perverted creation of man, devoid of reason but as source and expression of his enlightenment. But more than this the picture expresses a kind of aspirational ideal: 'it leaves', as Andrew Causey has said: 'much only half said'.<sup>(3)</sup> This is not to imply any hesitancy on Nash's part however; the strong design, solid structure and skilful use of counterchange suggest otherwise. But Nash's greater technical proficiency is no-

1. Exhibited with the London Group at the Goupil Gallery in April 1919, (42). It was sold to Sir Edward Marsh.
2. Andrew Causey, The Illustrated London News, 7th September 1967.
3. Ibid.

where more evident than in the treatment of the paint itself. Although, in general, the scale of the brushstrokes run counter to the perspective they nevertheless set up all manner of subtle relationships with the signified forms, and the solidity of those forms is enhanced or suppressed as a result. The heavily stippled paint texture of the pale turquoise-blue trees on the left cleverly reinforces the depiction of light coming from the left, since it catches and reflects the real light which falls onto the picture. The emptiness of this stunning painting reveals a presence which is most fully described - little wonder that it caused something of a sensation when it was shown in the London Group exhibition at the Goupil Gallery in the autumn of 1918. This revelatory emptiness became, at once, the psychological cornerstone and a major strategical device of Nash's landscape painting.

The success of The Cornfield did not prevent Nash from painting, in the same year Landscape near Sheringham (Plate 45) and Hesdin near St. Pol (Plate 46)<sup>(1)</sup>, two pictures which, at first sight, look tentative and naïve in comparison with the former painting. The broad, horizontally-banded composition and bright colours of Hesdin near St. Pol looks back to the Misbourne pictures and the Italian Landscape (Plate 5) of 1915. Nash structures the bands of the later picture by means of a series of skilful diagonal notations - shadows, tree trunks, field contours and clouds - to engender a work of almost diagrammatic clarity and great authority. In Landscape near Sheringham the reversion to a

1. Nash exhibited a watercolour, Sunset in a French Valley with the London Group at the Goupil Gallery in May, 1918 (67) which may well be Hesdin near St. Pol. Nash notes the sale of a watercolour French Landscape to Robert Nicholls in 1918.

more distant prospect is understandable in view of the topography.<sup>(1)</sup> Despite their seeming disparity Landscape near Sheringham and The Cornfield have a deal in common. Although the former is very delicately handled, Nash seems primarily concerned in both pictures with the description of broad landscape forms. The detailed passages do not distract from our awareness of the overall configuration which consists, in each case, of a large rounded form in the middle foreground which is bisected by a strident shadow. A watercolour version of The Cornfield<sup>(2)</sup> (Plate 47) is also markedly similar to Landscape near Sheringham, particularly in respect of the detailed passages of overhanging foliage in the left and right foregrounds of both paintings.

As an attempt to come to terms with more complex subject matter, Berkshire Farm of circa 1918, oil, (Plate 48)<sup>(3)</sup> is perhaps indicative of Nash's more outgoing and enquiring frame of mind. The rolling background landscape clearly relates to The Cornfield although the less fulsome and consequently more decorative appearance recalls earlier work. Despite the rather ponderous handling of the very dry paint, the rather awkward programmatic treatment of forms and the bright local colours, Berkshire Farm remains a rather soft and evocative picture - clearly located within the pre-Cézanne phase of Nash's development. Landscape with Cows, oil, (Plate 49) of circa 1918, also depicts rising ground beyond a foreground plane, (as do Hesdin near St. Pol and

1. This composition may, in fact, have been worked up from a much earlier sketch - possibly executed during Nash's walking tour of Norfolk with Pellew in 1912. The very rare appearance of a bird in the top right of the picture suggests Pellew's influence.
2. According to Nash this is not a study for The Cornfield as some have supposed.
3. Possibly Farm near Henley, exhibited with the London Group at the Goupil Gallery in May 1918 (43).

Landscape near Sheringham) but apart from this Landscape with Cows and Berkshire Farm have very little in common. The terse angular forms and spikey disjointed spaces of Landscape with Cows contrasting markedly with the softer character of Berkshire Farm look forward to a more rigorous and uncompromising style of painting.

In 1919 Nash painted two of what are probably his most decorative works; Whiteleaf Woods (Plate 50) and Wood Interior (Plate 51)<sup>(1)</sup> which is surely indicative of the heterogeneous character of his output at this time. The sloping field on the right of Whiteleaf Woods is flanked by rounded clumps of grey-green trees and cut across by a jagged shadow in a manner reminiscent of The Cornfield. The sinuous tree trunks and frond-like clumps of foliage create a marvellously rhythmic, two-dimensional design. The translucent effects created by the light as it filters through the overhanging foliage enhances the languorous and rather mystical air of expectancy which pervades the scene.

Although the poor quality of the reproduction makes any analysis of it speculative, Wood Interior appears to be one of the most abstracted of all Nash's paintings, since the major distinctions which furnish structural and spatial information - between foreground, middleground, background; solid and void - are systematically eroded. In particular, the foreground tree trunks are flattened against the picture plane since they run from the bottom to the top edge of the painting (the central tree stops short of the bottom edge, but a strong shadow establishes contact with it). The background frieze of trees is only marginally tonally weaker than the foreground tree trunks, and the tonal distinction between the foreground foliage and the middleground field

1. Reproduced in Modern Movements in Painting, Chapman & Hall, London 1920.

is almost eradicated - this confusion is compounded by the fact that the outline shapes of the former are continuous with the middleground contours. The patches of sky to the top right and left of the composition do not establish, because of their relative smallness, any clear distinction between solid and void. There is also a notable absence of shadows (with the one exception noted above) and little or no modelling of forms. Finally, the Matisse-like textures which are applied in ink do nothing to differentiate between the signified forms but instead simply add to the overall decorative effect. The result is almost diagrammatic in its rigorous suppression of space; having rather significantly, the character of an illustration. Nash's interest in flat decorative effects was probably renewed in 1919 as a result of his introduction to wood engraving. Wood Interior represents the extreme of this flat, decorative type of painting since he was soon to be subject to very different influences.

#### Percy Moore Turner

In late 1918 or early 1919 Nash met Percy Moore Turner the collector and director of the Independent Gallery who also lived at Gerrards Cross. Turner was impressed by the young artist, whose work he might already have seen in the collection of Sir Michael Sadler. It would seem that Nash's work conformed in every detail to Turner's ideal and, in turn Turner's views, which he set out in a book entitled The Appreciation of Painting<sup>(1)</sup> read, one feels, like a credo of Nash's most deeply felt convictions.

Turner was attracted by the unselfconscious simplicity of primitive art which he thought wholesome and good. Art-

1. Percy Moore Turner, The Appreciation of Painting, Selwyn and Blount, London, 1921.

ists should not weigh down their painting with a wealth of superfluous detail but neither should they dispense with subject-matter altogether to concentrate exclusively on formal considerations since this was, according to Turner, 'mere affectation'. Significantly for Nash, although Turner advocated simplicity he nevertheless laid great stress on structure in painting.

Nash was deeply impressed by the work of Cézanne's followers - Marchand, Friesz, and de Segonzac-which he saw not only in Turner's collection, but probably also in a series of exhibitions which were held at the Independent and Dover Galleries in the 1920's and early 1930's.<sup>(1)</sup> This work

1. We may justifiably single out those exhibitions which took place during the early 1920's, since they must have had the greatest effect on Nash as far as this group were concerned. One of the earliest of these post-war exhibitions of modern French painting and drawing which would likely have influenced Nash, took place at the Independent Gallery in May, 1920. On view were works by Marchand, Derain, de Segonzac and Friesz, including an oil, La Gouttière (1) and two watercolour landscapes (67) and (68) by Marchand; three oils, The Aerodrome (12) and two still-lives (19) and (23) by Friesz; a landscape in oil by de Segonzac, (4).

This was followed by a similar exhibition which also took place at the Independent Gallery, in April, 1921. On view were: two oils, Sous-bois (7) and Les Fleurs (9) and two watercolours, La Passerelle, (25) and Le Village (26) by de Segonzac; two oils, a still life (12) and L'entrée du Village (14) and three watercolours, two landscape studies (16) and (17) and L'aqueduc (20) by Marchand; an oil by Friesz, La Terrasse (6).

An exhibition of Othon Friesz's work was held at the Independent Gallery probably in the second half of 1921 since it contained work executed in 1920. The catalogue which is housed at the National Art Library very probably belonged to Nash himself, since a number of pencilled comments have been made on various works, in a hand which is extremely reminiscent of Nash's own at that time. These intriguing remarks are themselves characteristic - on Le Village, (Piémont, 1920): (12).

must have confirmed Nash in the direction he already to some extent had taken. His pre-war work must, in general, have seemed disconcertingly slight and less able than some of his more recent work to hold its own with work derived from Cézanne and his followers.

Nash was not suppressing his natural disposition towards flat, decorative effects, but rather the assimilation of these influences represents the process of development itself as the continual enlargement of vision and practice. He might also have felt the need to bring his work into line with and thus integrate it into the modern movement.

Nash comments 'good dullness', on L'Olivier (14), 'growth', on Le Campanile (15), 'quiet colour design', and rather interestingly, in view of Nash's subsequent interest in snow scenes, a remark (only partially legible) on the depiction of coldness in La Route dans la Neige (Jura) (19).

One general comment draws attention to 'the muddiness of the colour' which suggests that Nash was attracted to the obviously rather sombre general character of the exhibition. The range of subject matter at this exhibition suggests that it was profoundly influential. On view were at least two paintings of snow - (19) above and La Chaumière dans la Neige (25), a harbour scene, Les Jetées (Le Havre) (10) and various mountain landscapes, still-lives and tree studies.

In June of the following year, Jean Marchand held an exhibition of paintings and drawings at the Independent Gallery which was probably just as influential. On view were three pictures of viaducts, (12), (17), (35), and several landscapes and views of towns and villages.

In October, 1923 the third of this influential trio of French painters, Andre de Segonzac held an exhibition of paintings, drawings and etchings at the same gallery. Most of the 37 works on view were landscapes of which at least four depicted water in some form - Le Conde de la Rivière, (21) Le Bord de l'eau (35), Le Pont (36) and L'Ecluse (37).

Since modern art and French art were seen to be synonymous in England at this time, Nash must have felt obliged to take at least some account of the work of the School of Paris to effect this integration. Nash himself said that he 'caught up with French painting after the war'.<sup>(1)</sup>

### The Paintings

The rigorous continental influences to which Nash was subject can be discerned in the generally rather sober character of his work and specifically in his more aggressive treatment of form after 1920. Chalford, Gloucestershire (Plate 52) of 1920 and Stream Pourville (Plate 53) circa 1920, clearly express this influence. Buildings do not often appear in Nash's work before this time, but when they do they are invariably unobtrusive - either moulded into or largely obscured by the landscape. The overall configuration of buildings in Berkshire Farm (Plate 48), for example, fits snugly into a contour which is determined by the landscape, and even the individual structures within the complex are organic in character. In contrast, the buildings of Chalford, Gloucestershire are assertively independent of the landscape context. Man-made structures are, of course, more liable to geometrical transposition than are the forms of landscape itself. In view of this fact it is not difficult to understand why a great variety of buildings appear in Nash's work during the 1920's and 1930's.

It seems entirely appropriate that Nash should have been influenced by a group of artists for whom nature was centrally important. Of this group it was Marchand, together with Derain and to some extent Cézanne himself who became cult figures for painters of the English landscape

1. Conversation with the artist.

during the early 1920's. The almost devotional commitment to nature of the Frenchman became a powerful and pervasive influence to which Nash himself was also subject.

Nash differs in one important respect from the followers of Cézanne in that he rarely, if ever, imposes a geometrical scheme on the whole of his design.<sup>(1)</sup> Rather by depicting the buildings and other man-made structures as primary volumes he opposes them to the more sensuous forms of the landscape.<sup>(2)</sup> In Chalford, Gloucestershire for example the cubic forms of the buildings and angular contours of the pitched roofs, windows, fences and paths are contrasted against the sensuous twisting forms of hedgerows, overhanging trees and folds of distant landscape in a kind of formal counterpoint. The spirit of this more structural approach affects the whole of the design however, since the contours of the landscape forms adequately convey a sense of volume. The man-made structures of Stream Pourville<sup>(3)</sup> are similarly opposed to the serpentine flow of water. Nash differs therefore from artists like Marchand and Friesz who subject the whole of the design to a consistent transformation of style; in this sense Nash stays closer to nature, since the distortions he employs are less arbitrary and more in response to the motif itself.

Sapperton, Gloucestershire (Plate 54), Woods in Winter (Plate 55) and Hillside (Plate 57) of circa 1920 and Winter Scene, oil, (Plate 56) of 1920 have in common

1. Given Nash's later disposition towards pictorial ambiguity it is interesting to speculate about his line of development had he seen Cubist paintings by Braque and Picasso.
2. The most angular and abstracted of Nash's landscapes, which come closest to the Vorticist idiom, appear among the wood engravings.
3. Bradford Corporation bought the picture from William Marchant of the Goupil Gallery in 1924.

the characteristic gloomy aggressiveness of this period. In Sapperton, Gloucestershire the extensive hatching and strong patterns of light and dark areas and relatively small scale indicate the influence of wood engraving, whereas the solid, rather angular forms, which give the appearance of having been slotted together rather in the manner of a jigsaw puzzle, recall Marchand. The boldly assertive composition in which the tunnel of trees on the right is countered by the movement of the large tree from the centre to the top left of the design accords with the aggressive style. The remaining works of this group were probably executed in the Chiltern Hills in the winter of 1920-21 and all three depict a hillside with a high horizon line, with the result that the predominant movement is across rather than into the picture. The paint of Winter Scene has been very directly applied with no concessions to pleasing pictorial effects. There is little tonal or scalar recession and the resultant shallowness is reinforced by the vertical furrows on the left. Space is largely created by means of the discursive diagonal which runs from the middle to the top left of the composition. The red-purples and mauve-pinks give for a very bleak and rather despondent looking scene.

Woods in Winter is a strikingly angular design in which the middle ground field rises sharply onto the picture plane on the left. The steeply rising ground of Hillside is less disjointed but the forms in both paintings are spidery and frenetic. Both exhibit a variety of textures and patterns - hatching, cross-hatching, dry brushwork and inked contours which, in turn, represent a variety of natural forms. Although Woods in Winter with its dull overcast sky and wintry brown and grey colours is the more oppressive of the two, both are nevertheless harsh and even aggressive images.

The Leeds scheme gave Nash the opportunity to develop his idea of relating architecture to its landscape setting.

Although by no means inferior Rhubarb and Coal (Plate 58) of 1920, is perhaps the less radical of the two designs which he produced. It recalls earlier work in that it consists of a number of horizontal bands which are structured by means of a diagonal hedgerow running from the centre to the top left of the composition. This movement is countered by the smoke issuing from the train on the left and from the chimney at the top right of the composition. The narrow strip of furrowed field in the foreground of the composition pushes the rising middleground into space. Although the forms of the trees are sensuous and full-bodied the tightly-knit design conveys a sense of control which is necessary for a cartoon of this kind. This formal rigidity is, to a certain extent, offset by the rather humorous treatment of the train and the rhubarb sheds on the right.

The second design, Millworkers' Landscape (Plate 59) of 1920 is a rather more serious affair. The incisive diagonal movement of the rows of millworkers houses is stemmed by the massive form of the ruined abbey. The geometric elements - pyramids, cubes and semi-circles - of the abbey itself contrast with the organic forms of the trees below and the voluminous clouds of the stormy sky above. The rather diagrammatic treatment of the reflections in the canal on the right recall the reflections in Paul Nash's River Aire which was executed for the same scheme. The Yorkshire Post said rather elliptically of Millworkers' Landscape that it 'sought for ugliness at the expense of truth' whereas Rhubarb and Coal was: 'less extreme but untidy'.<sup>(1)</sup> The designs of the brothers Nash were seen to be transitional; more vigorous and less neat than the traditional, realist designs of Jowett and Rutherford but, by implication, rather more acceptable than the Vorticist designs of

1. The Yorkshire Post, 14 November, 1921.

The heterogeneous character of Nash's output during this time indicates that he had not by any means given up decorative painting in favour of solid modelling and spatial cohesion. For all their angularity of form and aggressive execution Woods in Winter, Sapperton, Gloucestershire and Wood Interior do not exhibit the same substantial character as Chalford, Gloucestershire and A Sawmill: Gloucestershire, oil, (Plate 61) (see below). Other works of this time are seen to be even more regressive in style. The lattice-like configuration of branches and foliage, shallow space and translucent light effects of Study of Trees of 1920, (Plate 60) for example, look back to the unashamedly decorative paintings of 1919.

In his review of Nash's exhibition at the Goupil Gallery in February, 1921,<sup>(1)</sup> Fry asserted that Nash was still, at the time, primarily a decorative painter. Only two works suggested to Fry that Nash was capable of painting more substantial and significant works (see above Page 61). One of these, A Sawmill: Gloucestershire (Plate 61) of circa 1920,<sup>(2)</sup> is arguably the most structurally rigorous of all Nash's works and comes closest to the style of Marchand and Friesz. The rigid volumes of the windowless building complex are not at all softened or tempered by the taut and unyielding landscape context in which they are set. This is perhaps the most uncompromising of all Nash's works. Fry's observation of this tendency would be unremarkable were it not for the fact that he was alone in making it. Despite the quite obvious changes which were taking place in

1. The New Statesman, 12th February, 1921, page 560.
2. Reproduced in British Artists of Today: No. 2, John Nash, The Fleuron, 1925.

Nash's work during the early 1920's the majority of critics obstinately continued to focus their attention on the flat, decorative, linear qualities of the work to the exclusion of all else.

Writing in 1926 Rutter, for example, asserts that: 'John and Paul Nash, stand for flat definition in the new English movement'.<sup>(1)</sup> In this respect, the work often was, and still is, likened to Japanese or Chinese art. The synoptic forms of Nash's work in the 1920's probably distracted critics away from the structural evolution which was taking place. But why, it might be asked, were they distracted so easily? There are two possible answers to this question. Firstly, it may have been due to the persistence of the importance attached by artists and critics alike during the previous decade to the decorative qualities of modern art. Secondly, it may have been due to the English sense of inferiority in the face of modern French art. No English artist, it was argued, could hope to compete with the achievement of Cézanne in particular. According to Rutter: 'The exhibitions of the London Group were never wanting in canvases whose paintings clearly show that they have seen the pictures of Cézanne - and misunderstood them completely.'<sup>(2)</sup> Thus critics were either unaware or unwilling to take account of the structural characteristics of Nash's work; preferring instead to see him as one of the main protagonists of the modern English school of decorative painting alluded to by Rutter.

Not until his review of Nash's one-man exhibition at

1. Frank Rutter, Evolution in Modern Art, Harrop and Co., London, 1926, page 122.
2. Ibid, page 144. This view persisted among English critics. See John Russell, Sickert to 1948, Lund Humphries 1948, pages 47-51.

the French Gallery in 1933 did Rutter recognise that Nash was: 'now laying more stress on the contrast of masses in his simplifications of nature'. Indeed he even talks of Nash's: 'complete mastery of the third dimension'. But, of course, all this is achieved: 'without losing his lovely sense of line'. And the review in general still lays great stress on the decorative qualities of Nash's work. (1)

Gerald Reitlinger was one of the few critics to take account of Nash's development during the early 1920's. According to Reitlinger: ". . . one may see (in English painting today) two generations of the more strictly post Cézanne painting. The older generation numbers painters of the distinction of Mr. Duncan Grant, Mr. Roger Fry and the brothers Nash, who have latterly approached 'significant form' through gradual evolution and experiment. These painters represent the characteristically modern English school not unworthy if we consider the vicissitudes of English painting in the last hundred years." (2)

1. The Sunday Times, 28 May, 1933.
2. Gerald Reitlinger, The Modern Revival of Draughtman-ship III - The Revival in England in Drawing and Design Vol. 1, No. 5, November, 1926.

Introduction

Nash's garden at Meadle<sup>(1)</sup> and his friendship with professional gardeners like Clarence Elliot and Jason Hill helped to develop his native interest in horticulture. From this time he made a pictorial record of his best plants thus joining together the activities of gardening and painting. Nash secured his first teaching post in 1922 when Sydney Carline, who was head of the recently reopened Ruskin School of Drawing at Oxford, invited him to teach at the school on a part-time basis of one day a week.<sup>(2)</sup> Nash remained there until Carline's death in 1929. He taught wood engraving and design (book illustration and fabric design) and occasionally he took groups of students on sketching expeditions. Although teaching was a marginal activity which did not obtrude to any great extent on his life as a professional painter it had a significant effect on his work - sometimes making it appear rather tentative in character.

In 1923 Nash became a founder member of the Modern English Watercolour Society, which held its first exhibition at the St. George's Gallery in April of that year. Rutter

1. Of which Paul Nash did a painting - Garden at Meadle - in 1926.
2. Gilbert Spencer was employed at the school on the same basis. Nash and Spencer became, as it were, friends in adversity: both were overshadowed by more famous elder brothers and both were consequently, to some extent, neglected by critics. But their life-long friendship was probably founded much more substantially on their similarity of artistic outlook. Spencer's career parallels Nash's own - he is primarily a landscape painter; his early work, which was linear in style, exhibited an engaging combination of simplicity and skill; and he was influenced by the Impressionists and eventually Cézanne. But more fundamentally Spencer displays in his work that same sense of integrity which springs from his commitment to nature.

described the founder members as being: 'all very different in style, but all having a respect for drawing in common, and all basing their pictures primarily on a careful construction in line'.<sup>(1)</sup>

In the summer of 1923 Nash visited Dorset and the Norfolk coast near Cromer, the latter with another founder member of the N.E.A.C., Francis Umwin. Both John and Paul Nash left the New English Art Club in 1923 and the brevity of their stay is indicative of the decline it had suffered since the turn of the century.

### Sydney Carline

During the years of their friendship Carline imparted to Nash an awareness of the theoretical underpinnings of painting which did not have a wholly beneficial effect on Nash's work. The two men grew to know each other well; they went on frequent sketching expeditions together when Carline would ceaselessly expound his theories to a receptive, if often a rather bewildered, Nash. Carline's commitment to the living model and to nature in general reflects his Slade training under Tonks. Carline also studied at the atelier of the French-Canadian painter Percyval Tudor-Hart in Paris. Hart advocated a working method based on an initial monochrome drawing which was progressively worked up and further differentiated into warm and cool areas and thence into full colour. Hart was also interested in the intrinsic and actual rhythms of forms in painting and in all his teaching he stressed the importance of relationships across as well as into the picture. Carline developed Hart's ideas in conjunction with John Duguid, an unsuccessful painter who had studied at the Bauhaus in Germany and

1. For a review of this exhibition see The Studio, May 1923, pages 279-280.

who, like Carline, was inclined to theorise about painting.<sup>(1)</sup> Carline developed an immensely complicated and self-conscious working method based on a systematic grouping and then subdivision of tones and colours in an attempt to achieve balance across as well as into the picture plane. By the time he met Carline, Nash had already developed a working method which was, in some respects, similar to Carline's own. Nash produced on-the-spot monochrome studies working systematically from light to dark in the manner of the 18th century English watercolourists and these became the source of finished work in oil or watercolour. Nash's concern with flat, decorative effects and rhythmic line also paralleled Carline's interest in pictorial relationships. These common interests did not have the effect however of confirming Nash in what he was already doing. Carline's voluble criticisms of the strengths and weaknesses of Nash's work coupled with his unflagging enthusiasm for and ceaseless espousal of his incredibly complicated working method made Nash very self-conscious about his approach to painting in general and his handling of tone in particular.

According to Nash, Carline was fascinated by the concentrated vision that he, Nash, was able to achieve in his work. In their discussions, Carline attempted to uncover the principles on which Nash's art was founded, in the hope of applying them to his own work.<sup>(2)</sup>

Nash's open-minded and programmatic attitude towards his work after 1918 had never stifled his creativity or interfered with his natural spontaneity. The over-cautious and rather ponderous works that he occasionally produced

1. Duguid became a close friend of Nash. Nash was a frequent visitor to Minchinhampton, Duguid's home in Gloucester and they remained friends until Duguid's death in the 1950's.
2. Conversation with the artist.

from this time reflect the anxiety which Carline's theorising must have engendered. Even the more exciting works have a rather systematic appearance which Nash was fortunately able to turn to account. Carline's stress on relationships across the picture plane together with a working method which slotted or butted together rather than overlapped forms probably gave Nash some justification to retain his interest in flat decorative effects.

### Paintings

The Lane. (Plate 62) of circa 1922<sup>(1)</sup> is a natural and spontaneous watercolour drawing which shows no evidence of any modern French influence of self-conscious awareness of theoretical issues. The precise contours and orderly brushwork of The Pond. (Plate 63) of 1922<sup>(2)</sup> on the other hand give for a more stable and reasoned appearance which suggests the codifying and calming influence of Cézanne's followers. The Moat, Grange Farm, Kimble, oil, (Plate 64) of 1922<sup>(3)</sup> shows evidence of the confrontation of the two diametrically opposed influences. On the one hand, the monumentalising influence of Cézanne's followers is seen in the substantial quality of the paint and in the use of steep perspective which gives for a rapid diminution of hedges, stream and trees towards the vanishing point in the centre of the design. On the other hand, the slotted appearance of some of the foreground forms, in particular the overhanging branches on the right, which have been painted in the spaces provided rather than over background areas as is the normal practice, which tend to counter this sense of deep

1. Painted in the lane below Nash's house at Meadle. Purchased in 1923.
2. Reproduced in British Artists of Today, op.cit. Nash sold two watercolours with the title A Pond in 1923.
3. Reproduced in British Artists of Today, *ibid*; C.A.S. Report 1919 - 1924, 1924, pl. 3. Purchased in 1923.

space is evidence of Carline's influence. This counter-movement towards the picture-plane is reinforced by a series of visual associations - foreground branches intrude from all four sides of the frame to produce a lattice-like configuration which associate with other linear components located at different fictive depths within the picture. The unstable and rather allusive spatial character which results is strangely in keeping with the uncharacteristically dynamic and evocative description of atmosphere.

Dramatic atmospheric effects appear again in Cromer (Plate 65) of circa 1923.<sup>(1)</sup> The commitment to the motif is more evident here than in Sawmill: Gloucestershire (Plate 61) for example, since the basic geometric structure of the building complex is filled out with a variety of architectural details. The Aylesbury Plain, oil, (Plate 66)<sup>(2)</sup> and View of the Plain (Plate 67)<sup>(3)</sup> both of circa 1923 are more conventional. The former presents a landscape which stretches away to an unusually low horizon. The tall elm trees on the left and farmworker, horse and cart on the right recall much earlier work. View of the Plain is more interesting in the quite radical treatment of the forms in the middle distance and resourceful use of the medium. The distant prospect in both paintings perhaps gave Nash the opportunity to perfect the tonal relationships.

1. Reproduced in British Artists of Today, op.cit. Nash sold three watercolours of Cromer to Desmond Coke in 1923: The Town, The Esplanade, East Runton and The Town from the Pier. The watercolour (Plate 65) is likely to be one of these.
2. Reproduced in British Artists of Today, ibid. Nash sold the painting to Sir Edward Marsh in 1923.
3. Possibly Looking over the Plain which Nash sold to Desmond Coke in 1922.

Grange Farm, Kimble (Plate 68) of 1923<sup>(1)</sup> is an elegantly formed and suavely executed work - the almost monochrome colours and self-conscious tonal arrangement indicate the extent of Nash's involvement with and anxiety about tone at this time.<sup>(2)</sup> A Kitchen Garden, Dorset, oil, (Plate 69) of 1923<sup>(3)</sup> has all the solidity and weight but none of the rigidity of Sawmill: Gloucestershire. The central rectilinear complex of glasshouses and furrows and orderly, almost systematic application of paint are tempered by the rhythmical forms of the landscape. Here Nash softens the rigorous excesses of the followers of Cézanne as he integrates it into his work.

### Paul Nash

John and Paul Nash had worked closely together as war artists during 1918 and they continued to see a good deal of one another in the 1920's & this contact seems to have been as much professional as social.<sup>(4)</sup> Although, according to John Nash, it was usual for the elder brother to impart his advice to the younger, there can be little doubt that the latter's work had a not insignificant effect on Paul Nash during the early 1920's. This interchange was brought about and fostered by the similarity of their cir-

1. Reproduced in British Artists of Today, op.cit. Nash sold a watercolour with this title from the St. Georges Gallery in 1923.
2. This preoccupation remained with Nash for some considerable time as a letter from Edward Bawden recalling his first visit to Meadle in 1935 indicates. See the catalogue introduction to the Retrospective Exhibition of Paintings, Watercolours, Drawings and Wood Engravings by John Nash, 'The Minorities', Colchester, November 1967.
3. Reproduced in British Artists of Today, ibid. Nash sold the painting to Richard Wyndham in 1923.
4. Apart from his friendship with Ben and Winifred Nicholson, Paul Nash was otherwise isolated from his professional colleagues at this time.

cumstances at this time. Both artists wished to bring their work into line with modern continental developments and both sought to do this by learning from the example of French art and, as a result, both exhibit a plurality of styles in their work. But whereas Paul Nash's eclecticism is, as Andrew Causey says: 'evidence of his searching for a style' (1) John Nash's was a more positive open-mindedness; he attempted to consolidate his art by utilising a variety of influences. Evidence of his searching can perhaps be seen in the forced and rather urgent character of Paul Nash's work. On the other hand, John Nash's powerful capacity to appropriate and subsume influences enabled him to work on a broad front with comparative ease.

Causey argues that Paul Nash did not resolve: 'the problem of pictorial symbol with the problem of style in the sense of method of representation' (2) between 1918 and 1928. For John Nash, on the other hand, the means were not and never could have been divorced from artistic function - language could never be developed in isolation from the committed utterance. In this sense John Nash was never exclusively concerned with the problems of technique as was his brother during the second half of 1921. Paul Nash was committed to the development of an abstracted or symbolic discourse which, to some extent, emancipated pictorial form from the burden of signification. Since he was able, without any sense of restraint, to operate through the subject, John Nash avoided the confrontation which caused his brother so much anxiety.

A detailed comparison of their work reveals that John

1. Andrew Causey. Unpublished doctoral dissertation on the work of Paul Nash, University of London, 1971, page 79.
2. Ibid, page 69.

Nash was in advance of and consequently influencing his brother during the first half of the 1920's.<sup>(1)</sup> There is nothing to compare with the monumental Sawmill: Gloucestershire (Plate 61) or the accomplished Chalford, Gloucestershire (Plate 52) in Paul Nash's work until Sandling Park and The Pond of 1924. Although the dominant centrality of the sheepfold in Sheepfold, Romney Marsh is striking it nevertheless fails to assert itself in relation to the landscape since it is constrained by the natural contours in a similar manner to the buildings in John Nash's Berkshire Farm (Plate 48) of 1918. There is no work of Paul Nash's to compare with The Moat, Grange Farm, Kimble (Plate 64) - it exhibits a subtlety and control which is noticeably lacking in Paul Nash's Chestnut Waters for example.

By 1922 John Nash was already fleshing out his pictures with more naturalistic detail, having absorbed to advantage the modern influences with which Paul Nash was only just beginning to come to terms. Although Sandling Park and The Pond are Paul Nash's most accomplished works of this period, which, in their treatment of form and space owe an obvious debt to John Nash's The Moat, Grange Farm, Kimble among others, they nevertheless represent a retreat from the advanced position taken up in Chestnut Waters.

John Nash's untroubled return to civilian life, his slightly earlier introduction to the work of Marchand <sup>or other followers</sup> of Cézanne through Percy Moore Turner<sup>(2)</sup> and his perhaps more comprehensive knowledge of the English watercolour trad-

1. Cubist influences do not appear in Paul Nash's work before Canal under the Lympne of 1922.
2. Paul Nash certainly knew Turner by the beginning of 1922. See Nash/Bottomley, op.cit., page 133.

ition, (see above, Page 3 Chapter 1) are additional factors which might well have contributed to his more rapid development at this time.

Introduction

In the summer of 1924 Nash visited Bath and Bristol whose architecture and docks <sup>in the case of Bristol</sup> were to be the inspiration of many works. (1) In the same year he began work on the wood engravings for a book on poisonous plants which was to be his masterpiece in this idiom. (2) In 1925 the first book to contain watercolours by Nash, Jonathon Swift's Directions to Servants (3) was published. In all, Nash was involved

1. Nash had been advised to work at Bath and Bristol by Edward Wadsworth when they were working on the project for the Leeds Town Hall in 1920. Nash must have come into contact with Wadsworth in late 1913 or early 1914 when the London Group was founded. Their respective careers exhibit many striking similarities which suggest that they may occasionally have exercised a direct and reciprocal influence on one another. Wadsworth held an exhibition of Cubist-inspired woodcuts at the Adelphi Gallery in 1919 which Nash may well have seen, since he was being introduced to the medium at about this time (see Page 3 Chapter 1). Wadsworth abandoned oil for tempera around 1922; the exact representation and meticulous design of port paintings like Dunkerque of 1924 are strongly reminiscent-both in form and subject matter-of Nash's immaculate and stringent dock and harbour paintings like Dredgers, Bristol Docks, (Plate 71) of about the same time. For Nash as for Wadsworth the sea itself was little more than a calm accompaniment to their quayside subjects.

Wadsworth turned to still-life painting around 1925 and after 1929 still-life groups began gradually to appear in other contexts in a manner which parallels a similar development in Nash's work at about the same time. In addition, Wadsworth adopted a divisionist technique in the late 1930's which is again analogous to the changes which were taking place in Nash's work under the influence of Ravilious just before the Second World War. It is also worth noting that both men worked as camouflage artists during war-time.

2. W. Dallimore. Poisonous Plants, Hazlewood Books, Etchells and Macdonald, London, 1927.
3. Jonathon Swift. Directions to Servants, Golden Cockerell Press, 1925.

in the publication of some sixteen books between 1921 and 1940. In late 1926 or early 1927 Nash collaborated with his brother in the production of a poster for the Empire Marketing Board on the subject of market gardening.<sup>(1)</sup>

Although this was the only work produced by the brothers in direct collaboration, it nevertheless reflects their more general interest in design and the applied arts.

Nash held two important joint exhibitions during the period: the first at the Goupil Gallery in May 1925 with Gilbert Spencer and Mark Gertler<sup>(2)</sup> and the second again at the Goupil Gallery in March 1928 with Gilbert Spencer and Neville Lewis.<sup>(3)</sup>

### The Paintings

The docks, boats, canals, bridges and buildings in which Nash became interested as a result of his visit to Bath and Bristol, in a sense, reversed the process of relaxation which had been underway since 1922, by providing for the re-emergence of a more rigid and formalistic style of painting. Nash might have felt that the landscape genre did not allow for the full development of the influences

1. Paul Nash discussed the project in a letter to Audrey Withers. Quoted in Bertram, op.cit. page 189.
2. Nash exhibited three oils including Grange Farm (45), which might possibly be The Moat, Grange Farm, Kimble (Plate 64) and eight watercolours including A Lock, Bath and Factories, Chalford which are difficult to identify with certainty.
3. Nash exhibited sixteen watercolours including, rather interestingly three figure studies: The Artist's Wife (22), probably a pencil study executed in 1920, Three Figures in a Garden (24), and The Artist's Sister (25) a pencil and wash portrait study executed in 1923. It is not possible to identify other work with any degree of certainty but it would seem as if Nash worked quite extensively in Gloucestershire and Somerset at this time since many of the works are of Chalford and the Kennet and Avon canal.

to which he had been subject earlier in the decade. Here the opportunity presented itself for new painterly experiences and Nash did not hesitate to accept the challenge which it represented.

This development was reinforced by a major exhibition of Cézanne which Nash saw at the Leicester Galleries in 1925.<sup>(1)</sup> Cézanne's monumentalising influence coupled with

1. The exhibition comprised 12 oils and 19 drawings and watercolours. On view were 6 tree studies, several still-lives, including L'Amour en Plâtre (10), and a number of landscapes in both oil and watercolour.

It is extremely difficult to determine when exactly the spirit of Cézanne's example began to insinuate itself into Nash's work, since it displays evidence of his interest in spatial ambiguity from very early in his career. Thus Nash's development at this time is much less easy to describe in terms of specific influences than the progress of his brother Paul during the same period for example. It is hard to believe that Nash would not have been to some extent aware of Cézanne during the early 1920's. He may well have seen the books on Cézanne in the possession of his brother. Cézanne, by Tristan Klingsor in the series Masters of Modern Art, John Lane, 1925 contains 40 illustrations. A detailed consideration of some of these clearly point to Cézanne as the inspiration for many of the innovations which were taking place in Nash's work during the period. For example, the vigorous suppression of space as the sea pushes forward onto the picture plane in the paintings of L'Estaque (5) and (7); the use of the wall as a framing device which establishes a foreground plane in Cour de Village a Auvers (9) (which is analogous to Nash's use of curtains and window frames); the dramatic centrality of the flower group and tree respectively in Tulips (20) and Etude d'Arbres (36), the confused relationships and cramped spaces of Jeune Homme à la Tête de Mort (22); the large empty foreground of Saint-Victoire dans le Loin-tain (23) and, most striking of all, the spatial analogies which associate components located at different fictive depths in Saint-Victoire (31) and Arbre (34).

In addition he would very probably have seen the illustrations in Roger Fry's book on Cézanne which was published by the Hogarth Press in 1927.

and reinforced by the influence exerted by his followers can clearly be seen in the greater amplitude of the forms, ordered brushwork and Cézannesque colouring of some of Nash's work at this time. However, Nash was as much influenced by the allusively paradoxical and dynamic character of Cézanne's work as by its monumentality. The conflation of these influences, which tend to pull in opposite directions, again give for a complex and seemingly inconstant development.

The distortions and ambiguities which are evident in the work of Cézanne have some objective basis in human vision, since human vision itself is the source of the mutual interactions which occur between objects and give rise to such ambiguities. Fortunately, as Cézanne must have realised, many of these ambiguities facilitate the necessary process of reformulating nature in the context of painting. However, these ambiguities seem often to be at the centre of Nash's project; they are given more prominence than their objective depiction would seem to justify. In order to understand the reason for this it is necessary to contextualise the specific example of Nash's work as a general strategy in a wider discussion of artistic aims. By so doing we furnish a conceptual framework which enables an overall conception of Nash's project to be articulated in relation to the specific means of its realisation.

Again some of the more important characteristics of the works reproduced in Fry's book are to be found in Nash's work after 1925: the horizontally banded composition and empty foreground of Maisons au bord de la Marne (10); the awkward and even ambiguous relationships between the objects in still-lives and interiors like Still Life with Ginger Jar (17), and Still-Life with Cineraria (19); the use of reflections to manipulate planes and surface in Winter Landscape (27), and The Pool (43); the exploratory cipher-like marks of drawings such as Mt. Ste. Victoire (31) and Drawing (30); and the radically unfocused character of the composition of Rocky Landscape (28).

The artist chooses from an infinity of motifs and by so doing he endows them with significance. But his choosing is not a simple matter of selection since nature is reformulated in art. Now the significance of the motif is rooted in this process of reformulation which strips away all superfluties, which subverts or disrupts the habitual process of dismissal and prolongs and concentrates the process of perception itself. The artist is not a free agent with the ability to select at will from nature; he is constrained to choose those motifs which are liable to the particular strategies of reformulation which he has developed and they are limited in number. The original motif has to lend itself to the devices which will transpose it into a concentrated presence.

Nash had already developed means of suppressing space in his pursuit of flat decorative effects. Encouraged by Cézanne's example he refined and extended these into a battery of devices which effected the process of reformulation in accordance with his desire to fix nature in its most replete form. The marked tendency from this time to leave areas of canvas and paper untreated and more importantly the extensive use of vigorous counterchange, which suppresses the spatial illusion, point to the influence of the French master.

Cézanne's on-going task of reformulating nature in two-dimensions is taken up by Nash in Ashbys Pond (Plate 70) of circa 1925.<sup>(1)</sup> What is remarkable about this seemingly modest design is its treatment of form and space - Nash employs a series of formal devices which lock together components located at different fictive depths. The first

1. Nash notes the sale of a drawing of Ashbys Pond at the beginning of 1925.

major branching of the centrally placed tree coincides with the line of the horizon and the branch on the left runs along this line for a short distance. This has the effect of pulling the background hillside towards the picture plane. Similarly, the hatched pattern of the sky engenders a strong sense of plane rather than space which further flattens the design. The lowest of the elongated branches of the sapling on the left follows exactly the edge of the pond to the central trunk. This has the effect of pushing the surface of the pond onto the picture plane and this again is reinforced by the pattern of inked lines on the surface of the pond itself. Further, the hedge at the far side of the pond on the left continues on the line of the distant hedge and gate on the right. The overall effect is to push the foreground onto the picture plane and nullify the distance between it and the lower middleground. As a result the left-hand hedge, gate, pollarded willow and haystack look unnaturally small.

These are not accidental associations; the similarity they bear to the pictorial contrivances of Cézanne, the subtle and profound effect they have upon the work and the frequency of their appearance suggest a deal of conscious deliberation on Nash's part. Neither are they the result of incompetence - Nash's not inconsiderable achievements by this time surely rule out this possibility.

Nash was one of a very small group of English artists, including Wadsworth, Ben Nicholson and Paul Nash, who were responding to Cézanne's example in this particular way during the middle of the decade. The paradoxical character of Nash's work is closer to that of Nicholson than it is to the rather more heavy-footed work of his brother or Wadsworth. But Nash differs from all three in the sense that his work does not undergo a broad stylistic transformation in response to these influences; he extracts the influential device from the general style of the work from which

it is derived. By ignoring the general character of continental painting which obviously, to some extent, signposts more specific influences, Nash laid the foundation for critical misconception and neglect.

The lucid handling of the forms and of the space in which they are located in Dredgers, Bristol Dock, oil, (Plate 71) of circa 1924,<sup>(1)</sup> one of the earliest Bristol paintings, is achieved by careful composition and controlled application of paint. Modelling is noticeably suppressed and the amplitude of the forms is largely achieved by the character of the contours. The design is rigorously pared of all superfluous detail and we are presented with a rich variety of monumental primary forms.<sup>(2)</sup>

Bristol Docks (Plate 72) of circa 1926, is even less atmospheric and more economical in execution. Modelling is at a minimum and a sense of form is conveyed almost wholly by means of contour - the form of the white launch, for example, which is silhouetted against a dark background is nevertheless amply conveyed by the drawing. The confusing linear network of spars, masts and houses rather interestingly interacts with the rotund volumes of hulks and funnels.

This kind of interaction is again evident in another marine painting, Ipswich Docks of circa 1931.<sup>(3)</sup> Here the

1. Reproduced in British Artists of Today, op.cit. Nash notes that Sir Edward Marsh bought the painting from the Goupil Gallery in late 1924.
2. Nash continued to be fascinated by the formal complexities of boat design and this interest reached its height in 1940 when he was again working as a war artist.
3. Formerly known as The Quay, Ipswich. Reproduced in The Studio, Vol.C1, 1931.

sweeping, curvilinear forms of the sailing barges are set against a distant scene of silos and warehouses which are reminiscent, in their almost diagrammatic simplicity, of the work of Edward Wadsworth (see below, page 57). By pushing this complex towards the foreground the dark smoking chimney in the far distance fosters the interaction which takes place between the former and the sails of the barges in the foreground.

The dramatic and distortive association between the quayside crane and the church in St. Mary's, Redcliffe (Plate 73) of 1929<sup>(1)</sup> gives for an illusionistically dynamic composition in which mutually exclusive structural configurations constantly subvert one another.

Apart from the paintings of Bristol, Ipswich and Yarmouth docks, Nash produced a major series on the architecture of Bath and Bristol at this time. Studies of The Polygon, Bristol (Plate 74) of 1925 and Avoncliffe from the Aqueduct (Plate 75) of circa 1926<sup>(2)</sup> show a greater concern than previously to texturally differentiate between the component forms of the painting.<sup>(3)</sup> This tend-

1. Nash notes the sale of a painting with this title from the Goupil Gallery in 1929.
2. A view of the Avon from the aqueduct carrying the Kennet and Avon Canal over the River Avon near Limley Stoke. Letter from Nash to the Tate Gallery, 2 May, 1954. Nash executed a painting from this drawing.
3. Nash painted the Kennet and Avon Canal many times during this period. His interest in lakes, canals and ponds might bear some relation to his passion for fishing. His diaries testify to the fact that he combined, as it were, the business of painting with the pleasure of angling. Nash's diaries and those of his wife, Christine, although by no means complete, contain useful information about their movements and in particular about their frequent painting trips and holidays. But apart from this they contain very little relevant material.

ency is even more marked in Clifton, (Plate 76) of circa 1927<sup>(1)</sup> in which the carefully articulated colours and textures of bricks and tiles tend to distract from the assertiveness of the volumes. The Old Canal, Bath, oil, (Plate 77) of circa 1926<sup>(2)</sup> is one of the most obviously Cézannesque of Nash's paintings. The solid block-like buildings, blind windows, methodical brushwork and strident red, blue and beige colours clearly point to the influence of the French master. The complex lock system thrusts into the picture and is stabilised and reinforced by the surrounding architecture. The resulting strongly recessional character is unusual as are the rather anecdotal figures which people the scene.

Although in some respects equally Cézannesque, the composition of A Lock, Bath, oil, of 1926<sup>(3)</sup> looks back to earlier work. The foreground plane which initially moves into space is turned steeply upwards to establish a high horizon. The solidly painted tree forms are sandwiched between and restrained by two geometric systems. Despite the evidence of Cézanne's influence, The Old Canal, Bath and A Lock, Bath are spatially fairly conventional, stable and unambiguous works. The Dundas Aqueduct, (Plate 78) of circa 1927, is rather different, for although the textural variety recalls Clifton, the composition and spatial articulation is far more radical. The reflections of the arch effectively link foreground to background in a way which suppresses the already shallow space. No relief is provided by the spaces under the bridge itself, since they appear to be filled to bursting with background vegetation. Consequently, we are presented with a tightly-knit set of

1. Presented to Manchester University in 1928.
2. Bought by the Contemporary Arts Society from the Goupil Gallery Salon, October, 1926. (108).
3. Reproduced in The Studio, Vol.C1, 1931.

rhythmical forms whose actual spatial dispositions are very difficult to discern. The picture clearly demonstrates that the depiction of detail does not necessarily prevent the development of a spatially ambiguous system. The Canal (Plate 79)<sup>(1)</sup> of circa 1928, is more controlled - the different textures of trees, water and buildings are clearly articulated and the elegant forms and stylish purples, beiges, and khaki-browns give for an accomplished if rather conventional watercolour.

The Canal Bridge, Bath, oil, (Plate 80) of circa 1929<sup>(2)</sup> is, as it were, situated in its treatment of form and space, between The Dundas Aqueduct (Plate 78) and The Canal (Plate 79) since it exhibits the flatness of the former with the unambiguousness of the latter. The scene is viewed from above and the strong reflections and large overhanging tree masses at the top of the design maintain a modular like regularity in the size of the main areas of the composition. This essentially decorative character does not, in any way, inhibit the signficatory role of each formal component and Canal Bridge, Bath remains a mysterious and rather powerful picture.

The Pond, oil, (Plate 81) of 1927,<sup>(3)</sup> is a more complex affair. The foreground is tilted upwards onto the picture plane whereas the middleground recedes into the distance in a fairly conventional manner. This has the predictable effect of making components in the forward areas of the middleground seem too small. There is a certain amount of linking between foreground and middleground,

1. The Kennet and Avon Canal near Bath. Bought from the Goupil Gallery in 1930.
2. Reproduced in The Studio, Vol.C1, 1931. Bought by the Victoria Art Gallery, Bath from the Goupil Gallery in 1911.
3. Painted at Meadle.

on the left, where the foreground tree associates with the more distant hedge, and on the right, where the small tree at the edge of the pond associates with the middle ground tree immediately above it to engender what seems to be a unified organic form. Despite these associations the vignette of distant landscape and open sky prevent the wholesale interlocking of components and, to this extent, the painting is more conventional in character than Ashbys Pond (Plate 70), for example.

Although Nash began still-life painting in 1922<sup>(1)</sup> it is useful to consider as a group some of the first scenes which extend into 1925. In Autumn Berries, oil, (Plate 82) of 1923 Nash gives as much attention to the idealised and obviously imaginative view of landscape through the window on the right as to the still-life of leaves and berries on the left. The frame of the window on the left and the curtain on the right are unobtrusive enough to allow the landscape to push forward and link up with the still-life group. Further, the space between the table and the window is suppressed by using Cézanne's device of making the edge of the table coextensive with the line of the more distant window sill. Nash executed a number of oil paintings during the 1920's which depict the garden at Meadle viewed from the cottage. In The Garden under Snow, oil, (Plate 83) of circa 1924,<sup>(2)</sup> the still-life of Autumn Berries has disappeared but the window frame remains to establish a foreground plane. However, in Meadle, Winter, oil,

1. Paul Nash's first flower painting - Magnolia Study - was produced in the same year. Like his brother, Paul Nash used the device of a window as a framework with curtains, a mirror, a chair or some other geometrical foreground shapes to contrast with the organic pattern. (See Bertram, op.cit. page 134) Paul Nash produced several flower paintings between 1926 and 1928.
2. Nash notes the sale of an oil painting with this title in 1924.

(Plate 84) of 1925 the frame too has disappeared. The elegant forms, solid, competent and ever expressive brushstrokes and rich browns, blues, mauves and purples of these and the large oil, A Window in Buckinghamshire (Plate 85) of 1928<sup>(1)</sup> are indicative of Nash's growing competency within conventional discourse. The Garden under Snow is however the most interesting picture of the three - the garden and landscape beyond are tilted up onto the picture plane and this is reinforced by the foreground hedge which runs parallel to and just below the horizontal window frame, as well as by the unconventional use of tone whereby the distant trees and hedge are tonally stronger than the window frame itself. The resulting ambiguities give for a curiously animated picture in which the landscape impinges rather menacingly upon the room within.

1. Formerly known as Snow Scene, Meadle. Nash notes the sale of an oil entitled Winter to Mrs. Quicke in 1928 and in brackets he adds 'Window in Bucks.'. The painting was shown at the Goupil Gallery in October, 1930 under its original title. Reproduced in The Studio, Vol.CI., 1930. page 326.

Introduction

To say that Nash discovered East Anglia in 1929 is rather misleading.<sup>(1)</sup> He already knew Norfolk quite well and the fact that he exhibited two watercolours, Old Farm, Suffolk, (291) and Ipswich, a drawing of the port at the Goupil Gallery Salon in November, 1919, indicates that he was at least familiar with parts of the adjacent county of Suffolk before 1920. In fact the event which so excited Nash in 1929 was his wife's discovery of the Stour Valley;<sup>(2)</sup> he worked there during the summer of that and the following year, by which time he had gathered sufficient material for his second one-man exhibition which was held in October 1930.<sup>(3)</sup>

He rented a small cottage near Wormingford close to the river where he spent part of every summer until 1939.

1. See Gore, op.cit., pXI, for example.
2. Two drawings - Near Great Horksley dated before 1918 /d'Offay Cowper Galleries, 1973 (32) and Wormingford Mill of 1922 /Royal Academy, 1967 (92) - indicate that Nash worked in this area before 1929. The style of the latter drawing - which is very close to that of The Pond of 1922 (Plate 63), for example - and the identifiable character of the landscape suggest that the date and title of the picture are correct. Nevertheless the large amount of work which Nash did in the Stour Valley during and immediately after 1929 indicates either that his knowledge of the region was limited before this date or at the very least a new-found enthusiasm for it during the early 1930's.
3. Nash exhibited 69 works. Included among the 34 oil paintings were The Aylesbury Plain (36) (Plate 66), Autumn Berries (39) (Plate 82), Snow Scene, Meadle (52) (See Page 98), Jug of Flowers (56) (Plate 86), A Sawmill: Gloucestershire (61) (Plate 61), The Farm Cart (65), now known as The Farm Wagon, (Plate 100), and A Lock, Bath (62) (See Page 95). Among the 35 watercolours on view were Ipswich Docks, (15) (See Page 93), the Dundas Aqueduct (25) (Plate 78) and Wormingford Mill Pool (31).

However, he did not confine himself to this area since it had been his practice for some time to travel fairly extensively. In 1927, for example, he worked on the Norfolk coast, in Dorset and in Gloucestershire. In 1929 he worked in Gloucestershire, Suffolk, Essex and Dorset. In 1937 he worked in Wales, which he had discovered in 1930, Dorset, Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex. This rather peripatetic way of life continued until his death in 1977.

From 1930 Nash often worked in Great Glemham Park, the ancestral home of the Earls of Cranbrook at Saxmundham. Nash had very probably made the acquaintance of Eric Ravilious by 1930<sup>(1)</sup> and the two were to become closely associated after 1934 (see page 101). In 1931 he began a series of plant drawings for articles in The Listener; these continued over a period of three years and they were later collected together under the title The Curious Gardener.<sup>(2)</sup>

In 1931 Nash again worked in Suffolk for another one-

1. Ravilious entered the Design School of the Royal College of Art in 1922 when he fell under the influence of his tutor Paul Nash who might well have introduced him to his brother, John, at some time during the following three years. Their relationship may initially have been fostered by a mutual interest in wood engraving. Nash wrote an article on the revival of wood engraving in England for the London Mercury in November 1928 (Vol. XIX, No. 109) in which he described Ravilious as an expert practitioner in the medium. The article contained the reproduction of an engraving by Ravilious.
2. Jason Hill, The Curious Gardener, Faber and Faber, 1932.

man exhibition which was held at the French Gallery in May 1933.<sup>(1)</sup>

Both the 1930 and 1933 exhibitions were, to use Nash's own term, 'sell-outs'.<sup>(2)</sup> By this time Nash was being patronised by some important and influential people including Sir Edward Marsh, Desmond Coke, Montague Shearman, Richard Wyndham, Sir Montague Pollock, Sidney Schiff, Claude Lovat Fraser, John Drinkwater and others.

In 1934 and 1935 he returned to East Anglia working at Snape and Wiston where he rented a cottage. In 1934 Nash joined the teaching staff of the Royal College of Art as an assistant teacher of design on a part-time basis of one day a week. Here he met the painter Edward Bawden who was also to become a life-long friend and colleague. The principal, Sir William Rothenstein, wanted practising artists who were not professional teachers to work at the college in the belief that they would be, as Nash put it, 'a leaven to the pedagogues.'<sup>(3)</sup> As at Oxford, Nash had a free hand, he simply talked to the students, giving them advice on a wide variety of work such as wood carving wood engraving (which he also taught), needlework, embroidery, stained glass and murals. Later, under Jowett and Darwin, Nash was brought in to give monthly assessments of

1. Nash exhibited 53 works. Included among the 28 oil paintings were the series of four depicting the seasons, (9), (11), (13), (15) (Plates 92-95), Upper Water (10) (Plate 104), Marrows and Daisies (21) (Plate 87). Included among the 25 watercolours were Roofs in Clifton (30) which might possibly be Clifton (Plate 76), The Bend in the Stream (51) (Plate 103) and Mantlepiece (53) possibly Mantlepiece (Plate 90).
2. Conversation with the artist.
3. Ibid.

the work in the painting school.

Although Nash lived out of London from 1918 he was, nevertheless, to some extent associated with the major artistic developments in England during the 1920's. With the reappearance of abstract art in England in the early 1930's and the coming of Surrealism soon after, Nash was acutely aware of the fact that his position in the modern English movement was about to change.<sup>(1)</sup> Why was the challenge of Abstract and Surrealist art not accepted by Nash? The question is worth asking since, in effect, he was constrained to take up one of two positions - either to continue as a member of one of the more advanced schools of English painting or to become an outsider, developing along a route of his own making. He was not overtaken by events as some have supposed, his choice was deliberate. On the one hand his commitment to the motif would not have allowed him to indulge in the arbitrary pictorial play offered by abstraction. On the other hand he was not, and never had been, interested in literary or symbolic painting - indeed he quite vehemently maintained that his flower pieces, for example, were not symbolic like his brother's - the motif itself was sufficient, and indeed the only justification for painting.

### The Paintings

As a result of his increasing interest in horticulture Nash produced a spate of flower and plant paintings in the early 1930's. What many of these paintings have in common is their large size, strong colours and expressive, broken

1. I once asked him if he had any association with Unit 1 and he replied, 'No, I was away from it all', which rather suggests that he was himself aware of his progressive displacement from the centre of radical developments in England. Conversation with the artist.

brushwork. The large paintings Jug of Flowers, oil, (Plate 86) of 1930 and Marrows and Daisies, oil, (Plate 87) of circa 1930, make use of reflections in a highly polished table which is tilted up onto the picture plane. Both contrast the comparatively light, organic foreground ensemble against a dark, severely rectilinear background. The jug of the former and the upright marrow of the latter picture both stand in a very odd relationship to the tilted table on which they stand. The elliptical shape of the flower pot in Marrows and Daisies does not seem to account for the spread of flowers on the left. In both paintings the proximity of the background furniture confuses the relationship between the foreground objects and their spatial setting. The resulting ambiguities can perhaps be traced back to the still-lives of Cézanne.

Compared with the above, the still-life groups of Flowers in a Vase, oil, (Plate 88) and Summer Flowers, oil, (Plate 89) both of circa 1935, dominate the canvases to a much greater degree. Both are less painterly and although the former utilises a rectilinear spatial context they are neither of them as interesting as the earlier pictures. Mantlepiece (Plate 90) of circa 1933 is rather an oddity while Buddleia and Red Hot Poker (Plate 91) of circa 1933<sup>(1)</sup> is noteworthy for its unusual viewpoint - the confusion caused by the steep angles and rather discursive still-life is played off against the clarity of the tonal arrangement.

In circa 1930 Nash produced a series of four paintings in which the seasons are represented by appropriate flowers and plants. Summer, oil, (Plate 92) and Autumn, oil, (Plate 93)<sup>(2)</sup> are still-life paintings taken from life with

1. Exhibited in Australia and New Zealand 1934 - 1935.
2. Reproduced in the catalogue to Nash's exhibition at the French Gallery, May 1933 (15).

imaginary landscapes beyond. Although both are idyllic, tranquil pictures executed in the painterly broken style of the period, they are not perhaps as interesting as those of Winter, oil, (Plate 94)<sup>(1)</sup> and Spring, oil, (Plate 95). Here the representative plants are set in the landscape itself. The dominant centrality of the ensemble in Spring give them an animate, even an anthropomorphic character which is reinforced and echoed by the rhythmic movement of the distant tree trunks on the extreme left. Winter is perhaps the most interesting painting of the series. The relevant plants (hellebore) are again central though not as dominant as in Spring since they are largely confined to the lower half of the painting. However, the boldly contrasted bands of the fore and middlegrounds provide the most striking feature of the work. Here Nash produces an ingenious and highly radical variation on a traditional theme.

In contrast, a great many of Nash's landscapes of the early 1930's are accomplished and substantial without being inspired or innovative. At the beginning of the decade Nash celebrated his rediscovery of the Stour Valley by producing the large oil, Wormingford Mill, Essex (Plate 96) and The Sluice Gate, oil, (Plate 97) both of circa 1930. Both are accomplished and interesting works which, in particular, exhibit a rich variety of forms and textures. The Sluice Gate is the less conventional of the two in the dramatic centrality of the tree group and startlingly 'unnatural' tonal arrangement. The study of Wormingford Mill, pencil and wash, (Plate 98) of 1929 is of interest - the highly individual ciphers which Nash uses to represent form call Cézanne's later studies to mind.

1. Reproduced by Christopher Blake, Modern English Art, Allen and Unwin, London, 1937 and in the catalogue to Nash's exhibition at the French Gallery in May, 1933 (9).

This promise was not fulfilled however as Nash reverted to rather more conventional means. Despite the strong tonal contrasts and vivid colour accents, The River at Bures, oil, (Plate 99) of 1930<sup>(1)</sup> is a rather dull affair. The conventional composition of Grange Farm, Kimble, oil, of circa 1930 is not alleviated by the somewhat laboured technique, - the paint has a worried, rather overworked look which gives for a very woolly effect. This is again evident in The Farm Wagon, oil, (Plate 100) of circa 1930. The curvilinear forms of the large cart are contrasted with the simplified and rather oddly arranged geometric forms of the farm buildings on the left. But the picture lacks cohesion and as a result it seems rather listless. Grange Farm, Kimble, Bucks, oil, of circa 1930<sup>(2)</sup> and Park Scene Glenham, oil, (Plate 101) of circa 1931,<sup>(3)</sup> are accomplished if unremarkable affairs. The River, Evening (Plate 102) of 1932 is an extreme example of the more spontaneous style of the watercolours at this time in which the linear framework is consequently much less evident and greater attention is given to the evocation of atmosphere. Although The Bend in the Stream (Plate 103) of circa 1933 is compositionally more interesting in its juxtaposition of open and closed spaces it is not sufficiently developed to warrant more interest. The flatter treatment of paint and 'washed-out' colour of Upper Water, oil, (Plate 104) of 1933 produce a sleepy and uninspiring landscape. Boat Houses, Marlow (Plate 105) of circa 1933, returns to the theme of

1. Nash reproduced this painting as a lithograph. A copy is housed at Manchester City Art Gallery (Rutherford Loan Collection) under the title The Stour near Bucks.
2. The painting is not in its original state; passages of it were retouched by Nash in the early 1960's.
3. The ancestral home of the Earls of Cranbrook near Saxmundham in Norfolk. Nash worked there frequently from this time until his death.

architecture in landscape but clearly it breaks no new ground.

Indeed Nash seemed to be doing no more than marking time at this point in his career. In an attempt to resolve this unhappy state of affairs he turned back to his own artistic roots. Path through the Willows (Plate 106) of 1934 and The Grove (Plate 107) of circa 1936, make more than a backward glance towards the English water-colour tradition. The sinuous tree trunks, elegant description of decorative foliage and tasteful colours are rather more satisfying than most of the rather plodding landscapes of this period. This rhythmic articulation is seen again in the continuously undulating topographical surfaces of Snow of circa 1936. Although the oil version adheres quite closely to the design of the watercolour and despite the changes which attempt to reinforce this undulating rhythm it loses something of the fluidity of the original. The more abrupt and angular contours of the trees and foreground detail, in particular, are separated out from the main rhythms of the landscape.

The solid rather angular forms and heavy systematic brushwork of The River Wiston, Evening, oil, (Plate 108) of circa 1935 looks back to earlier painting done under the influence of Cézanne's followers. Bledlow Church - The Lyde, oil, (Plate 109) of circa 1935 is perhaps the most richly textured work of this period and as such represents the culmination of a technical development which had been underway for a decade.

Introduction

In 1936 Nash was again in Suffolk which was at this time rapidly becoming, one feels, his spiritual home. In the same year he met John Piper and Graham Sutherland who were both affected by his work. In 1937 he produced, in collaboration with Eric Ravilious, a large scale decoration on the theme of outdoor pursuits for a trade exhibition which was held in Paris in that year, (Plates 110 and 111). In 1938 he returned to Brittany, visited Bristol with Eric Ravilious, discovered the Gower Peninsular in South Wales, worked at Assington Park in Suffolk and held a small exhibition at the Little Burlington Gallery.<sup>(1)</sup> In April of the following year he held an exhibition of watercolours at the Goupil Gallery.<sup>(2)</sup>

The Paintings

A number of factors not least his friendship with Eric Ravilious and his discovery of the Gower Peninsular enabled Nash to overcome the problems he had encountered during the first half of the 1930's. With Handen House Park, oil, (Plate 112) of circa 1935, Nash reactivates the more radical landscape painting of the 1920's. The centrally placed copse divides the upper part of the painting into two halves, which remain separate despite the diag-

1. I have been unable to trace any record of this exhibition.
2. Nash exhibited a number of paintings of the Brittany coast and the Gower Peninsular among the 35 watercolours on view, including Woods by the Shore, Gower (29) (Plate 120). Reproductions of The Frozen Pond, Meadle (9), Brittania in Winter Quarters (12) (in colour), Sand Dunes and Rocky Coast (13) and Corner of a Field, Wiston (17), accompanied a review of the exhibition by E. N. Wright which was published in The Studio, Vol. CXVII, May, 1939, pages 204-206.

onal linking effected by foreground trees and shrubs. The vertical furrows on the left push the field up onto the picture plane while the field on the right, which contains an anthropomorphic circle of trees, runs into space in a conventional fashion. Other such dislocations are also evident in this very interesting work - in the various associations between the tree forms and in the unstable relationship between the discontinuous middleground and the unresolved foreground.

Nash's sometimes rather unconventional attitude to composition which manifested itself in both oils and watercolours like Park Scene, Great Glemham, (Plate 101), The Dundas Aqueduct (Plate 78), and The Bend in the Stream (Plate 103), gave rise to an extreme form in A Suffolk Landscape, oil, (Plate 113) of circa 1936.<sup>(1)</sup> The vibrant high-keyed colours and open spontaneous brushwork represent an attempt to emulate the watercolour technique. The disposition of tones tends to violate the spatial logic of the motif, but even more remarkable is the unfocused character of the composition itself which is reinforced by the arbitrary relationship between the frame and the motif. What we normally expect from a painting - an ordered composition of harmoniously integrated components which are arranged and treated to programme the response of the spectator in accordance with the overall content - is significantly absent. Consequently, the painting has a momentary, illusive quality which is very compelling.

Such painting would not have been possible before the revolution of impressionism in the 1860's, since it exhib-

1. One of a number of landscapes made in the neighbourhood of Assington, Suffolk. Letter from Nash to the Tate Gallery, 12 April, 1958. The Tate Gallery bought the picture in 1939.

its the same kind of democratised, non-hierarchical composition as Monet's Quai de Louvre of 1866 for example. Monet establishes an objective and impartial position which decentres man from the locus of the enquiry while remaining optimistic in the espousal of material reality. Nash logically extends beyond this by reformulating man as a psychological, rather than a physical presence which is expressed through the landscape motif and consequently activated by the formal complexities which continually disrupt the traditional relationship between the viewer and the work.

Despite the lonely road, rather gloomy colours and general sense of desolation, The Road up to Whiteleaf, oil, (Plate 114) of 1937 is rather more committed in character than The Warren, a watercolour of 1936 which, although exhibiting a greater variety of forms and more distant view of landscape is nevertheless closer in spirit to Suffolk Landscape.

Nash saw a good deal of Eric Ravilious during 1937 and evidence of Ravilious's influence can be discerned in Nash's work at this time. Landscape at Princes Risborough (Plate 115) of circa 1937 is a case in point. The uncharacteristically distant view, elegant synoptic forms and welter of tiny calligraphic marks are evidence of Ravilious' influence. The distant cows very cleverly indicate the intervening distance between the low middleground and the higher foreground. Autumn Scene (Plate 116) of circa 1939<sup>(1)</sup> is unusual for its beautiful light and atmosphere which is evoked by the warm browns of the earth, sappy greens of the trees and pale purple of the distant hillside copse. The proximity of the hill and presence of

1. Exhibited at the New York Worlds Fair 1939.

two divergent paths give the work something of the quality of Suffolk Landscape. In Peaceful Crater (Plate 117), of circa 1939<sup>(1)</sup> the delicate, miniscule patterning and long dry brushstrokes which are characteristic of the period are contrasted with the startlingly dark form in the centre of the composition. Despite this extensive patterning the forms of the painting are suggested rather than clearly articulated.

Although Nash had painted the sea from very early in his career he did not consider the coast as a possible landscape motif until his trip to Brittany in 1938. This interest in coastal scenery rather than coastal installations was very probably fostered by Eric Ravilious.

The abrupt tonal contrasts and vivid colours of Rocks and Sand Dunes, Llangeneth (Plate 118), of circa 1939<sup>(2)</sup> are expertly handled. The painting is divided into two almost equal triangles by a diagonal which runs from the bottom left to the top right of the frame, the rich patterning and olive green, blue, purple and venetian red colours of the lower half of the painting are contrasted with the sparse, pale beige, turquoise and ultramarine colours of the upper triangle which contains the sea and sky. The systematic depiction of grass, fragmented clouds and elegant curvilinear forms of dunes in Cliffs, Penmaen Gower of circa 1939 are even more reminiscent of Ravilious.

1. According to Sir John Rothenstein this picture was shown at Nash's exhibition of watercolours at the Goupil Gallery in April 1939. If this is so then it must have been exhibited under a different title since no work entitled Peaceful Crater is listed in the catalogue. See Picture Post, 1 April, 1939. The work was exhibited at the New York Worlds Fair in the same year under the title Peaceful Crater.
2. Purchased in 1940.

The radically synoptic treatment of the foreground vegetation of Mewslade Gower (Plate 119), of 1939 recalls Winter (Plate 94), of 1930 and Hamden House Park (Plate 112) of circa 1935. The extensive use of dry brushwork in long curvilinear configurations which follow the contours of the landscape is an unusual and rather daring variation on the watercolour technique. The suave, muted colours again recall Ravilious.

The precise and emphatic patterning and audacious composition of Woods by the Shore, Gower (Plate 120), of circa 1939 make it one of the most impressive works of this period. The imposition of light forms on a dark ground again flattens the design. The massive bulk of the wooded hillside is expertly located by the pale evocation of the distant bay on the left.

Dry brushwork is again evident in the description of the frond-like foliage and reeds of The Bathing Pool, the River Stour (Plate 121).<sup>(1)</sup> The muted colours and curious foreground configuration of diving board and undulating bank— which is strongly reminiscent of Paul Nash's early Pyramids in the Sea— together give for a rather mysterious evocation of the place.

1. The bathing pool at Wormingford often frequented by the Nashes. John Nash painted it many times during his career.

Introduction

At the outbreak of war in 1939 Nash returned to his native Buckinghamshire from his rented cottage at Wiston in Suffolk. He joined the Royal Observer Corps and remained at Meadle until early in 1940 when he became an official war artist, taking the rank of honorary captain in the Royal Marines. Nash was not greatly enthusiastic about the war artists project which was set up in 1940 under the chairmanship of Kenneth Clark. In a letter to Blaikey of the Imperial War Museum, Nash expressed his misgivings: 'I fear that after twenty years the spark of inspiration will be somewhat dulled, besides, what a war . . .'.<sup>(1)</sup>

In any event, Nash was sent to Plymouth to draw 'things of interest in the dockyard'.<sup>(2)</sup> Although there was a great deal of interesting material in the dockyard: 'chain and ropeway walks, wonderful figureheads and huge anchors',<sup>(3)</sup> it seemed: 'rather like a peacetime operation'.<sup>(4)</sup> Nash's dissatisfaction prompted him to move on to Cardiff and then Swansea on the South Wales coast. Towards the end of 1940 he resigned his commission as an official war artist and applied for a post on active service. In November, 1941 he was commissioned Captain in the Royal Marines and appointed to staff C. in C. Rosyth. In 1943 he was transferred to staff C. in C. Portsmouth and he remained on the South Coast until his demobilisation in late 1944. During his time on active service Nash worked on camouflage and decoy work.

1. Dated 22 February 1940, Imperial War Museum, London.
2. Conversation with the artist.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

We may suppose that Nash's inability to sustain his interest as a war artist was not wholly due to the inconveniences and restrictions of service life but was symptomatic of some deeper seated disillusionment with his work. A letter which Paul Nash wrote to his brother from Oxford gives some indication of John Nash's state of mind at this time. Paul commiserates with John on hearing of his 'great boredom' with painting, one supposes, since the letter goes on: 'P. said you had shaken him (Wyndham Lewis) to the core and struck him dumb and all that by saying you only painted for a living and cared nothing for art . . . I am distressed to think that you may not enjoy painting. I use the word to cover everything. Surely that is not true. God knows one can get tired and bored with work. Perhaps a big break like you are having will give you something new and after you'll get a fresh kick out of painting.' (1)

During that 'big break' which lasted for at least four years Nash attempted to purge his mind of matters artistic. As he later said of this period: 'Even if I saw things that interested me I deliberately turned away from them.' (2)

Nevertheless a substantial touring exhibition of Nash's work was organised by the Art Exhibitions Bureau under the auspices of the Royal Academy during the war. (3)

1. Letter dated 1941. National Art Library, London.
2. Conversation with the artist.
3. This exhibition toured the Midlands and the North beginning at Preston in November, 1940 and ending at the Bluecoat Chambers in Liverpool in March, 1943 and visiting, between times, Northampton, Manchester, Leicester, Halifax, Burton, Burnley, Swansea, Derby, Mansfield and Birkenhead. On view were 15 oils including Park Scene, Glemham (Plate 101) and The Sluice, Wormingford, probably The Sluice Gate (Plate 97); 33 watercolours and 6 wood engravings.

## The Paintings

Perhaps the most bizarre of all Nash's war paintings is Figurehead, Devonport (Plate 122), of 1940. The looming and disconcertingly lively central figure, the exaggerated perspective of the street on the left and the dark slanting shadows are strongly, though probably quite fortuitously, reminiscent of De Chirico. The extensive use of pattern relates it to work done immediately before the war. The most substantial of Nash's Plymouth pictures, one of only two oil paintings which he executed during the Second World War, is Destroyer in Dry Dock, oil, (Plate 123) of 1940. The bright steel-blue boat, dark yellow-greens and severely angular shapes of the camouflaged dock and lowering sky give for a powerful expressionistic effect which recalls his earlier war work.

It seems clear that the quality of Nash's war work is directly proportional to the degree of his active involvement. With this in mind it is perhaps easy to understand why the remainder of the work done at Plymouth is competent without being inspired. New Cruiser, North Dock (Plate 124) and Two Submarines by a Jetty (Plate 125), are accomplished if rather ordinary watercolours. Figurehead and Machinery (Plate 126), and Quayside (Plate 127) are aimless and disinterested in character - empty of any commitment. Even the more conventional war drawings like Sunderland, pencil, (Plate 128), Destroyer, pencil, (Plate 129), Timber Rafts, pencil and watercolour, (Plate 130), and Dry Dock, pen, pencil and watercolour, (Plate 131) have the appearance of being formal exercises which often exhibit incongruously cheerful and wholly inappropriate colours.

At Swansea Nash was more actively involved in dockyard and offshore activities and he was able, for a while at least, to sustain his interest. A Dockyard Fire, oil,

(Plate 132) is perhaps the best of Nash's Second World War pictures. The dramatic lighting, stark complementary colour contrasts and expressive distortions make it as radical work as any produced during the Second World War.

Nash's actual involvement in this incident (he helped to fight the fire) enabled him to produce a committed and concentrated record of the event. From the Wheelhouse

(Plate 133) is compositionally quite interesting and evocatively atmospheric with a noticeably Ravilious-like treatment of the sea itself. Convoy, pen and watercolour,

(Plate 134) is unusual for the detailed and ordered pen work - the extensive horizontal hatching of the sea again recalls Ravilious. H.M.S. Oracle at Anchor (Plate 135),

and Bristol Channel, pen and watercolour, (Plate 136), are quite accomplished works but Nash's lack of purpose comes through in the rather anecdotal and caricature-like treatment of the figures. Beached Ship, pencil, (Plate 137), is an accomplished study which again fails to convey any feeling of commitment.

Introduction

Immediately after his demobilisation Nash bought 'Bottengoms' Farm on the Essex/Suffolk border where he remained until his death in 1977. The pattern of his pre-war existence was quickly re-established and he took up painting and illustration again though perhaps without the same kind of enthusiasm he had shown in similar circumstances in 1918 (See above, Chapter 3). In the early years after the war Nash must have spent a good deal of his time laying out the now-famous garden at Bottengoms. 'There', according to Ronald Blythe: 'his passion for plants was to rage unrestricted'.<sup>(1)</sup> But this was not simply a diversion - painting, plant illustration and gardening were activities whose interdependence was more than superficial; for Nash, one feels, they were the three mutually enhancing components of a major creative mode. Thus the garden may have helped Nash to regain his interest in painting which was so evidently lacking during the war years.

By this time Nash had become too important a figure to remain an 'outsider'. In 1944 he became an A.R.A. in circumstances which suggest that he was appropriated by rather than joined the artistic establishment. Although he received 'a terrible wiggling' from his as ever image-conscious brother, it was an event of little consequence for Nash himself.<sup>(2)</sup> Nevertheless, he took his duties with characteristic seriousness and the enlightened changes which have taken place within the R.A. during the

1. The Observer Magazine, 14 May, 1978, pages 38-40.
2. He was completely indifferent to the institution and greatly surprised by his being accepted into it. Conversation with the artist.

last twenty five years, must, in some measure, be attributed to his influence. (1)

In 1945 Nash rejoined the staff of the Royal College of Art and he became an honorary fellow of the College in 1954. Nash's first post-war exhibition was held at the Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield in 1953 (2) and part of this exhibition was shown at the Aldeburgh Festival later in June of the same year. (3) In March 1954 Nash held a retrospective exhibition at the Leicester Galleries (4) which must have been rather an uninspiring affair judging by the review in The Times. (5)

### The Paintings

It would be difficult to argue, in view of subsequent developments and Nash's general attitude, that his work after 1945 was in any way affected by his becoming an associate member of the Royal Academy. It is much more likely that the aspiring spirit of reconstruction which pervaded British society in the immediate post-war period would likely have prompted him to work within a more conventional and thus accessible idiom by reactivating and

1. See Conclusion.
2. Of the 56 watercolours and 7 oil paintings on show a considerable number date from before 1944, including The Dundas Aqueduct (22) (Plate 78), The Bend in the Stream (55) (Plate 103) and The Pond (63) (Plate 81), the latter two of which were purchased by the gallery.
3. Nash showed 35 works.
4. Nash showed 43 watercolours including Avoncliffe from The Aqueduct (11) (Plate 75), The River Brett, Higham (41) (Plate 144), and a number of flower paintings of the early 1950's. Among the 26 oil paintings on view were: The River Wiston, Evening (49) (Plate 108), and Early Spring, Firle Beacon (63) (Plate 146).
5. The Times, 20 March, 1954.

focusing his war-time doubts about the social relevancy of painting. In any event the work shows little evidence of his 'finding something new' as his brother had hoped; it gives the impression that painting was not a particularly exciting activity for him at this time. Certainly there is nothing to compare with the major works produced in the comparable period after 1918. In fact, quite the reverse is true - with few exceptions Nash's painting between 1945 and 1955 is rather dull and repetitive, giving the appearance of going through the motions without commitment. His recovery was painfully slow and it was not until the late 1950's or early 1960's that work began to appear which showed any advance on his previous achievements.

The predominant interest in watercolour during the late 1930's was continued after 1945 and comparatively few oil paintings seem to have been completed between 1945 and 1950. The crisply detailed drawing, strong tonal contrasts and extensive use of patterning of Winter Morning, Wormingford (Plate 138) and Winter Afternoon (Plate 139),<sup>(1)</sup> both of circa 1945 clearly relate them to the watercolours of the late 1930's. Summer, Stoke-by-Nayland (Plate 140) of 1947 is sketchy and tentative in execution; the dramatic setting sun and enormous empty foreground give for an edgy rather anxious quality which is strangely at odds with the subject matter. The rather dry paint quality is again evident in The Blenheim (Plate 141), also of 1947<sup>(2)</sup> but the more incisive drawing and strong contrasts of blue and yellow-greens against the terra cotta of the parched earth give for a much more confident picture.

1. Reproduced by Sir John Rothenstein, Modern English Painters - Lewis to Moore, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1956. p. 23.
2. Painted in the artists garden at Wormingford. Letters from Nash to the Tate Gallery, 2 May, 1954 and 8 August, 1961.

Bottengoms under Snow, oil, of circa 1950<sup>(1)</sup> is probably one of the most detailed of all Nash's works in this medium. The assiduous representation of the physical properties of nature and precise description of light and atmosphere are representative of a general trend towards a more orthodox style. In this case, as in others, the shift in interest towards detailed description has the effect of overlaying, confusing and eventually fragmenting the pictorial basis of the composition. Here the snow passages only add to the confusion caused by the rambling and discursive composition where normally they would emphasise the basis of the design. This picture clearly demonstrates that Nash's concentrated vision was not achieved by the simple accretion of details.

We see again in the dots, blobs and curvilinear striations of The River Brett, Higham, Suffolk, oil, (Plate 142) of 1950<sup>(2)</sup> and Late Summer, Stoke-by-Nayland, oil, (Plate 143) of circa 1951, evidence of Nash's attempt to infuse some of the more attractive features of his watercolours into his oil paintings. In these two works he is not without success since the fluid paint handling and rhythmic treatment of the forms give for a greater sense of flexibility and relaxation. River Brett at Higham (Plate 144) is obviously the watercolour on which the oil (Plate 142) is based. Although remarkable for their similarity one can perhaps understand what so attracted Nash to the medium of watercolour which could not, he felt, be expressed in oil - that unique combination of incisiveness and lyrical suggestion. The Barn, oil, (Plate 145) of 1951<sup>(3)</sup> is less unified in that the detailed description

1. Reproduced in The Studio, Vol. 147 No. 732, March 1954, page 79.
2. Reproduced by Herbert Read, Contemporary British Art, 1951, Pl.14.
3. Nash's diploma picture for the Royal Academy.

of the building itself is contrasted with the rather abstracted area on the right which is reminiscent of Paul Nash's early Surrealist landscapes. This latter area is, in turn, contrasted with the landscape vignette at the top right of the composition. The rather high-keyed pinks and reds of brick and tiles look forward to the more colourful works of the late 1960's and 1970's.

Afon Creseor, North Wales, oil, is probably the largest peace-time landscape which Nash executed. It is a dull, even grim picture, which, at first sight, seems hardly an appropriate response to the brief which he was given.<sup>(1)</sup> Nash was unused to working on such a large scale and it obviously caused some problems. The picture looks rather strained since it gives the impression of having being laboriously built up with relatively small and consequently rather fussy-looking brushstrokes of dry paint which the painstaking detailing does nothing to alleviate. The over-deliberate composition is stiff and sometimes rather crude in places; the channels of water for example thrust into the picture to establish the plane of the large foreground against the frieze-like landscape beyond in a manner which is reminiscent of much earlier work like About a Pig and The M;sbourne Valley, (Plate 13). The ochre, rust, dirty green and pale blue colours are very much in accord with this rather dull conception.

The picture exemplifies what John Russell once said of Nash's work, namely that it; 'sometimes had the look of low spirits'.<sup>(2)</sup> Russell's would seem to be a defensible

1. Nash was invited, along with other leading artists of the day, to produce a large picture for an exhibition connected with the Festival of Britain entitled Sixty Paintings for 51.
2. The Sunday Times, 3 September, 1967.

position; it is surely naïve to suggest that the painting is valid to the extent that its 'look of low spirits' makes for a successful representation of the desolate landscape of North Wales.<sup>(1)</sup>

Nevertheless the fact that the picture is successful as a representation provides the basis for further discussion since Nash gives his own unique version of it, without having to resort to the usual picturesque histrionics. In addition, by adopting a different viewpoint, we see the weaknesses of Afon Creseor - the crude thrusting diagonals of the water channels, the repetitive synoptic forms of the large foreground, the archaic looking assembly on the left and the background frieze - as, in some senses, constituting a very modern picture which demonstrates the complexity of Nash's position with regard to the representation of nature in art. By determining its essential content this complex relationship constitutes the unique character of Nash's work. Early Spring, Firle Beacon, near Lewes, oil, (Plate 146), of circa 1954<sup>(2)</sup> perhaps most clearly resolves what Nash had been attempting to do in terms of structural clarity and spatial cohesion during this period and as such it represents at least a minor step forward in his development.

The landscape watercolours of the early 1950's are pleasant if rather repetitive and unspectacular in character, giving the appearance of being produced according to rather conventional formulae (see Plate 147). Nash seems

1. This is rather like saying that a painting of which the subject is boredom is only successful if it is itself boring.
2. Nash executed a spring 'variation' of the same subject in the same year. It was often Nash's practice to produce seasonal variations on the same subject after the Second World War.

primarily concerned here to differentiate between the textures of the various forms and as a result the paintings are covered with a wealth of surface incident. The rather light, feathery treatment of foliage in particular is often achieved by washing over areas of chalk. The robust design of light and dark forms of Oaks by the Sea (Plate 148) of 1954 is sufficient to support the wealth of detail in a way which the rather flimsier designs of the above watercolours are not able to do.

Introduction

Having re-established their ritual summer visits after the war the Nashes travelled even more extensively than they had previously - adding Shropshire, Derbyshire, Yorkshire, Skye and Provence to the already extensive list of places they had visited. Nash exhibited again at the Leicester Galleries in April 1960.<sup>(1)</sup> The considerable number of new works which he showed is indicative of his new-found enthusiasm for painting. It was a period of important new developments for an artist already in his mid-sixties.

By this time he was coming to be regarded as one of the grand old men of English painting. In 1961 he changed his dealers, moving from the Leicester Galleries to Agnews in accordance with his changing status. In 1964 he was awarded the C.B.E. and in 1967 he received an honorary degree from the University of Essex. His massive retrospective exhibition of paintings and drawings which was held at the Royal Academy in 1967 drew him further into the English establishment<sup>(2)</sup> (see below); from this time

1. Nash exhibited 34 works. Of the 24 watercolours on view were several plant studies and Mewslade Bay, Gower Peninsular (24) (Plate 119).
2. Nash exhibited 263 works - 91 oil paintings 5 wood engravings, and the remainder mostly in watercolour although there is a high concentration of chalk and wash drawing before 1925. The critical response to this exhibition is difficult to understand in view of the great variety of subject matter - farm buildings and implements, seaside towns and resorts, ports, docks, harbours, coastal scenes, bridges, canals, sluices, plantations, orchards, interiors, war scenes and occasional figure studies.

Nash's interest in the visual effects of water which manifested itself quite early in his career and grew

the gap which had always existed between the critical evaluation of his work and his achievement, steadily increased.

Why was the Royal Academy exhibition such a failure? Here, after all, was the opportunity to demonstrate to critics and public alike the significance of Nash's achievement. Unfortunately, several factors, including it must be said, the character of the exhibition itself combined to render the opportunity lost and Nash was confirmed by a massive, professionally disinterested, critical exercise, which sometimes bordered on cynicism, as a respected, if unremarkable, landscape painter in the English tradition.

The blame for this cannot rest with any one individual or group. Nash and his advisors were certainly responsible for the overly cautious character, daunting size, and apparently unimaginative hanging of the exhibition.<sup>(1)</sup> The latter is a crucially important factor which would have made it difficult for anyone to see the exhibition as other than extremely repetitive. In addition, the venue would not obviously have disposed critics to radically re-appraise Nash's work.

during the 1930's, became an almost overriding obsession during the last twenty five years of his life. This interest is dramatically revealed by the exhibition; if we discount the wood engravings and plant studies, almost half of the remaining works are concerned with the visual effects of water in all its various forms.

A substantial portion of this exhibition was shown at 'The Minorities', Colchester later in November of the same year. On view were 57 oils, 81 watercolours, 23 botanical and flower studies and 5 wood engravings. This exhibition was certainly the largest that Nash held out of London.

1. According to Ronald Blythe, the exhibition paid homage to industriousness more than to art.

Referring to his review of the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition of 1967, Edward Lucie-Smith asserts that: 'no institution which shows work of such a poor standard can hope to enjoy any sort of respect from members of my profession.'<sup>(1)</sup> Lucie-Smith is typical of the more forward looking critics whose attitude towards the R.A. is symptomatic of the general critical climate which obtained in England at this time. The conservative strictures of the R.A.—which had been the dominant influence in the visual arts since the war—were gleefully overthrown in a wholesale commitment to modernism which was fostered by a growing sense of cultural internationalism. The subtle modernism of Nash's art had little chance of being recognised in such an extravagant and euphoric atmosphere. If the exhibition had been held in the late 1950's or the early 1970's then the response might have been very different.

The few lively and committed reviews—by critics who were able to break through the barriers which had, intentionally or otherwise, been set up, who were able to recognise the richness and variety beyond the dullness and repetition—were lost in a sea of listless generalities and threadbare epithets.

### The Paintings

From the middle 1950's Nash's attitude to his subject matter becomes less passive than it had previously been in the immediate post-war period in the sense that it used rather than described. But, in the same way that the structure of the motif was always necessarily more evident after his involvement with Cézanne and

1. See Studio International, September 1967, page 114.

his followers in the 1920's, so Nash retained his interest in light and atmosphere after the period of predominantly descriptive painting in the late 1940's and early 1950's.

Thus, The Fallen Tree (Plate 149) of 1955 successfully marries the vigorous design and complex interplay of forms with a persuasive evocation of winter in which soft greys, greens, browns and purples play a major role. Similarly the rapid counterchange and wealth of surface incident in Dark Forest (Plate 150) of 1957<sup>(1)</sup> is very much in keeping with the chaotic, claustrophobic character of this primeval landscape. In Foothills of the Cuillins (Plate 151) of 1957<sup>(2)</sup> Nash begins to relax his grip on the motif - the dominant movement is across rather than into the picture since the middleground is a shallow, ribbon-like, and rather confusing configuration which is covered by a wealth of surface incident. Further, the relationship between the mountain on the left and the diagonal rock formation below it seems intentionally ambiguous since they appear to be continuous. The simple conception of pale hills and sky provide welcome relief from the frenetic activity below. February Evening, Great Glenham (Plate 152) of 1958 is an allusive and evocative watercolour where Fallen Tree, Bridehead Lake (Plate 153)<sup>(3)</sup> and The Waterfall both of 1959 are less atmospheric but more vigorous in execution. Colour plays an important

1. The primeval forest known as Staverton Thicks, near Butley, Suffolk. Nash worked there frequently in the 1950's and 1960's.
2. Painted on one of the many summer visits which Nash made to the Isle of Skye after the Second World War.
3. Nash executed an oil painting based on this watercolour. Bridehead is near the village of Little Bredy in Dorset - Nash frequently worked in the area from very early in his career.

role in Wild Garden, Winter. (Plate 154) of circa 1959<sup>(1)</sup> as it does in other paintings of the period. The blue-greens, purples, pinks and greys convincingly describe a scene in which the forms themselves are to some extent emancipated from or shaken out of their descriptive functions. Much of the detail of the foreground and middle-ground does not describe or even suggest in the normal sense; the more conventional upper portion is consequently rather awkwardly contrasted with the more abstract and two-dimensional lower half of the picture. This opposition is resolved in the equally atmospheric but much more integrated Frozen Ponds, oil, (Plate 155) of circa 1959.<sup>(2)</sup> The stylised ovoid shapes of the ponds themselves are reflected and counterchanged by the snowy shapes on the bank above, the latter of which is pushed forward as a result. The twisting rhythmic articulation of the forms and continuous unbroken contours give for an abstract curvilinear design of great subtlety. The wintry colours evoke a strong sense of light and atmosphere in a picture which resolves rather than opposes description and abstraction.

Nash was often drawn to landscapes which had been violated rather than moulded by man; which had been cut into or in some way hollowed out to convey a greater sense of their physicality. The Deserted Gravel Pit (Plate 156) of 1959 is notable for its unconventional and quite surprising tonal arrangement and vibrant pink, blue, green and purple colours, where Gravel Pit, Norfolk (Plate 157) of circa 1960 is rather less dramatic and more conventional in colour. Both pictures make use of the continuous unbroken contours which are typical of the period. The

1. Nash's garden at Wormingford. The work was executed in the winter of 1958-59. Letter from Nash to the Tate Gallery, 10 July, 1959. The picture was bought by the Tate Gallery in 1959.
2. The artist's garden at Wormingford.

Garden in Winter, oil, (Plate 158) of 1962 is more naïve and flatter in character than Frozen Ponds (Plate 155). The planar network of dark spidery branches which stand out sharply against the large expanse of snow and has the effect of pulling the upper portions of the curving form of the hillside onto the picture plane. The high viewpoint ensures that the foreground plane is tilted downward and made almost one with the flattened background. This calligraphic and decorative picture is reminiscent of work executed in the late 1910's.

Mill Buildings, Boxted, oil, (Plate 159) of circa 1962<sup>(1)</sup> is closer to Frozen Ponds in that it confronts and resolves in one design a number of seemingly incompatible characteristics. Nash employs a conventional perspective system (to which he resorted very rarely), the composition is arranged along a series of diagonals which run into the picture and meet in the centre of the canvas. The landscape forms and buildings alike conform to this system but the space which is generated is carefully modulated by the groups of trees which rise from the centre to the top edge of the painting and the sapling on the left which together firmly enclose the space in the upper left hand quarter of the composition. In addition the field on the left is also constrained within a boundary of solid vegetation. This, together with the severely rectilinear treatment of the buildings gives for a taut design where each component is firmly locked into place. This rigour is offset by the saturated and richly orchestrated colours of early evening. The brilliant pink brickwork, purple

1. Painted in the late summer and autumn of 1962. A winter variation of the same subject made a year or so earlier is in the Chelmsford Essex Museum. Letter from Nash to the Tate Gallery, 20 September, 1963.

shadows and bright blue roofs of the buildings are set off against the peach coloured corn in the field on the left. The intense turquoise-greens of the foreground foliage are contrasted with the dark secondary greens of the central tree group which, in turn, strikes a strident note against the pale ceruleum sky above. In its breadth of vision and marvellous sense of control Mill Buildings, Boxted must surely rank among the greatest of Nash's achievements.

Winter Evening, oil, (Plate 160) of circa 1962 exhibits the same combination of rigour and richness. The disc of the setting sun, the disconcertingly large and spidery foreground plant and the evocative atmosphere are rather Surrealistic in character though probably quite unintentionally so. Despite their common subject-matter Winter Evening and Wild Garden, Winter (Plate 154)<sup>(1)</sup> exhibit important differences in the treatment of form and space. The taut, synoptic forms and firm, logical disposition of the planes in Winter Evening make it a more 'rational' picture. Although Nash has made a great deal of the reflections in the foreground pool it nevertheless remains in the plane which runs away to the middle distance where it meets the rising ground of the middle field. Each topographical component in Winter Evening is bounded by a constraining contour whereas the forms in Wild Garden, Winter are more open and discursive.

These differences cannot be accounted for by the different media employed since Waterfall, Dolanog (Plate 161)

1. Both paintings are of Nash's garden at Wormingford. Winter Evening depicts the view to the left of Wild Garden, Winter. The centre foreground tree of the latter painting becomes the overhanging tree on the extreme right of Winter Evening. The building is Nash's garage.

of circa 1964 exhibits the same tightly knit and robust character of Winter Evening. The vigorous pattern of light and dark shapes and fresh, bright and predominantly warm colours of Waterfall, Dolanog give for a work which is emotionally affirming as well as structurally assertive. Nash breaks down the psychological as well as the physical distance between the spectator and the motif and in so doing he produces an optimistic and outgoing work.

Nash's response to the Derbyshire landscape is very different. Derbyshire Hillside (Plate 162) of circa 1964 presents the same tightly-knit composition in which the shadows cast by the massive landscape configurations play an important role in the rhythmic articulation of the overall design. Nash creates a sense of space by progressively reducing the size of the landscape components as they approach the horizon. The pale wistful colours and dry, bone-like forms reproduce with remarkable accuracy and insight the character of those ancient sites which so captured the imagination of his brother.

Although Nash had painted coastal scenery from very early in his career, Incoming Tide (Plate 163)<sup>(1)</sup> and Breakwater at Overstrand, oil, (Plate 164) both of circa 1965 are significantly different from his previous seascapes. Both are very spare images which describe a vast sweep of almost limitless space. All of the space of Incoming Tide is taken up by the sea apart from a narrow

1. According to Nash this picture was painted at Overstrand near Cromer in 1965. It is one of a number of similar drawings which he did on the Norfolk coast in the summer of that year. Letter from John Nash to the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, March, 1967. Breakwater at Overstrand very probably derives from the same trip.

strip at the top of the design and a wedge of sand and a foreground fence at the bottom. One can't help but feel that Nash must have derived enormous pleasure from this most audacious and exciting imagery by signifying an immensely powerful entity with the slightest of means. Although less simple, Breakwater is perhaps even more dramatic. The sub-divided foreground forms of bank, path and fence are centrifugally arranged around a focal point which is situated at the vanishing point of the path. These forms are rather awkwardly related to the vast triangle of sea which stretches away to a distant, tilted horizon. The sweep of distant clouds, windswept trees and almost featureless landscape create a sense of desolation which is increased by the pathetic and flimsy evidence of man's presence. The sea has a powerful relentless character reminiscent of Paul Nash's Dymchurch pictures of the early 1920's.

Winter Scene, oil, of circa 1965<sup>(1)</sup> seems in some ways to be turning back to Wild Garden, Winter (Plate 154). The firm, rhythmically continuous contours produce a stable design which is disrupted by the vigorous and even aggressive textures and patterns. The foreground is particularly chaotic since the uprooted tree on the right generates a confusingly abrupt pattern of light and dark shapes and the textures on the extreme left of the composition have the effect of pulling the foreground onto the picture plane.

Winter Evening, oil, (Plate 165) is less aggressive in execution, the design, in general, is looser and more naturalistic. The evocative peach-coloured sky sets off the cooler colours of the landscape below. Winter Scene

1. The artist's garden at Wormingford.

and Winter Evening are indicative of a general trend away from the tightly-knit designs of the late 1950's and early 1960's towards a more relaxed form of painting.

It is worth noting that although Winter Evening of circa 1962 (Plate 160) and Winter Evening of 1969 (Plate 165) were painted from the same viewpoint, it would be difficult to attribute the differences they exhibit to the gardening activities which took place on the site during the period between their respective executions. This clearly demonstrates that Nash did not slavishly adhere to the integrity of the motif but, on the contrary, was prepared to modify it radically in accordance with his aims.

Introduction

Ironically, the Royal Academy exhibition put Nash on a firmer financial footing than he had been in the past, and during the last decade of his life he enjoyed relative prosperity.<sup>(1)</sup> In April, 1970 he held another important exhibition outside London, at Chelmsford which later in June moved on to Worthing.<sup>(2)</sup> The damage caused by the Royal Academy exhibition became evident in the almost total lack of interest in his next London exhibition of watercolours which was held at the Hamet Gallery in November, 1970.<sup>(3)</sup>

The renewed interest in British art of the early modern period which has manifested itself of late has largely been brought about by two English dealers: Anthony d'Offay and David Wolfers. Both men came to realise the importance of Nash's contribution to the modern movement in England and if Nash's position has changed it is largely due to their efforts.

In April, 1973 Nash held an important exhibition of early works at the d'Offay Cowper Galleries<sup>(4)</sup> which, however suffered from a similar lack of critical response as his previous exhibition.<sup>(5)</sup>

1. He left something over £60,000 on his death in 1977.
2. Nash exhibited 109 works - 19 oils, 48 watercolours, 6 plant drawings, 1 wood engraving, 1 comic drawing and 34 book illustrations - which were drawn from all periods of his career.
3. It warranted only two lines in The Times of 19 November, 1970.
4. On view were 35 works, including 12 comic drawings, executed between 1911 and 1918.
5. The Times, 9 May, 1973.

Two exhibitions were held in the following year; at the Maltzahn Galleries in January and at the Tib Lane Gallery in Manchester in October.<sup>(1)</sup> Since Nash's death in 1977 there have been several London exhibitions of his work including a joint exhibition of the work of Paul and John Nash at the Blond Gallery in February, 1978,<sup>(2)</sup> and a memorial exhibition of John Nash's work at the Grafton Gallery in May of the same year.<sup>(3)</sup>

During this period articles on Nash have appeared in the magazine sections of The Sunday Times<sup>(4)</sup> and The Observer<sup>(5)</sup> and the first major publication on Nash's work appeared in July 1978.<sup>(6)</sup>

### The Paintings

Nash progressively relaxed his attitude to the motif in his last years and this is seen in the textural variety of The Dead Fir Tree, oil, (Plate 166) of 1969 which unusually extends to the treatment of the sky. The rather dry quality is more than off-set by the complex orchestration of colours.

Nash had always been a more skilful colourist than

1. Nash exhibited 25 works - 1 oil and 24 watercolours.
2. On view were 2 oils and 15 watercolours dated from 1922 to 1970, including The Breakwater, Overstrand (Plate 164).
3. On view were 16 oils, 50 watercolours, 15 plant drawings, 20 wood engravings and 7 humorous drawings drawn from all periods of Nash's career.
4. The Sunday Times, 31 August 1975.
5. The Observer, 14 May 1978.
6. John Lewis, John Nash. The Painter as Illustrator, The Pendomer Press, July, 1978. This beautiful book, which is a work of art in its own right, as the first serious study of Nash effectively demonstrates his supreme achievement as an illustrator and wood engraver.

either he or his critics had realised - the very earliest of his works show clear evidence of his sensitivity and control. There are, of course, periods in which colour is literally played down, if not suppressed - during the 1920's, for example, when Nash's austere outlook was coupled with and reinforced by his overbearing interest in tone, and again in the immediate post-war period when his anxiety manifested itself in a series of forced and overly descriptive works. But generally Nash realised the demands of the motif could best be served by taking account of chromatic as well as tonal relationships. Colour it is which takes on an increasingly important role after the middle 1950's until it becomes the dominant concern in the last 'impressionist' works.

In The Dead Fir Tree Nash plays off the saturated emerald greens of the foreground forms against the muted khakis of the trees behind. The predominantly purple bark occupies a chromatically intermediate and thus mediating position between these two areas. The vigorous counter-change of light and dark areas of the partially stripped and broken trunk has the effect of flattening the overall design. These pictorial relationships have nothing to do with the conventional symbolism of such a romantic motif. Similarly, the rather sinister, animal like character of the foreground rocks in Rocky Estuary, Skye, oil, of 1970 is an unintentional by-product of an essentially non-literal approach to the subject. The expansive character and brilliant colour of the landscape tends to confirm this view.

The Watersplash, Glandford, oil, (Plate 167) of circa 1972<sup>(1)</sup> is a comprehensive statement in which the signify-

1. Near Cromer in Norfolk.

ing and non-signifying roles of the painting are skilfully integrated; each constituent of the work expresses fully the various modes of discourse of which it is a part. Thus, the brilliant pinks, emerald greens, pale turquoise and peach, dark sombre greens and rich maroons more than adequately evoke the natural colours of the landscape. The elegant stylised forms of water, field and hedge which are bounded by continuous contours point up a substantial landscape configuration which is not typical of the period. The dynamic sweep of the sky, reflected water and wind-blown middleground trees breathe life into what would otherwise be a stiff and rather hieratic image. This comprehensiveness is again evident in the seemingly effortless deployment of forms, sensitive evocation of light and atmosphere and skilfully economical representation of water and foliage in Watersplash, Polstead, oil, of 1975.<sup>(1)</sup>

However, it would be a mistake to conclude that Nash's last works represent the final flowering of a long and arduous career in which the conflicts and tensions are purged in an ultimate and joyous resolution. On the contrary these conflicts and tensions remain at the heart of Nash's project to the end of his career. The pale bright colours of Cornish Estuary (Plate 168) of 1975, which are reminiscent of the work of the English watercolourists of the eighteenth century, and fluid handling of the paint give, at first glance, for a pleasant and deceptively unproblematic work, but closer inspection reveals a number of interesting spatial anomalies. The interceding space between the foreground bank and the tidal mud flats beyond is not clearly established. Nash compounds the error in a number of different ways. To begin with the shadows thrown by the branches on the extreme left of the composition seem

1. Near Assington in Suffolk.

to extend from the flats to the parapet in a continuous fashion. Further, the vertical triangular flange which is attached to the parapet in the centre of the composition seems to be in the same plane as and thus continuous with the flats beyond. This latter reading is itself disrupted by the shadow thrown onto the parapet by the flange itself. The structure of the sluice is also ambiguous, the lower left portion does not seem to be in the same place as the arch above it. This disjunction is reinforced by the discontinuous contour of the arch on the left.

Nowhere is the game of visual analogies more evident than in Nash's treatment of the overhanging branches on the extreme right, which echo and mirror the flow of water through the sluice on the left. The brickwork itself seems to dissolve into a cascade of brushstrokes on the lower right and the bank on the left is represented by a rhythmic swirl of marks which again recalls and echos<sup>e</sup> the flow of water through the sluice.

Wormingford (Plate 169) of circa 1975 must be one of the most spontaneous and atmospheric of Nash's water-colours. The effect of foliage against the light is evoked by a range of greens of stunning freshness and vibrancy. The radical composition and, in particular, the novel and audacious relationship between the frame and the motif demonstrates that the experimental nature of Nash's late works is not wholly confined to the exploration of spatial ambiguity.

Nash the plant illustrator began to affect Nash the landscape painter in the early 1920's. The first manifestation of this can be seen in the conventional still-life paintings which began to appear around 1922 by providing a ready-made context in which to pursue this particular line of inquiry. However, as the landscape context became increasingly evident, the developments could not

for long be contained within the context of conventional still-life painting and all three genres - landscape, still-life and plant illustration - were gradually extended and transposed into a category of painting which did not conform to any one of them.

The attempt to combine in one form the close-up scrutiny of individual plant forms and landscape painting occupied Nash, to a greater or lesser extent for most of his career. 'Half a haystack interests me now' he told John Rothenstein in 1938, 'just as much as a wide stretch of country.'<sup>(1)</sup> Rothenstein recognised that: 'this preoccupation with the intimate and the near - with the foregrounds of landscape - was an expression of his interest in horticulture.'<sup>(2)</sup> The fact that a work like Winter, (Plate 94) of 1930 is difficult to classify in terms of traditional genres is indicative of this interaction. In landscape painting, foreground forms have traditionally been used as a framing device to increase the sense of spatial recession. Nash, on the other hand, uses them rather differently - rarely cut off by the frame they become a focus of attention and not just a means of focusing on the more distant parts of the landscape. Yet neither are they incongruously large as in Surrealist painting - rather they integrate easily into the composition without causing disruption to the spatial relationships.

Towards the end of his life Nash produced some sophisticated examples of this new genre, among them Little Grotto, (Plate 170), of circa 1975 and Sun and Shade, Skye, (Plate 171), of 1975. Both are radical works but of the

1. Quoted in Rothenstein, Modern English Painters, op.cit., page 243.
2. Rothenstein, *ibid.* page 243.

two Little Grotto is perhaps the most inventive. The sparkling emerald-green of the foreground vegetation contrasts markedly with the gaunt, grey forms of the trees and rocks. The delicate posie of ferns in the centre foreground looks, at once, like some primeval offering and symbol of regeneration which stands against the harsh, grey landscape, empty and lifeless. Be that as it may, Nash unfolds and reveals a hitherto unknown dimension of landscape - a dimension which, in some senses, is of his own making - psychologically complex and compositionally innovative. Sun and Shade, Skye is a rather busier but nonetheless interesting picture in which the conventional spatial configuration of foreground, middleground and background is replaced by an overlapping series of round configurations which enclose a shallow central space. The trees on the extreme left slope away from rather than towards the centre of the composition as they would do traditionally. The coincidence of some of the branches of the central tree with more distant contours again engenders a series of spatial anomalies. Because of these, the painting is rather chaotic - it does not exhibit the ordered and carefully graded character of traditional landscape.

Trees on a Ridge, Skye echos the sloping composition of Little Grotto but now the sense of instability is much increased by the composition which falls steeply away on the left, by the topography where forms are scooped out and folded over in chaotic manner and by the textures which follow and reinforce the sweeping curves of the design. Rocky Gorge, France (Plate 173) of circa 1975 is more conventionally elegant. Here Nash orchestrates the forms which he had gradually refined over long years - the forms of tree and stream, of cloud and rock are deployed in a complex interaction with nature itself - a reflexive process which distils and concentrates the pictorial end product. Nature then, as much device as starting point, nature as the fundamental of Nash's project and nature

respectfully taking up its assigned position in Nash's own particular scheme of things.

But even in his later years the process was liable to break down and when it did the results are significantly disappointing. Borrovaig, Skye (Plate 174) of circa 1975 is a case in point. The drama of the landscape subdues and distracts Nash and in so doing it defies the interactive mechanism which had been so carefully developed. Nash is constrained, as a result, to fall back on a more conventional discourse and Borrovaig, Skye for all its drama and brilliant colour is a rather dull affair which belongs to the picturesque tradition.

For most of his working life Nash avoided the more dramatic effects of wind and weather. But in a number of sea pieces which he did in Cornwall towards the end of his life he demonstrated the ability to control unruly and emotive subjects and by doing so clearly pointed up the predominant importance of the motif as the initiator of his own particular pictorial dialectic. The powerfully aggressive, even malevolent sea and strong sky of Rough Sea, Cornish Coast, oil, (Plate 175), of 1975 seems strangely at odds with the brilliant emerald and turquoise-greens, pinks, purples and maroons of the composition. This discordant note intensifies what is already a very agitated picture - a picture which is again reminiscent of Paul Nash's Dymchurch paintings of the early 1920's.

It is entirely characteristic of Nash's enthusiasm and inventiveness that one of the last oil paintings he must have completed, only the matter of months before his death - a painting of his beloved garden at Bottengoms - should represent a dramatic and novel departure from previous practice. The landscape of Snowfall, oil, is seen as if reflected in a distorting mirror. The curved forms

are piled one on top of the other. The foreground plane is tilted steeply downwards towards the bottom edge of the picture and the now familiar furrowed field in the distance curves sharply downwards to the left in a similar fashion. The building and wall are squeezed into and consequently distorted by this anomolous spatial context. The ensuing instability gives for a highly expressionistic and rather disturbing picture which is, in some senses perhaps, symptomatic of Nash's advanced age.

Every artist's work is set within, and thus affected by, a frame of reference which is the product of the social and artistic concerns and critical conventions of the time in which he lives. The character of this complex interaction, which eventually bears on public opinion, varies according to the artist, for any given socio-historical context.

According to Aaron Scharf: 'we will never thoroughly grasp the essential characteristics of Modern art . . . unless we try to understand what motivated the critics too'.<sup>(1)</sup> In saying this Scharf is opposing the established view of art as a specialised and essentially asocial practice; he recognises that art necessarily operates through educational establishments and professional associations, through commercial organisations and through criticism.

During the preparation of this thesis I have become aware of certain factors which have had an important bearing on the critical evaluation of Nash's work, which have given rise to the established view of Nash and which have consequently assigned him to the position which he now occupies within English art.

The Criticism: Some General Remarks

It may be that the perfunctory, impassive and highly repetitive character of the critical writing on Nash in some way reflects the repetitive and unremarkable character

1. Aaron Scharf, Modern Art 1848 to the Present: Styles and Social Implications, Unit 6: The Emergence of Modern Art in the Early Twentieth Century, A Third Level Course, The Open University, page 24.

of the work itself. But such a view of criticism as an unmediated and straightforwardly descriptive activity takes little or no account of the fact that it is, to some extent at least, historically determined by both external and internal factors - by, that is to say, the conditions under which it is produced and by its own internal dynamic.

John Nash enjoyed a long career, during which he produced a large quantity of work which he regularly exhibited. His artistic standing was always such that critics have, until comparatively recently at least, given him a reasonable amount of attention. Consequently, there exists a deal of critical writing which is usually in the form of articles or exhibition reviews of one kind or another. But apart from Sir John Rothenstein's chapter on Nash in Modern English Painters and Frederick Gore's introduction to the catalogue of Nash's retrospective exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1967 (see above, Chapter 10), no substantial study of his paintings has been undertaken.

Thus we are confronted by a relatively large body of highly fragmented critical writing which is predominantly based on the response to Nash's work in either one-man or group exhibitions. This highly restricted production context does not allow for the development of new interpretations or ideas; the reviewers are never able to get beyond the stage of introducing the artist and his work to their readers and consequently they regurgitate the same biographical details and analytical epithets with predictable regularity. This repetitive tendency has been reinforced by the prescriptive nature of criticism itself - in Nash's case, in particular, conditions were ideal for criticism to feed off itself. The result is a rigidly orthodox view of Nash which has the illusory authority of a weighty consensus.

## Paul Nash

The overshadowing of Nash by his more famous elder brother, Paul, manifested itself in the context of criticism in a number of ways which have had a profoundly damaging effect on the younger Nash's reputation. In its simplest form it stemmed from the close association which was seen to exist between 'the brothers Nash' before 1930, and from the fact that Paul Nash, as his correspondence suggests, vigorously promoted his own career from the very earliest.

According to a review of the early exhibition of The Cumberland Market Group which was held at the Goupil Gallery in 1915:

Though there is as much that must be accounted negligible among the experimental efforts of some of the painters of the avant-garde the pictures by Messrs. Ginner, Gilman, Nash and Bevan, call for notice by reason of the evidence they afford of a distinct aim and purpose . . . Of the four members of the group, Mr. Paul Nash, contributed the most purely decorative works in his green landscapes. In his art, unlike that of the others, there is a feeling for primitivism rather than for impressionism. (1)

Now Paul Nash was never a member of the Cumberland Market Group; the work to which the reviewer refers is by John Nash. The exhibition began in the middle of April and ended at the beginning of May; it followed an exhibition of The London Group which had taken place during the previous month at the same gallery. Since both Paul and John Nash showed work at this earlier exhibition it seems reasonable to suppose the proximity of these exhibitions gave

1. The Studio, Vol. LXXV, June, 1915. page 53.

rise to the confusion. The later exhibition was quite important since it was the only one to be held by this radical and influential group who were concerned to establish a school of Neo-Realist painting in England at this time.

The persistence of this confusion after 1930 when the brothers were seen to go their separate ways, and even indeed after Paul Nash's death in 1946, can only be attributed to the elder brothers growing reputation. This confusion was gradually transposed into a pervasive and insidious critical tendency which was ultimately much more damaging to John Nash's reputation.

In his reviews of the three major exhibitions which Nash held in the 1930's, William Gaunt tends increasingly to interpret Nash's work in relation to that of his brothers. Gaunt says of the first of these exhibitions which was held in the Goupil Gallery in 1930 that:

In approaching the very welcome exhibition of oil paintings and watercolours by Mr. John Nash at the Goupil Gallery, a mental comparison of him and his brother, Mr. Paul Nash is almost inevitable; and it serves a useful purpose in helping to define his talent. Between the two brothers what is probably just to call a family likeness in an attitude to nature which though it is characteristically English is free from sentimentality. They paint the features of landscape, trees, fields and ponds, in their own right and not for their human associations, though human relations to the landscape - as they work out in cultivation and building - are always recognised. But, considering their Englishness, they are both remarkably free from what, in writing about animals, has been called "nature faking".(1)

This does seem to represent a genuine attempt to describe

1. The Times, 3 October, 1930.

objectively what the work of the brothers Nash has in common. At this point, according to Gaunt: 'the family likeness ends' and the remainder of the review, apart from two further references to Paul Nash, considers the work of the younger Nash in its own right.

Gaunt's review of the exhibition which was held at the French Gallery in 1933 is more committed to a comparative approach:

For all their differences Mr. Paul Nash and Mr. John Nash are more like each other than either of them is like anyone else, so that it is not only difficult to discuss one without mentioning the other, but also legitimate to speak of a Nash art with Pauline and Johanine aspects . . . To say that Pauline and Johanine aspects represent sense and sensibility is tempting until it is remembered that sense has more than one meaning and that sensibility counts in pictorial organisation as much as it does in direct response to what is called nature.(1)

This conveys significantly less in terms of useful information about John Nash's work than the equivalent passage in the earlier review. Gaunt continues: 'What it seems to amount to in looking at the (paintings) by Mr. John Nash . . . and as is inevitable - mentally comparing them with the work of his brother, is that Mr. John Nash is less constructive, or if you like architectural, and more sympathetic to natural appearance.' This passage clearly demonstrates the emasculating effect of this tendency since it tells us very little about Nash's method of construction or of how his sympathies towards natural form are realised in his work. Where the presence of Paul Nash is not quite as evident, the discussion is significantly trivial and commonplace.

1. The Times, 9 May 1933.

Although Gaunt's review of the exhibition of Nash's watercolours which was held at the Goupil Gallery in 1939 is ostensibly the most complimentary of the three, the dependence on material derived from the previous reviews and the condescending and rather off-hand tone make it most damning.<sup>(1)</sup>

Gaunt continued in the same vein when some twenty eight years later he reviewed Nash's exhibition at the Royal Academy. By this time Paul Nash's position was such that it made any comparison between the two brothers seem wholly inappropriate to the majority of critics. By drawing attention to some of the evident similarities between their work Gaunt was being (albeit unwittingly, one suspects) embarrassingly provocative.<sup>(2)</sup>

Despite these similarities the dangerously indiscriminate use of this comparative approach resulted in an undesirable narrowing of vision which consequently left the greater part of Nash's achievement unrecognised.

Thus, in general, the overshadowing of his elder brother, by blunting the sensibilities of some critics between the wars, adversely affected the integrity and thus importance of Nash's output.

### Modernism

Some have interpreted Nash's development - from him beginning as a radical young painter to his final position as an establishment figure - as evidence of a gradual falling-off after a promising early career. This notion was succinctly stated by The Times critic in 1954 when he ass-

1. The Times, 6 April, 1939.
2. The Times, 12 September, 1967.

erted that: 'it is certainly possible to trace his explosive ideas of the time in the retrospective exhibition of his work . . . it is if one were observing the gentle ripples created on the margin of the pond by some tremendous splash in the centre'.<sup>(1)</sup> By observing these fading influences with some regret the critic reveals the widespread conviction that most art in this century can only be validated to the extent that it is seen to be influenced by one or more of the major modern movements.

Whether or not this is true is open to debate, but certainly it is nowhere more evident than in England where artists and critics alike have suffered from a continuing sense of inferiority in respect of modern French art in particular. That this notion persists is visibly demonstrated by the re-arrangement in 1968 of early modern English painting at the Tate Gallery. The prominence given to each work seems to depend more on the degree to which it exhibits either Impressionist or more importantly Post Impressionist influences than on its intrinsic merit. Thus a group of works of very uneven quality - from Sickert through Fry and Lewis to Matthew Smith - is exhibited in Gallery 13 while below stairs John Nash's The Cornfield, (Plate 47) and The Moat, Grange Farm, Kimble, (Plate 64), Paul Nash's watercolour The Cherry Orchard, a Cayley Robinson, a Clausen and James McBey Patrick's Winter in Angus are considerably disadvantaged by their cramped and badly lit basement setting. The fact that the only characteristic that this latter group have in common is the significant lack of any Post Impressionist influence confirms the importance of this stylistic rubric.

This again has led to a narrowing of critical persp-

1. The Times, 20 March, 1954.

ective which has not only been dismissive of Nash but has also stifled rather more disinterested forms of enquiry. However, the tendency to validate Nash by association is evident even in the context of more open-ended criticism. In discussing the series of flower paintings of 1930 (see Plates 86, 87, 88 and 91) Andrew Causey suggests that: 'the idea of enlarging the central feature of the picture out of all proportion to the landscape background is distantly related to Surrealism, and is similar in character to the explorations that Paul Nash was making at much the same time'.<sup>(1)</sup>

There is a deal of evidence to support what, in one sense is true, although Causey is obviously at pains to avoid the suggestion that Nash resorted to this device under the direct influence of Surrealism. Nevertheless, the point seems forced to the extent that a very generalised influence which must have operated at an unconscious level was seen to be sufficiently important to warrant attention.<sup>(2)</sup>

It is quite understandable that critics should sometimes have attempted to force Nash into a Surrealist mould since it reflects the primary influence upon and dominant position of his brother Paul after 1930. Ironically, because they were looking for something they could not find the critics were oblivious to the discernible influences of modern French painting by Cézanne, Marchand and others which had informed Nash's work from the early 1920's.

The value judgements which derive from this critical

1. Andrew Causey, Illustrated London News, 7 September, 1967,
2. We have already seen that Nash was opposed to Surrealism; I have suggested rather different reasons for the particular character of this series. (See Page 104).

tendency which are based on the mandatory influence of modern art exemplify a general conception of artistic creativity. This, in turn, is rooted in a particular brand of Romanticism which opposes the idea of newness or novelty to that of an established style or convention. This again leads to a dangerous narrowing of critical vision. According to Aaron Scharf: "It is only those who are blinded by an obsession with the totally new that are unable to perceive the subtle 'modernism' in the works of more traditionally based artists."(1)

If criticism of this kind is often forced or misconceived, it nevertheless represents a genuine attempt on the part of the critic to see Nash in a new light; to emancipate him from the moribund corpus of received ideas and traditional associations.

### Tradition

The neutrality of the term 'landscape painter' is apparent rather than actual; it does more than simply describe what an artist paints; it imputes a degree of orthodoxy by placing him within the context of the English landscape tradition - within, that is to say, the specific tradition of landscape painting which developed and came to fruition in the hundred years between say 1750 and 1850.

The general character of Nash's work - the fact that it is largely, though by no means exclusively, landscape painting which is frequently devoid of any contemporary reference - disposed critics to an 'historical reading'. Once established the reference is quite easily utilised to demonstrate that Nash is above all an essentially academic painter since an academic painter is one who works within

1. Scharf, op.cit., pages 71-72.

an established tradition - in this case the tradition of English landscape painting - without in any way changing the practices and ideals to which he wholeheartedly subscribes. According to Gerald Feeney: 'Many people see (John Nash) to be carrying the banner of the hallowed English tradition of watercolour: the heir to such masters as De Wint, Sanby, Cozens, Girtin and Cotman'.<sup>(1)</sup> The hagiographical tone and rather inflated language suggests that Nash must have had a suitably reverential attitude towards, and consequently position of dependence upon, the 'masters' of such a 'hallowed tradition'. A similar relationship is implied by Philip Sutton when he suggests that: 'John Nash is essentially a lyrical artist who has explored the secret life of the country, and his watercolours possess a freshness which is in direct line of descent from the great English tradition'.<sup>(2)</sup>

Nash's watercolours, in particular, have often been compared with those of the Norwich School and others of the English watercolour tradition like Alexander Cozens and Francis Towne. Alan Freer is typical in suggesting that: '(Nash's) work resembles most closely the painting of the eighteenth century watercolourist Francis Towne'.<sup>(3)</sup> According to John Russell: '(Nash) had already learned from Cotman that painters are free to disentangle, simplify and reorganise the fact of nature'.<sup>(4)</sup> Statements of this kind lend probably quite unintentional support to the critical view established by Feeney and others above, by embroiling Nash in the tradition.

1. The Suffolk Free Press, 10 May, 1967.
2. The Financial Times, September, 1967.
3. Introduction to an Exhibition of Watercolours and Drawings by John Nash, Tib Lane Gallery, Manchester, October, 1974.
4. The Sunday Times, 3 September, 1967.

What often is only inferred by some critics is sometimes specified by others. According to one critic: {John Nash) is an academic painter of the right rather than the abused kind. He has built on a long, sound tradition - the sensitive rendering of the mood of English landscape, and the essentially English art of watercolours - without being so conservative as to let the tradition go dead in his hands'.<sup>(1)</sup> If we are uncertain about the basis of distinction between academic painters of the 'right' and 'abused' kind, he leaves us in no doubt about the fact that Nash worked within a firm and long established tradition. That the work is not 'so conservative' implies, of course, that it is conservative to some degree.

Such directness is rare however; most recent critics have apparently soft-pedalled Nash by capitalising on the established and highly conventionalised critical framework which masks censure under a thin layer of vague but nevertheless ruthlessly efficient inferences. According to David Wolfers, for example, John Nash is: 'very clearly in the mainstream of the English painting tradition'.<sup>(2)</sup> If we suppose that this statement has some meaning other than the truism which it denotes, then it must be that Nash is an academic painter. John Russell suggests that: 'In sticking to the middle-ground of English landscape and English weather . . . Nash has sometimes given his work the look of low spirits'.<sup>(3)</sup> The term 'middle-ground' suggests a moderate position which is cosily integrated into a well-established and therefore academic context.

This view of Nash's work has given credence to a highly selective biographical view of Nash himself. His

1. Unidentified source.
2. The Field, 14 September, 1967.
3. The Sunday Times, 3 September, 1967.

rural pursuits of gardening, plant illustration and fishing together with his lack of formal training as an artist have given rise to the notion that he was a naïve rustic. This view is colourfully expressed by Sir John Rothenstein who suggests that:

The landscapes of John Nash are uncommon in that they are the work of a countryman. His brother Paul also loved landscape, but he brought to his interpretation of it a town-sharpened and innately literary intelligence and town-forged weapons, but John is a countryman by life-long residence and in all his interests. Where Paul would write a manifesto or form a group, John transplants some roses; where Paul would cherish the words of Sir Thomas Browne or Blake, John consults a seed catalogue.<sup>(1)</sup>

This is the naïve, and by implication, unthinking rustic who according to Burghope Stuart: 'In a strange world of crackpots and philanderers, commercial lackeys and egocentric demons . . . stands out as a homely philanthrope, comforted by his botany, gardening and love of landscape.'<sup>(2)</sup> In an article entitled John Nash Homegrown Vision, Christopher Neve talks of Nash's 'humble vision of the countryside and still life'.<sup>(3)</sup> And in the same vein Terence Mullaly suggests that Nash: 'repays the eye attuned to subtleties, the reflective mind and the gentle heart'.<sup>(4)</sup>

This absurdly caricatural view of Nash as the naïve and unthinking rustic; the humble recluse with the gentle heart has had nevertheless a reciprocal effect on the

1. Sir John Rothenstein op.cit. 1956, page 244.
2. The Essex Chronicle, 23 April 1971.
3. Country Life, 7 September 1967.
4. The Daily Telegraph, 5 November 1970.

evaluation of his work. William Gaunt describes Nash's early work as having 'the awkwardness of a young girl'.<sup>(1)</sup> According to Ayrton and Turner: 'John Nash continued his exploration of the folds and corners of the English scene'.<sup>(2)</sup> What could possibly come from such an artist but a safe, traditional and inherently unproblematic art which could justify only the most passing of references.

### Problems of Classification

The critical writing on Nash tends to support E. H. Gombrich's assertion that the Aristotelian search for essence or 'essentials' held its grip on the humanities long after it had been discarded by the natural sciences. Nash's work is hedged about by a number of normative labels which have become the overridingly important factors in determining critical response by replacing the work itself as the locus of the enquiry. The effect of this curious critical process where ends become means is, according to Gombrich, restrictive as well as distortive: 'The normative connotations of our stylistic terms cannot simply be converted into morphological ones - for you cannot get more out of your classification than you put in'.<sup>(3)</sup>

The indiscriminate application of normative categories would seem to be particularly damaging to Nash since his painting demands especially rigorous morphological consideration. It is quite obvious that critics have not sufficiently 'exercised their eyes' in respect of Nash's work as Baudelaire was forced to do when confronted by the

1. Gaunt, op.cit., 1930.
2. Ayrton and Turner, Aspects of British Art, Page 108.
3. E. H. Gombrich, Norm and Form, Studies in the Art of the Renaissance, Phaidon, 1966, page 87.

deceptively resistant painting of Ingres.<sup>(1)</sup> By replacing rather than enhancing morphological considerations, normative labelling has effectively by-passed and consequently devalued Nash's contribution to modern English painting.

According to Edgar Wind:

Some of the best cataloguers of modern art have perhaps unwittingly helped to shape the working habits of younger artists. Paintings brought forth in rows and classes look irresistably like illustrations for the artist's future catalogue raisonne. Is it possible that, in the place of the patron, it is now the cataloguer who looks over the artist's shoulder? As is well known, the cataloguers excusable love of order has occasionally obscured the art of the past by forcing its profuse growth into linear sequences. Today linear sequence seems to dominate growth. The cataloguer has become an aesthetic force.<sup>(2)</sup>

The applicability of Nash's work to such classification is seriously in doubt since, according to the critics at least, it is neither linear or sequential in character. There is considerable critical evidence which suggests, for example, that Nash's work is unchanging and therefore repetitive. Guy Brett bluntly asserts that '... (Nash's) approach has hardly changed at all in 50 years'.<sup>(3)</sup> Christopher Neve is equally to the point when he argues that: 'As a painter Nash has changed very little, except to become technically more accomplished'.<sup>(4)</sup> This view is most provocatively expressed by Edwin Mullins: 'With a painter who has chugged along a single rural track

1. See A. Brookner, The Genius of the Future, Phaidon, pp. 82-83.
2. Edgar Wind, Art and Anarchy, pp. 164-165.
3. The Times, 2 September 1967
4. Neve, op.cit., 1967.

for quite so long as Nash, so large an exhibition is rather like listening to a ball by ball commentary by John Arlott on a minor counties match for three days solid. Engaging, inconsequential and utterly soporific'.<sup>(1)</sup>

Mullins' is a typical view of Nash's development which, while reinforcing the disposition towards a normative reading of his work, goes some way towards explaining why he has been so neglected by critics and especially art historians of late. That critics often talk of Nash's 'total consistency of development' is clearly indicative of the desultory consideration which his work has received. It is worth noting that Nash's immensely complex development might well have discouraged those who have attempted, however superficially, to classify his work in the manner prescribed above.

Nash has also been considerably disadvantaged by the disposition of critics and historians alike to give consideration to those forms of art which relatively easily yield up the social, political and other 'extra artistic' factors by which they have been informed. Thus, despite the importance of Abstract Expressionism as the first major American movement in art, its intrinsic character is such that it has received considerably less critical attention than American Pop Art for example. The sociological complexities, variety of political connotations, strongly literal character and psychological techniques of this latter movement were sufficiently accessible to overcome the initially hostile reaction of those idealist critics who had previously championed Abstract Expressionism.

1. The Sunday Telegraph, 3 September, 1967.

As with movements so with individual artists. At a time when the social context in particular, is seen to be increasingly important to any understanding of art, work in which the social and other factors are either heavily mediated or negatively defined is erroneously considered to be sociologically neutral and not therefore deserving of attention. Nash's work certainly falls into this category.

Nash was and is a popular painter in the sense that there has always been a ready market for his painting - apart from a modest amount of teaching, the proceeds of his work alone were always a viable means of support. Yet, in an international context he is very little known; he never held a one-man exhibition and only very rarely exhibited abroad and very few of his works are in either public or private collections overseas. This discrepancy between the national and international awareness of Nash leads one to suspect that he was subject during his career to whatever factors were adversely affecting the international standing of his English contemporaries.

If we consider Nash in relation to a comparable American contemporary like John Marin for example, then clearly we cannot contribute the difference in their present international standing to their work alone; it has to be accounted for by other factors which are rooted in the commercial and institutional structures of their respective countries. (1)

The histories of British and American art between 1910 and the Second World War are, in many respect similar.

1. That Marin is held in higher regard than Nash in both the national and international contexts is clearly demonstrated by the relevant art historical literature.

Both countries were in a relatively backward position with regard to the visual arts around 1910; both were traumatically introduced to continental ideas in the period immediately before the First World War which resulted in the development of indigenous and extreme avant-garde movements; and both countries suffered what in some senses could be called a 'cultural backlash' during the economic depression between the wars.

Yet the differences are perhaps more significant than the similarities. British Government policy during the period reflects the national lack of regard for the visual arts and widespread failure to understand their importance in affecting not only our everyday lives but perhaps more importantly our international standing. Sir Joseph Duveen's blueprint for the spiritual and commercial regeneration of British art between the Wars, <sup>(1)</sup> for example, seems incredibly modest by comparison with the Federal Arts Project of the Works Progress Administration in the United States.

Apart from this the important policy-making bodies in Britain, like the Royal Academy for example, were under the control of conservatives who zealously and often quite unfairly furthered their own revisionist and myopic ends. These extreme attitudes had the effect of polarising British artists into two opposing camps; the Establishment centred on the Royal Academy and the avant-garde which was spearheaded by Paul Nash and Ben Nicholson in their espousal of Surrealism and Abstraction respectively. This was an awkward state of affairs for John Nash since he was unable to identify with either group and as a result was obliged to become institutionally disembodied by working in a kind of cultural no-mans-land between the two major

1. See Duveen, Thirty Years of British Art, Studio, 1930.

ideological groupings in the visual arts.

The American government's recognition of the importance of the visual arts which manifested itself in the W.P.A. had a two-fold significance for subsequent developments - by stimulating private patronage after the Depression and as an historical event by drawing attention to the American experience between the wars it greatly enhanced the international reputation of a considerable number of American artists of the modern period.

The influx of expatriate European artists into Great Britain during the thirties had no lasting effect on British art since the majority were prompted, by the lassitude and even hostility of their hosts, to move quickly on to the United States where of course they made a significant contribution to the developing international reputation of American Art.

That period which has just emerged from the formless flux of events which constitutes the present is obviously the period which is most subject to upheaval and change. As far as the history of art of the period between the beginning of the First and end of the Second World Wars is concerned, the large amount of critical attention which it is now receiving is perhaps indicative of the formation of those historical perspectives which necessarily construct the past. It is to be hoped that Nash will emerge from this forming process with the enhanced reputation which he obviously deserves.

## Conclusion

The commercial context within Nash worked for most of his career obliged him to produce a large number of paintings which are, in consequence, sometimes rather dull and repetitive in character. As the work clearly indicates there were periods in his life when Nash was sustained more by his own dogged industriousness than by an genuine sense of excitement or motivation. On the other hand, as a representative sample, the one hundred and eighty or so works considered here stand as a dramatic and tangible rebuttal of one aspect of the established view of Nash, since they visibly demonstrate the extraordinary diversity of his output.

Nash was not artistically isolated as critics have supposed - as a young man he was obviously, to some extent, affected by the artist personalities and various forms of art with which he came into contact in the tumultuous period before the First World War; he codified, rationalised and refurbished his art under the influence of Cézanne and his followers in the 1920's; he, in some ways, consolidated his position in opposition to Abstraction and Surrealism in the 1930's; and he was profoundly influenced by a host of individuals - his brother, Pellew, Gilman, Sydney Carline, Ravilious et.al.

But Nash was as much influencing as influenced - the freshness of his vision provided the thrust for important new developments before the First World War; he pointed the way for artists like Gilbert Spencer, Ethelbert White, Harold Squire, Keith Baynes, Bernard Adeney and others in their rediscovery of English landscape in the 1920's; apart from his brother he clearly affected some of the more important English painters between the Wars including

Bawden, Meninsky, Ravilious, Piper, Sutherland and Henry Moore;<sup>(1)</sup> he exercised a powerful influence on Royal Academy painters like John Aldridge and John O'Connor after the Second World War; and more generally his pervasive influence has spread to such an extent that it has subtly changed the response of layman and professional alike to English landscape through the work of 'popular' painters like Roland Hilder and R. H. Tunncliffe.

Nash was heavily penalised as an English painter playing for high stakes within the dangerous context of landscape painting. Critics who were either indolent or insensitive to or confused by his work, used the great tradition of English landscape painting as an escape clause; a kind of facile catch-all which effectively by-passed by painlessly subtending the work itself.

By suggesting radical alternatives to the tradition with which it is usually associated Nash's work represents a challenge which critics have either been unwilling or unable to accept. The wayward, open ended subject-matter, radical and discursive compositions and spatial ambiguities generate a psychological complexity which stands as a massive and self-evident indictment of the established, repetitive, and amazingly short-sighted critical view.

Painting was never an abstraction for Nash, it did not exist as a peripheral activity on the margins of his existence, it was not practised at some necessary distance from the events on which it commented in order to obtain

1. Nash recounted a meeting with Moore after the Second World War. Moore became serious when Nash told him that: 'he felt a bit of a back number nowadays.' 'You shouldn't say that John,' he said, 'both you and Paul were very important to me during my early career.' Conversation with the artist.

the desired degree of objectivity, it was not seen primarily as a means of subsistence. Rather, it was intricately woven into the fabric of his own life, it exemplified the conviction that living and communicating are part of the same project and as such it was at the centre of the lived experience which it intensified and completed.

All of Nash's attitudes and activities have to be understood in relation to his basic conviction that nature was significant to the extent that it was a material and ultimately knowable reality; it was not the signifier of some alternative mode which was located elsewhere, behind or underneath it; it was not a language which could express some more profound, speculative, metaphysical reality. This explains his scornful attitude to what he called 'the language of the genius loci';<sup>(1)</sup> it reveals his obsessive scrutiny of nature - from the delicate veining of the smallest leaf to the vast expanse of tranquil sky and remorseless ocean - as an attempt to fix and understand the intoxicating variety of forms of the material world; and it demonstrates the importance of gardening and plant illustration as integral components of this empirical project.

But what was the Nature which Nash represented? At certain points in his career the work becomes socially significant to the extent that is integral with some broader-based change within society - the rapid developments which took place in British art before the First World War were only part of a wider social upheaval; the rediscovery of English landscape was spearheaded by artists, first as one of the increasing number of leisure activities in the boom years of the early 1920's and then

1. See Ronald Blythe's article on Nash in The Observer Magazine, op.cit.

as a major activity in place of work during the Depression; the responsible mood of British society after the Second World War manifested itself in the widespread practice of an accessible form of realist painting.

But these were mere acquisitions rather than conscious strategies which have to be set against a body of work which, apart from the war paintings, fails to record the vast changes which transformed English society during the whole of Nash's long career; which tells us little or nothing of the history through which the artist lived - the Edwardian era, the General Strike, the Depression, the Cold War are all significantly absent from his work.

On the other hand Nash did not expunge every contemporary reference from his work; he did make a point of seeking out those unsullied and still picturesque tracts of ancient landscape which so captivated his brother. Was Nash a formalist therefore? Despite his obvious commitment to the forms of nature, Nash could not justifiably be described as a formalist; the meaning of the work - with its ever-present prevailing mood which draws attention even in the most domesticated of landscapes to the potency of nature - suggests otherwise. Stylistic change and formal innovation are never pursued for their own sake, they never emancipate themselves as an autonomous process from the overall content of the work. The relationship between the pictorial basis of the composition and the signified forms is not realised as a state of balance but rather as a process in which the formal innovations are utilised in the production of the overall meaning.

The importance of personal involvement for Nash, can be demonstrated in relation to his war paintings. His life as an ordinary soldier during the First World War ensured that he responded to it by producing perhaps some of the most poignant and socially significant images of the

conflict. The very different and curiously disengaged position in which he found himself during the Second World War resulted in work which, as a record of the event, does not rise much above the level of feeble reportage.

The inconsistent and therefore enigmatic choice of subject matter continually activates the gaps, inconsistencies and irregularities of his work. The meaning of this totality - of subject matter and its treatment - can only be approached in terms of Nash's own irreducible individuality; it is the basis of his important and unique contribution to English painting in this century.

"NASH & NASH"

(From a criticism on the N.E.A.C. "A distinguished pair of brothers - John and Paul Nash - is well represented by characteristic examples of landscape")

Oh Mr. Art Critic, Go on!  
That "is" may give rise to some fall.  
Are they characteristic of John  
Or characteristic of Paul.

Is Nash not distinguished from Nash?  
Are they paired like a "turn" at a Hall?  
Can no-one discern in a flash  
The example of John and of Paul?

Are they knit like the Siamese Twins,  
Because they are brothers withal?  
Don't you even know where John begins  
And what is the ending of Paul?

Suppose in the course of the game  
John is seen at the Burlington Ball  
With ARA latched to his name  
Must we all pray for John & for Paul.

Or should Paul feel that painting in jam  
Is (in Art's name) the Ultimate Call  
Of what use if his brother cries "Damn!"  
When John's jammed for ever with Paul.

TOM FOOL

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London Group note Bowness, A. and Farr, D., Tate Gallery, 1969.

Paintings and Watercolours by Paul Nash introduction Andrew Causey, Tate Gallery, 1975.

Retrospective Exhibition of Paintings, Watercolours, Drawings and Wood Engravings by John Nash, C. B. E., R. A., introduction and personal letter Lewis, J. and Bawden, E., The Minories, Colchester, November, 1967.

LIST OF PLATES

1. Claughton Fellow - Hayricks  
1914. Pen, chalk and watercolour  
Signed. 6 x 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Private collection.
  
2. An Accident  
Undated. Pen, crayon and watercolour  
Signed. 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 12 $\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Private collection.
  
3. Cross Roads, Gerrards Cross  
1912. Pencil and watercolour  
Signed. 10 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 15 ins. Newport Museum & Art Gallery.
  
4. Allotment Gardens  
c. 1912. Pen, crayon and watercolour.  
Unsigned. 15 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 19 ins. Private collection.
  
5. Italian Landscape  
1915. Watercolour.  
Signed. 14 x 14 $\frac{1}{2}$  ins. 'The Minorities' Art Gallery,  
Colchester.
  
6. The Threshing Machine  
1914. Pen, chalk and wash.  
Signed. 16 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 21 $\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Private collection.
  
7. Steam Floughing  
Undated. Pen, chalk and wash.  
Signed. 10 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 14 $\frac{7}{8}$  ins. Private collection.
  
8. Gloucestershire Landscape  
1914. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 19 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 24 ins. Ashmoleum Museum, Oxford.

9. Threshing  
1915. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 30 x 25 ins. Private collection.
  
10. Trees in Flood  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed. 16½ x 13½ ins. Leeds City Art Gallery.
  
11. A Dorset Landscape  
Undated. Chalk and wash.  
Unsigned. 16½ x 15½ ins. Tate Gallery.
  
12. The Viaduct  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Unsigned. 35 x 26 ins. Leeds City Art Gallery.
  
13. The Misbourne Valley  
c. 1915. Pencil and watercolour.  
Signed. 7¾ x 9½ ins. Private collection.
  
14. The Misbourne Valley  
c. 1915. Pen and watercolour.  
Signed. 9¾ x 10¾ ins. Private collection.
  
15. Hillside Whiteleaf  
Undated. Pen and wash.  
Signed. 20½ x 14½ ins. Leeds City Art Gallery.
  
16. Drawing  
Undated. Pen and wash.  
Unsigned. 16 x 4¾ ins. Private collection.
  
17. Near Houdkerk, Belgium  
Undated. Pen and watercolour.  
Unsigned. 14½ x 10¾ ins. Imperial War Museum.

18. A Lewis Gun: Anti-Aircraft Pit  
Undated. Pen and watercolour.  
Unsigned.  $11\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Imperial War Museum.
19. Study for A Lewis Gun: Anti-Aircraft Pit  
Undated. Pen, pencil and indelible pencil.  
Unsigned.  $8\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{3}{4}$  ins. Imperial War Museum.
20. A French Highway  
1918. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 36 x 28 ins. Imperial War Museum.
21. Study for A French Highway  
Undated. Pen, pencil and wash.  
Unsigned. 10 x 7 ins. Imperial War Museum.
22. An Advance Post, Day  
1918. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 30 x 20 ins. Imperial War Museum.
23. A Bombing Post in the Snow  
1918. Pen, black chalk and watercolour.  
Signed.  $10\frac{1}{2} \times 18$  ins. Imperial War Museum.
24. Study for A Bombing Post in the Snow  
Undated. Pen, pencil and wash.  
Unsigned. 10 x 14 ins. Imperial War Museum.
25. The Bridge over the Arras-Lens Railway  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Unsigned.  $27 \times 31\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Imperial War Museum.
26. Study for The Bridge over the Arras-Lens Railway  
Undated. Pencil, coloured chalk and watercolour on  
two pieces of paper.  
Unsigned.  $13\frac{1}{2} \times 15\frac{3}{4}$  ins. Imperial War Museum.

27. 'Stand To', Before Dawn  
 Undated. Pen and watercolour.  
 Unsigned. 13 x 15 $\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Imperial War Museum.
28. An Advance Post, Night  
 Undated. Watercolour.  
 Unsigned. 13 x 15 $\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Imperial War Museum.
29. Study for An Advance Post, Night  
 Undated. Pencil and coloured chalk.  
 Unsigned. 4 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Imperial War Museum.
30. A Trench Mortar Firing at Evening  
 Undated. Pen, pencil, coloured chalk and watercolour  
 on two pieces of paper.  
 Unsigned. 14 x 15 $\frac{3}{4}$  ins. Imperial War Museum.
31. Study for A Trench Mortar Firing at Evening  
 Undated. Pen, pencil, coloured chalk and watercolour  
 Unsigned. 18 x 21 ins. Imperial War Museum.
32. Study for A Trench Mortar Firing at Evening  
 Undated. Pencil and colour chalk.  
 Unsigned. 6 x 7 ins. Imperial War Museum.
33. Study for A Trench Mortar Firing at Evening  
 Undated. Pen, pencil, coloured chalk and watercolour  
 Signed. 14 x 11 $\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Imperial War Museum.
34. Study for A Trench Mortar Firing at Evening  
 Undated. Pen, pencil, blue chalk, wash and touches of  
 white.  
 Unsigned. 7 x 7 $\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Imperial War Museum.
35. Study for A Trench Mortar Firing at Evening  
 Undated. Pen, pencil and coloured chalk.  
 Unsigned. 7 x 7 $\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Imperial War Museum.

36. A Deserted Trench  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Unsigned. 17 x 21 ins. Imperial War Museum.
37. Study for A Deserted Trench  
Undated. Pencil.  
Unsigned.  $8\frac{1}{2}$  x  $10\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Imperial War Museum.
38. 'Over the Top'  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed.  $31\frac{1}{2}$  x  $42\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Imperial War Museum.
39. Study for 'Over the Top'  
Undated. Pen, pencil, chalk and watercolour.  
Unsigned.  $12\frac{1}{2}$  x 17 ins. Imperial War Museum.
40. Oppy Wood  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 72 x 84 ins. Imperial War Museum.
41. Study for Oppy Wood  
Undated. Pencil on tracing paper.  
Unsigned.  $10\frac{1}{2}$  x  $15\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Imperial War Museum.
42. Study for Oppy Wood  
Undated. Pencil and wash on tracing paper.  
Unsigned.  $15\frac{1}{2}$  x  $10\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Imperial War Museum.
43. Study for Oppy Wood  
Undated. Pen, pencil and wash touched with white on tracing paper.  
Unsigned. 10 x  $11\frac{3}{4}$  ins. Imperial War Museum.
44. The Cornfield  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 27 x 30 ins. Tate Gallery.

45. Landscape near Sheringham  
1918. Pen and watercolour.  
Signed.  $14\frac{1}{2}$  x 18 ins. Private collection.
46. Hesdin near St. Pol  
c. 1918. Watercolour.  
Signed.  $13\frac{3}{4}$  x 15 ins. 'The Minorities' Art Gallery,  
Colchester.
47. The Cornfield  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed.  $8\frac{3}{8}$  x  $10\frac{1}{8}$  ins. Tate Gallery.
48. Berkshire Farm  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 17 x  $12\frac{7}{8}$  ins. Private collection.
49. Landscape with Cows (?)  
Undated. Oil on board. (?)  
Signed. Whereabouts unknown.
50. Whiteleaf Woods  
1919. Pen and watercolour.  
Signed.  $10\frac{1}{8}$  x  $14\frac{1}{8}$  ins. Private collection.
51. Wood Interior  
1919. Pen and watercolour.  
Signed. Whereabouts unknown.
52. Chalford, Gloucestershire  
1920. Pencil and wash.  
Signed.  $12\frac{1}{2}$  x  $16\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Private collection.
53. Stream, Pourville  
Undated. Pencil and watercolour.  
Signed.  $12\frac{1}{4}$  x  $16\frac{1}{8}$  ins. Cartwright Museum & Art  
Gallery, Bradford.

54. Sapperton, Gloucestershire  
Undated. Chalk and grey wash.  
Signed.  $14\frac{3}{4} \times 11\frac{3}{4}$  ins. Private collection.
55. Woods in Winter  
Undated. Pen and watercolour.  
Signed.  $10\frac{7}{8} \times 14\frac{3}{4}$  ins. Whitworth Art Gallery,  
Manchester.
56. Winter Scene  
1920. Oil on canvas.  
Signed.  $18\frac{1}{2} \times 30\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Manchester City Art Gallery.  
(Rutherford Loan Collection)
57. Hillside  
Undated. Pen and watercolour.  
Unsigned. Whereabouts unknown.
58. Rhubarb and Coal  
Undated. Pen and gouache.  
Unsigned.  $11 \times 20\frac{3}{4}$  ins. Leeds City Art Gallery.
59. Millworkers Landscape  
Undated. Pen and gouache.  
Unsigned.  $14\frac{1}{2} \times 20\frac{3}{4}$  ins. Leeds City Art Gallery.
60. Study of Trees  
1920. Pencil and watercolour.  
Signed.  $15\frac{1}{2} \times 11$  ins. Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield.
61. A Sawmill, Gloucestershire  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Unsigned. Whereabouts unknown.
62. The Lane  
Undated. Black chalk and watercolour.  
Unsigned.  $11\frac{1}{2} \times 15\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Tate Gallery.

63. The Pond  
1922. Pencil and watercolour.  
Signed. Whereabouts unknown.
64. The Moat, Grange Farm, Kimble  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Unsigned. 30 x 20 ins. Tate Gallery.
65. Cromer  
Undated. Pen and watercolour.  
Unsigned. Whereabouts unknown.
66. The Aylesbury Plain  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. Whereabouts unknown.
67. View of the Plain  
Undated. Pen, pencil and watercolour.  
Signed. 11 x 16 ins. Ulster Museum.
68. Grange Farm, Kimble  
Undated. Pencil and wash.  
Signed. 12 x 15 $\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Ulster Museum.
69. A Kitchen Garden, Dorset  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. Whereabouts unknown.
70. Ashbys Pond  
Undated. Pen and wash.  
Signed. Whereabouts unknown.
71. Dredgers, Bristol Docks  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 27 x 34 ins. Swindon Museum and Art Gallery.

72. Bristol Docks  
Undated. Pencil and wash.  
Signed.  $11\frac{3}{4} \times 14\frac{3}{4}$  ins. Private collection.
73. St. Mary's, Redcliffe, Bristol  
Undated. Pen and watercolour.  
Signed.  $13\frac{3}{4} \times 15\frac{1}{2}$  ins. National Museum of Wales,  
Cardiff.
74. The Polygon, Bristol  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed. Whereabouts unknown.
75. Avoncliffe from the Aqueduct  
Undated. Pencil and wash.  
Signed.  $15\frac{1}{2} \times 19\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Tate Gallery.
76. Clifton  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed.  $11\frac{3}{4} \times 16$  ins. Whitworth Art Gallery,  
Manchester.
77. The Old Canal, Bath  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed.  $25\frac{1}{2} \times 30$  ins. Cartwright Museum & Art Gallery  
Bradford.
78. The Eundas Aqueduct  
Undated. Pencil and watercolour.  
Signed.  $13 \times 15\frac{3}{4}$  ins. Private collection.
79. The Canal  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed.  $15\frac{1}{2} \times 21\frac{3}{4}$  ins. Whitworth Art Gallery,  
Manchester.

80. The Canal Bridge, Bath  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 28 x 30 ins. Victoria Art Gallery, Bath.
81. The Pond  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 26½ x 33½ ins. Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield
82. Autumn Berries  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 20 x 30 ins. Municipal Gallery of Modern Art,  
Dublin.
83. The Garden under Snow  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 30 x 24½ ins. Ulster Museum.
84. Meadle Winter  
1925. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 20 x 18 ins. Private collection.
85. A Window in Buckinghamshire  
1928. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 36 x 30 ins. Private collection.
86. Jug of Flowers  
1930. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 29½ x 23½ ins. Manchester City Art Gallery.
87. Marrows and Daisies  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 30 x 24 ins. Private collection.
88. Flowers in a Vase  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 29½ x 23½ ins. Private collection.

89. Summer Flowers  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. Whereabouts unknown.
90. Mantlepiece  
Undated. Pencil and watercolour.  
Signed. 19 x 13 $\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Williamson Museum and Art  
Gallery, Birkenhead.
91. Buddleia and Red Hot Poker  
Undated. Pencil, crayon and wash.  
Signed. 19 x 14 ins. Doncaster Museum and Art  
Gallery.
92. Summer  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 31 x 23 ins. H.M. Ministry of Public  
Buildings and Works, The British Embassy, Paris.
93. Autumn  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 29 x 23 ins. Central Museum and Art Gallery,  
Northampton.
94. Winter  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 20 x 30 ins. Private collection.
95. Spring  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 31 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 23 $\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Private collection.
96. Wormingford Mill, Essex  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 35 x 40 ins. Private collection.

97. The Sluice Gate  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed.  $22\frac{3}{4}$  x  $25\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Private collection.
98. Wormingford Mill  
1929. Pencil and wash.  
Signed.  $15\frac{1}{2}$  x  $20\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Private collection.
99. The River at Bures  
1930. Oil on canvas.  
Signed.  $19\frac{1}{2}$  x  $29\frac{3}{4}$  ins. Private collection.
100. The Farm Wagon  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed.  $17\frac{1}{2}$  x  $25\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Private collection.
101. Park Scene, Great Glemham  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 24 x  $30\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool
102. The River, Evening  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed. 14 x  $21\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Private collection.
103. The Bend in the Stream  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed. 14 x 22 ins. Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield.
104. Upper Water  
1933. Oil on millboard.  
Signed. 22 x 32 ins. Leeds City Art Gallery.
105. Boat Houses, Marlow  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Unsigned.  $16\frac{1}{2}$  x 21 ins. Leeds City Art Gallery.

106. Path through the Willows  
1934. Watercolour.  
Signed. 22 x 15 $\frac{3}{4}$  ins. Manchester City Art Gallery.  
(Rutherford Loan Collection)
107. The Grove  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed. 21 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 17 $\frac{1}{4}$  ins. Private collection.
108. The River Wiston, Evening  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 20 x 30 ins. Private collection.
109. Bledlow Church - The Lyde  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 34 x 27 ins. Private collection.
110. Nash (centre) working on his display for a trade exhibition of British goods, Paris 1937.
111. The completed decoration.
112. Hamden House Park  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. Whereabouts unknown.
113. A Suffolk Landscape  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 24 x 32 ins. Tate Gallery.
114. The Road up to Whiteleaf  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 20 x 30 ins. Manchester City Art Gallery.  
(Rutherford Loan Collection)

115. Landscape at Princes, Risborough  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed. 19 x 23 ins. Cartwright Museum and Art  
Gallery, Bradford.
116. Autumn Scene  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed. 16 x 21 $\frac{1}{4}$  ins. Whitworth Art Gallery,  
Manchester.
117. Peaceful Crater  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed. Whereabouts unknown.
118. Rocks and Sand Dunes, Llangeneth  
Undated. Pencil and watercolour.  
Signed. 15 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 22 $\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Tate Gallery.
119. Newslade, Gower  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed. 15 x 21 ins. Private collection.
120. Woods by the Shore, Gower  
Undated. Pencil and watercolour.  
Unsigned. 22 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 17 $\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Nottingham Museum and Art  
Gallery.
121. The Bathing Pool  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed. 19 x 23 ins. Nottingham Museum and Art  
Gallery.
122. Figurehead, Devonport  
Undated Watercolour.  
Unsigned. 17 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 22 $\frac{3}{4}$  ins. Southampton Art Gallery.

123. Destroyer in Dry Dock  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 25 x 30 ins. Cartwright Museum and Art  
Gallery, Bradford.
124. New Cruiser in North Dock  
Undated. Pen, crayon and wash.  
Signed. 21 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 17 $\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Ferens Art Gallery, Hull.
125. Two Submarines<sup>n</sup> by a Jetty  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed. 9 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 15 $\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Imperial War Museum.
126. Figurehead and Machinery  
Undated. Pencil and watercolour.  
Signed. 10 x 15 ins. Imperial War Museum.
127. Quayside  
Undated. Pencil and watercolour.  
Signed. 10 x 15 ins. Imperial War Museum.
128. Sunderland  
Undated. Pencil.  
Signed. 10 x 15 ins. Imperial War Museum.
129. Destroyer  
Undated. Pencil and wash.  
Signed. 10 x 15 ins. Imperial War Museum.
130. Timber Rafts  
Undated. Pencil and watercolour.  
Signed. 10 x 15 ins. Imperial War Museum.
131. Dry Dock  
Undated. Pen, pencil and watercolour.  
Signed. 10 x 15 ins. Imperial War Museum.

132. A Dockyard Fire  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 20 x 32 ins. Imperial War Museum.
133. From the Wheelhouse  
1940. Watercolour.  
Signed.  $16\frac{1}{2}$  x  $21\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Imperial War Museum.
134. Convoy  
Undated. Pen and watercolour.  
Signed. 10 x 15 ins. Imperial War Museum.
135. H.M.S. Oracle at Anchor  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed.  $15\frac{3}{8}$  x  $21\frac{5}{8}$  ins. Imperial War Museum.
136. Bristol Channel  
Undated. Pen and watercolour.  
Signed. 10 x 15 ins. Imperial War Museum.
137. Beached Ship  
Undated. Pencil.  
Signed. 15 x 10 ins. Imperial War Museum.
138. Winter Morning, Wormingford  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed. 16 x  $22\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Nottingham Museum and Art Gallery.
139. Winter Afternoon  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed.  $14\frac{7}{8}$  x 23 ins. Rochdale Art Gallery and Museum.
140. Summer, Stoke-by-Nayland  
1947. Watercolour.  
Signed.  $17\frac{1}{2}$  x 23 ins. Rochdale Art Gallery and Museum.

141. The Blenheim  
1947. Pencil and watercolour.  
Signed.  $22\frac{3}{4}$  x  $18\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Tate Gallery.
142. The River Brett, Higham, Suffolk  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 27 x 34 ins. Private collection.
143. Late Summer, Stoke-by-Nayland  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Unsigned. 28 x 36 ins. Bristol Corporation Art  
Gallery.
144. River Brett at Higham  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed. 18 x 22 ins. Private collection.
145. The Barn  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed.  $26$  x  $32\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Royal Academy of Arts.
146. Early Spring, Firle Beacon, near Lewes  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed.  $19\frac{1}{2}$  x  $33\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Private collection.
147. The River Box, Suffolk  
Undated. Pencil and wash.  
Signed.  $9\frac{3}{4}$  x  $14\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Private collection.
148. Oaks by the Sea  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed. 22 x 17 ins. Oldham Museum and Art Gallery.
149. The Fallen Tree  
1955. Pencil and watercolour.  
Signed.  $17\frac{1}{2}$  x  $21\frac{3}{4}$  ins. Tate Gallery.

150. Dark Forest  
1957. Watercolour.  
Signed. 14 x 19 ins. Private collection.
151. The Foothills of the Cuillins  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed.  $14\frac{1}{2}$  x 22 ins. Rochdale Museum and Art  
Gallery.
152. February Evening, Glemham, Suffolk  
1958. Watercolour.  
Signed. 15 x 22 ins. Colchester Arts Society.
153. Fallen Tree, Bridehead Lake  
1959. Watercolour.  
Signed. 18 x 22 ins. Private collection.
154. Wild Garden, Winter  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed.  $17\frac{1}{2}$  x  $21\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Tate Gallery.
155. Frozen Ponds  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 23 x 29 ins. Private collection.
156. The Deserted Gravel Pit  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed.  $13\frac{3}{4}$  x 22 ins. Castle Cliff Museum, Keighley.
157. Gravel Pit, Norfolk  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed.  $13\frac{1}{2}$  x  $17\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Bolton Museum and Art Gallery.
158. The Garden in Winter  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed.  $24\frac{1}{2}$  x  $29\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Private collection.

159. Mill Buildings, Boxted  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 28 x 32 ins. Tate Gallery.
160. Winter Evening  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed.  $24\frac{1}{2}$  x  $29\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Worthing Museum and Art  
Gallery.
161. Waterfall Dolanog, Montgomeryshire  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed.  $15\frac{1}{2}$  x  $20\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Leeds City Art Gallery.
162. Derbyshire Hillside  
Undated. Pen and watercolour.  
Signed.  $13\frac{1}{2}$  x  $18\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Private collection.
163. Incoming Tide  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed. 16 x 22 ins. Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.
164. Breakwater at Overstrand  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed. 23 x 29 ins. Private collection.
165. Winter Evening  
1969. Oil on canvas.  
Signed.  $21\frac{1}{2}$  x  $27\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Private collection.
166. The Dead Fir Tree  
1969. Oil on canvas.  
Signed.  $27\frac{3}{8}$  x 21 ins. Private collection.
167. The Watersplash, Glandford, Norfolk  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed.  $19\frac{1}{2}$  x  $29\frac{3}{8}$  ins. Private collection.

168. Cornish Estuary  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed.  $14\frac{1}{2} \times 17\frac{7}{8}$  ins. Private collection.
169. Wormingford  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed.  $14\frac{3}{4} \times 21\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Private collection.
170. Little Grotto  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed.  $18 \times 15$  ins. Private collection.
171. Sun and Shade, Skye  
1975. Watercolour.  
Signed.  $20 \times 15$  ins. Private collection.
172. Trees on a Ridge, Skye  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed.  $19\frac{1}{2} \times 14\frac{3}{4}$  ins. Private collection.
173. Rocky Gorge, France  
Undated. Watercolour.  
Signed.  $19 \times 14\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Private collection.
174. Borrovaig, Skye  
1975. Watercolour.  
Signed.  $20 \times 16\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Private collection.
175. Rough Sea, Cornish Coast  
Undated. Oil on canvas.  
Signed.  $22\frac{1}{2} \times 29\frac{3}{4}$  ins. Private collection.

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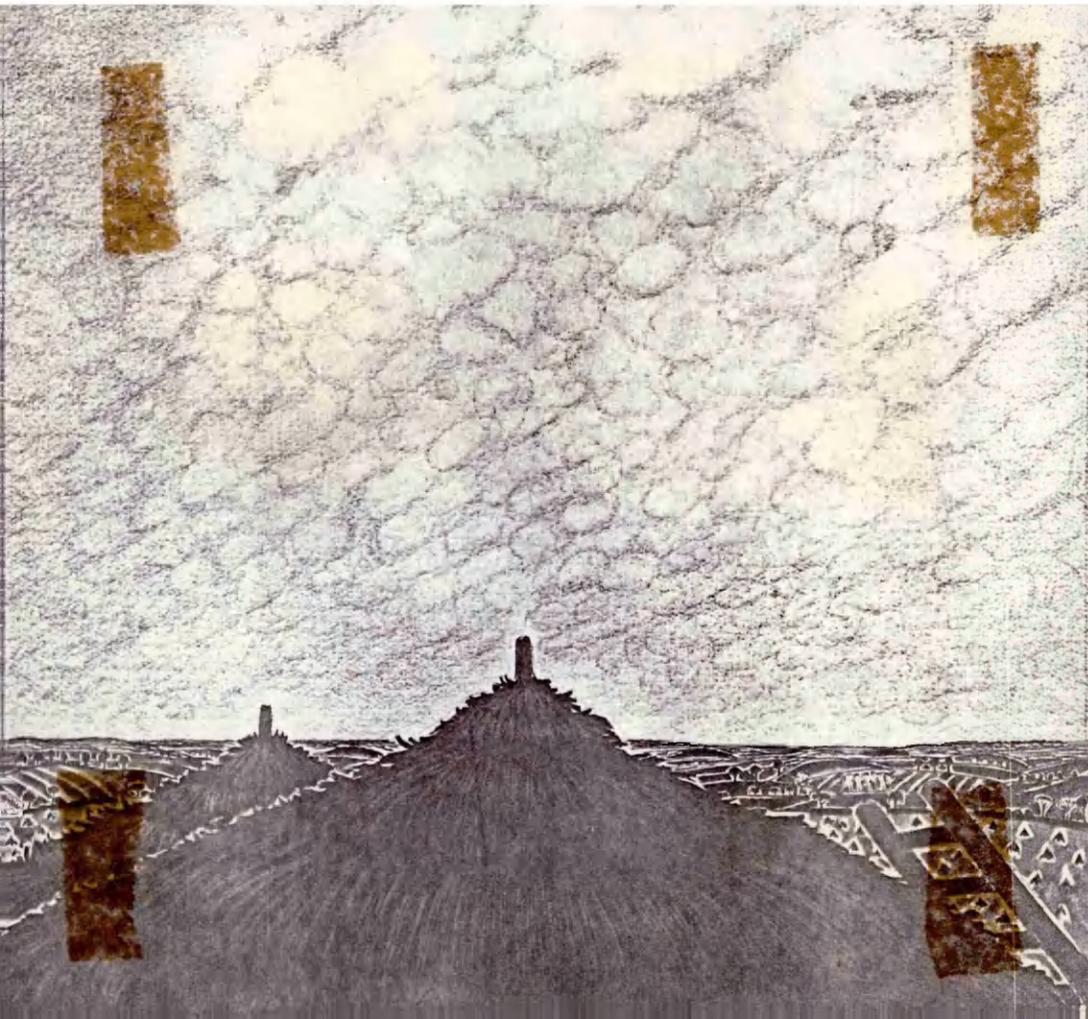
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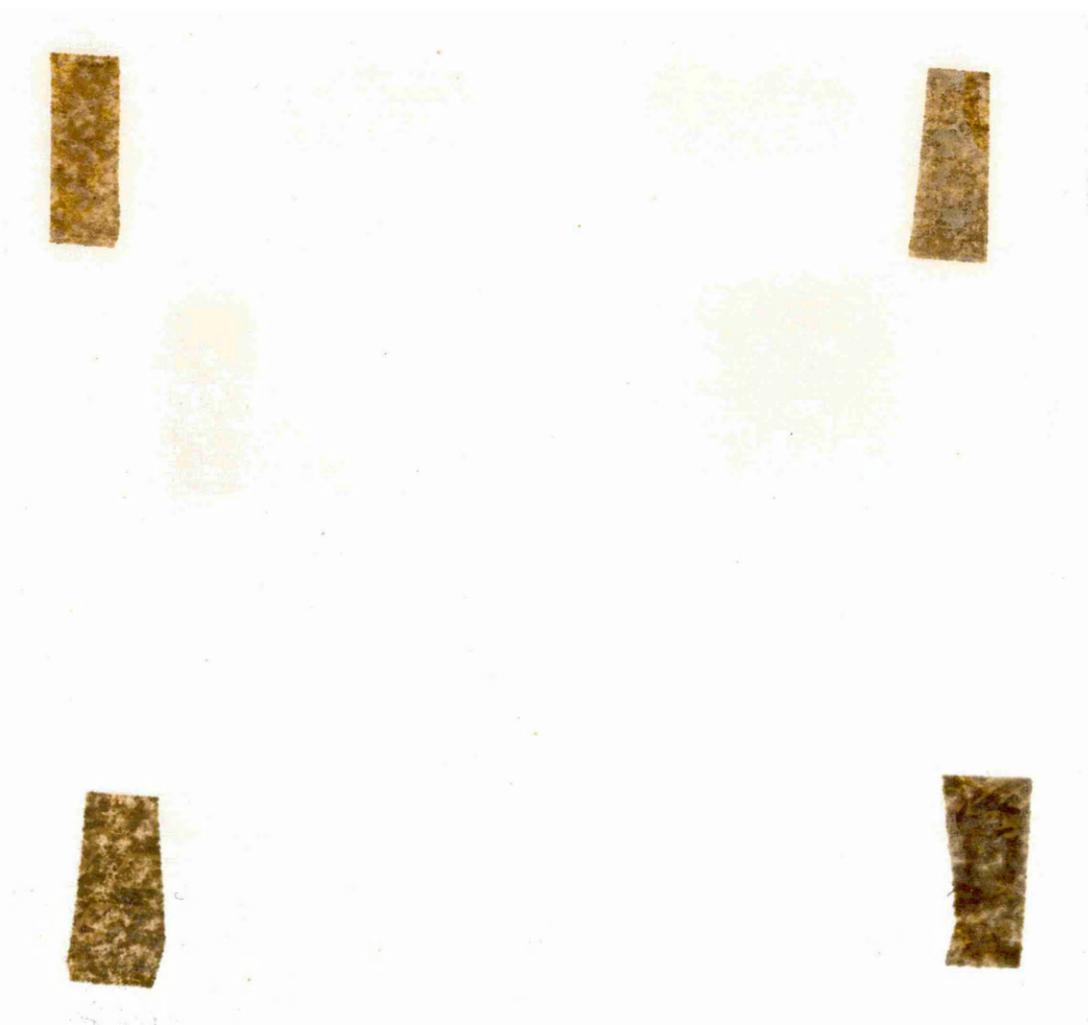
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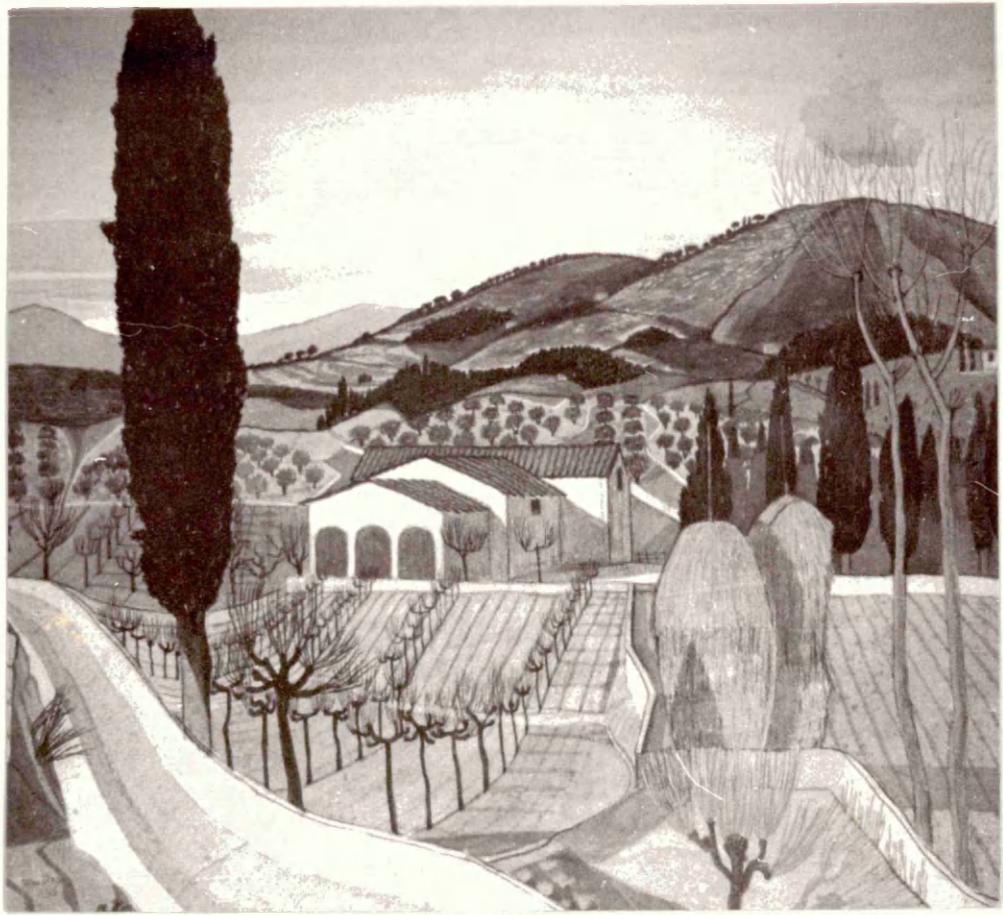


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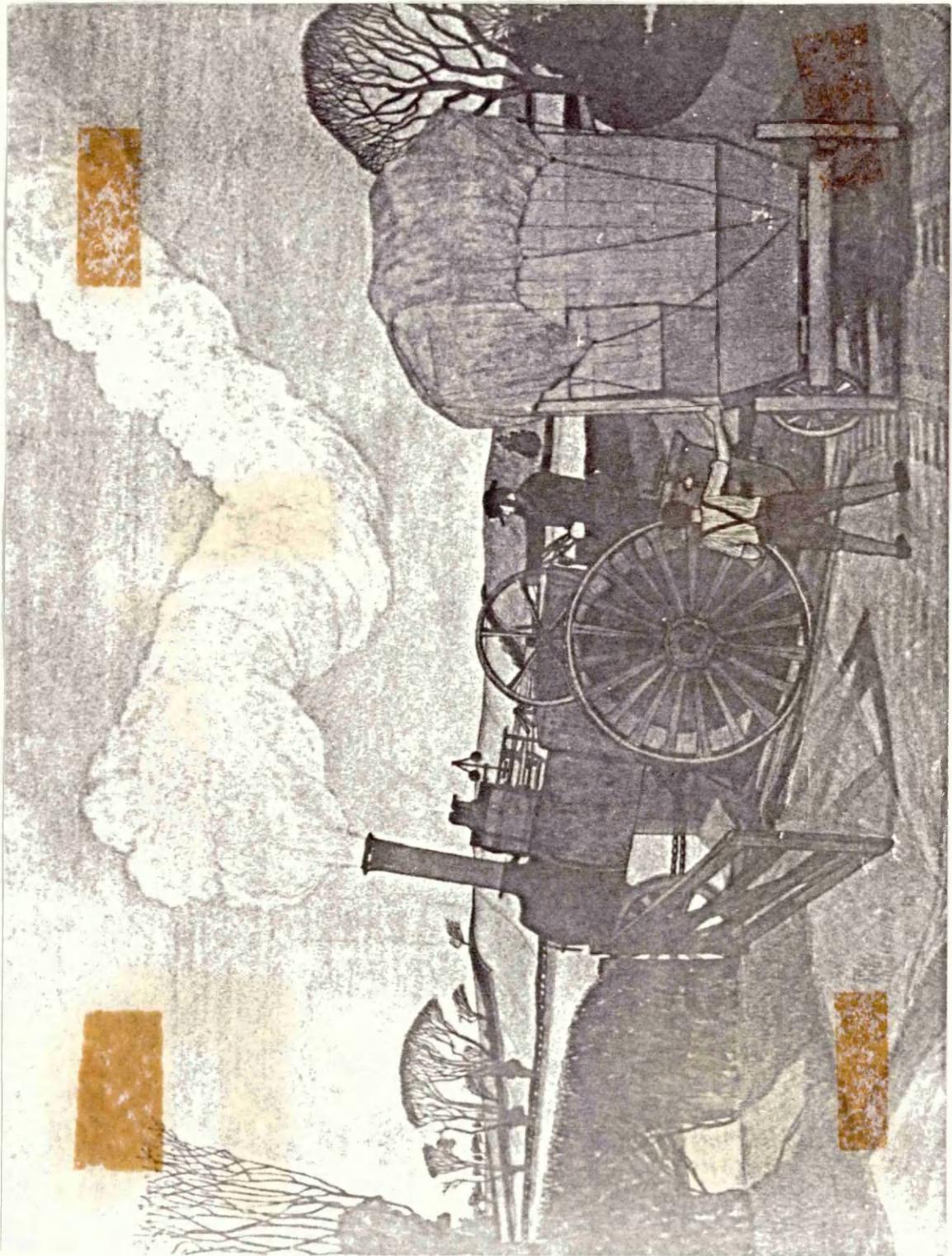


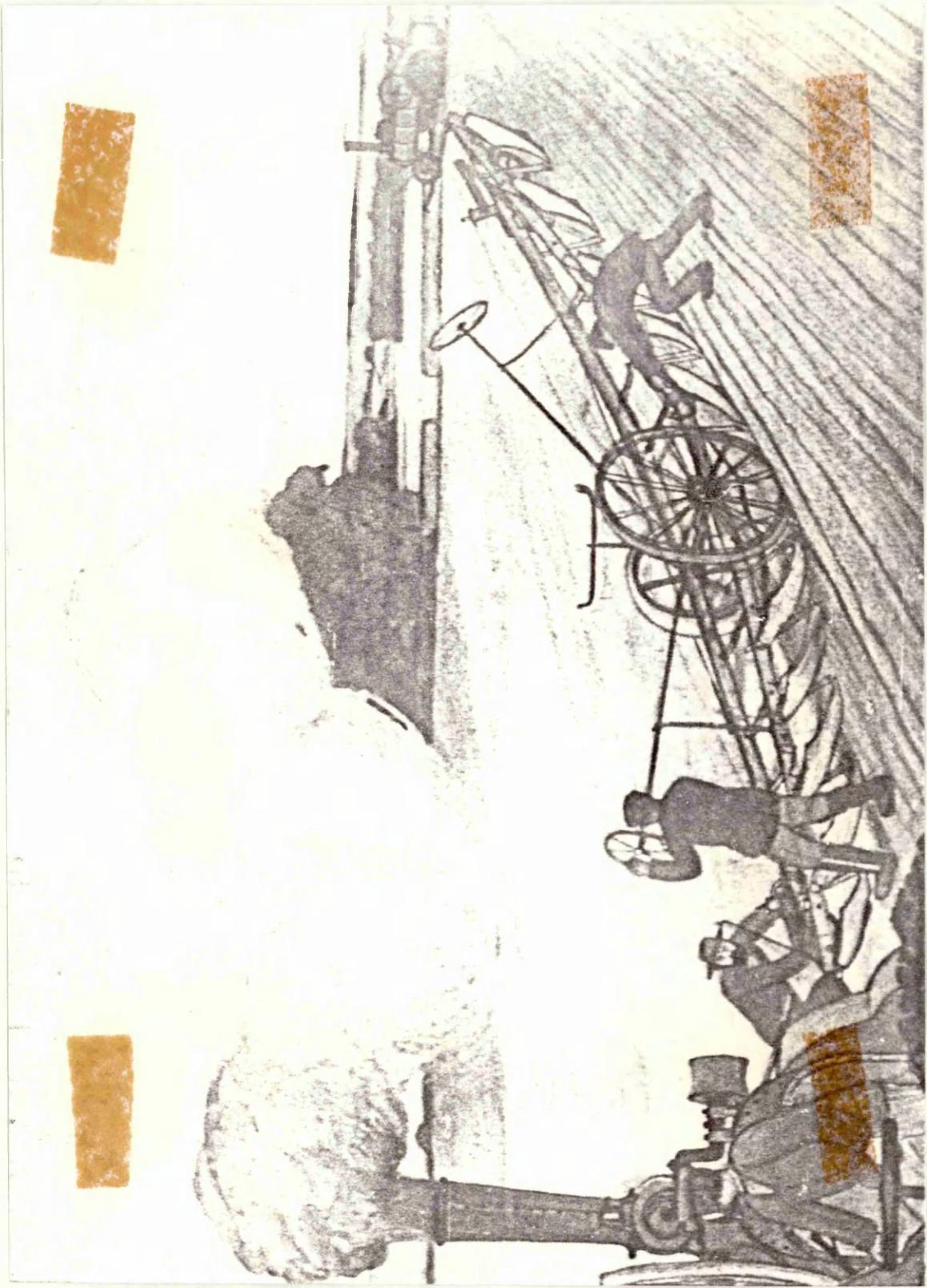
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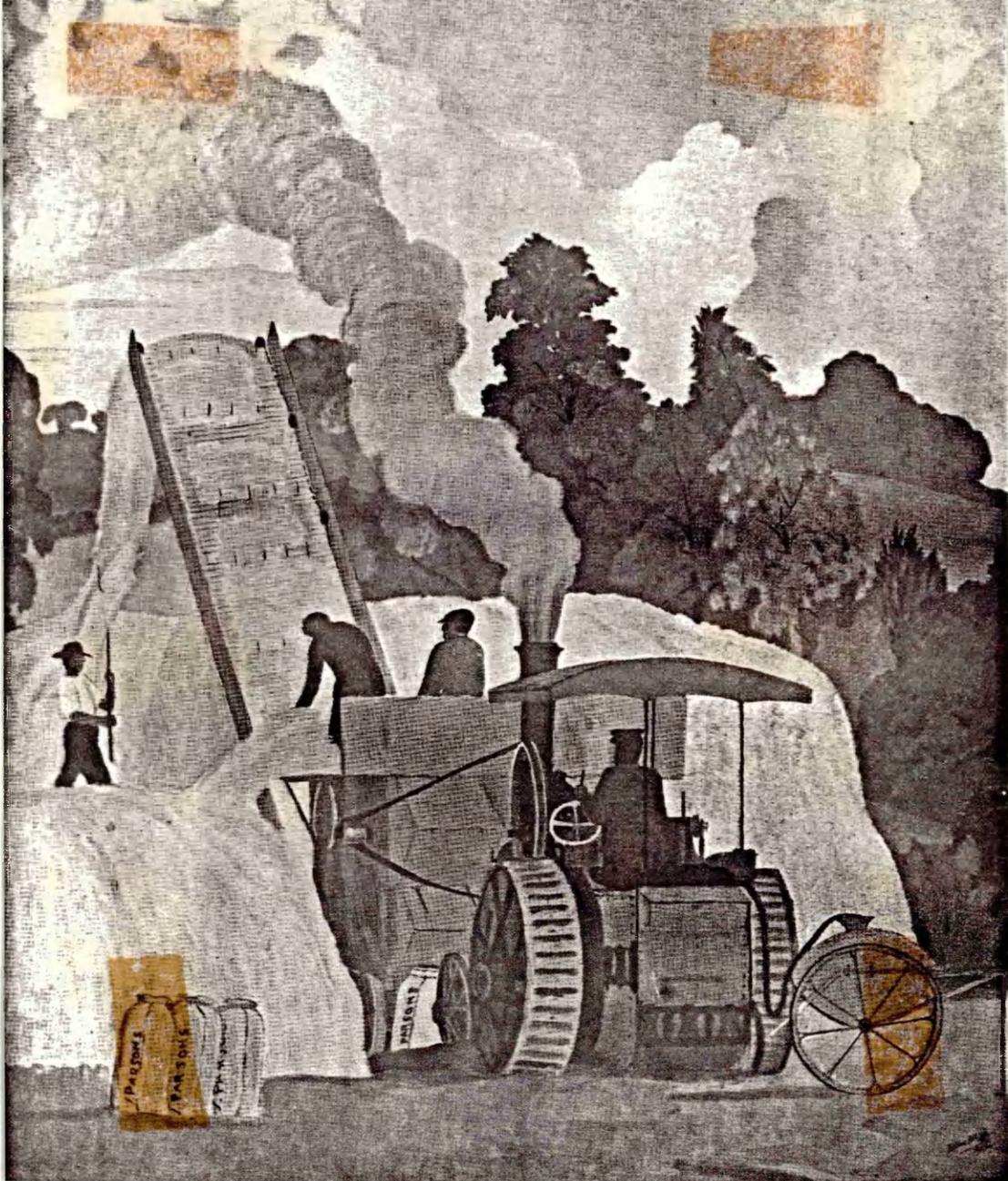
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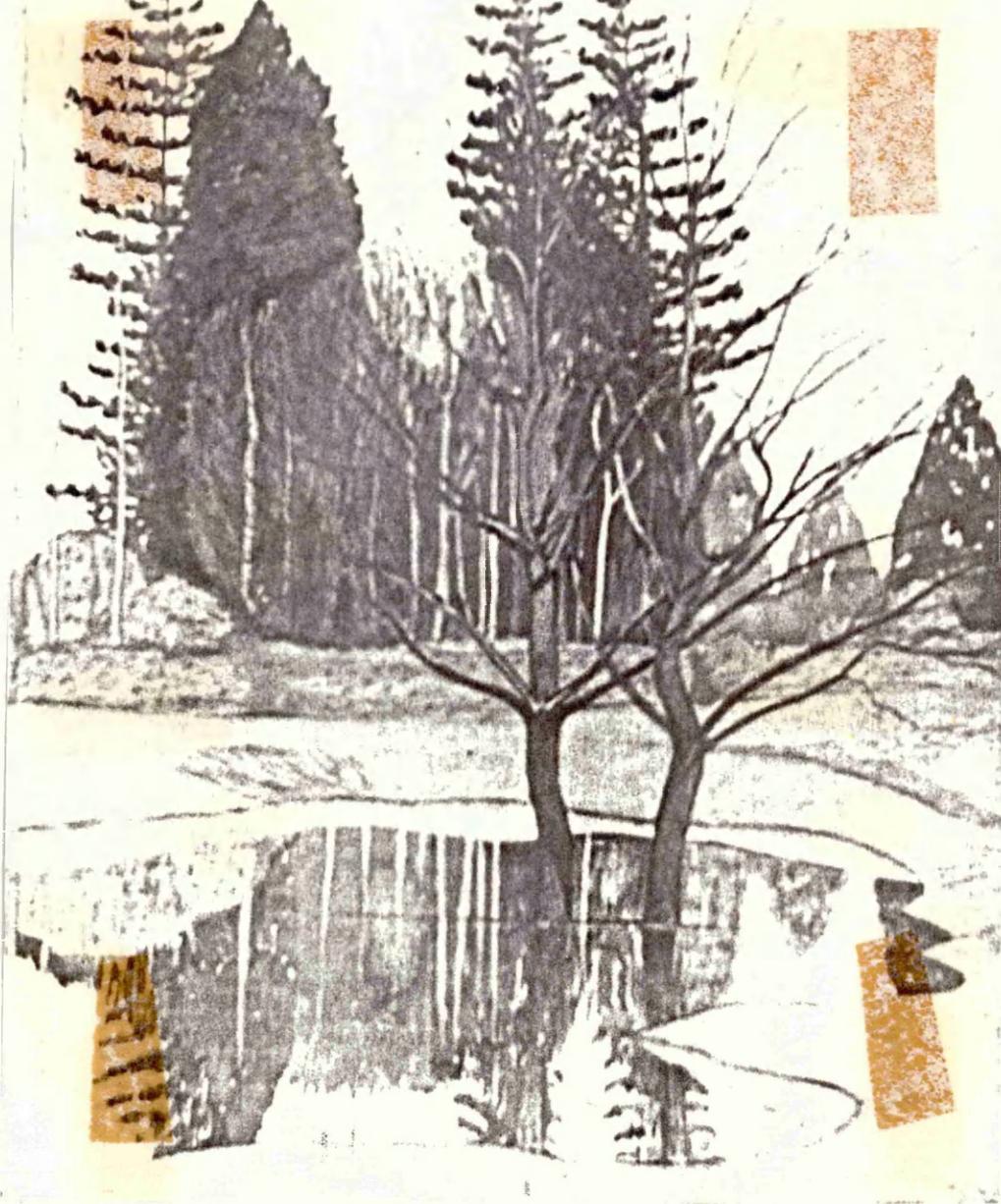




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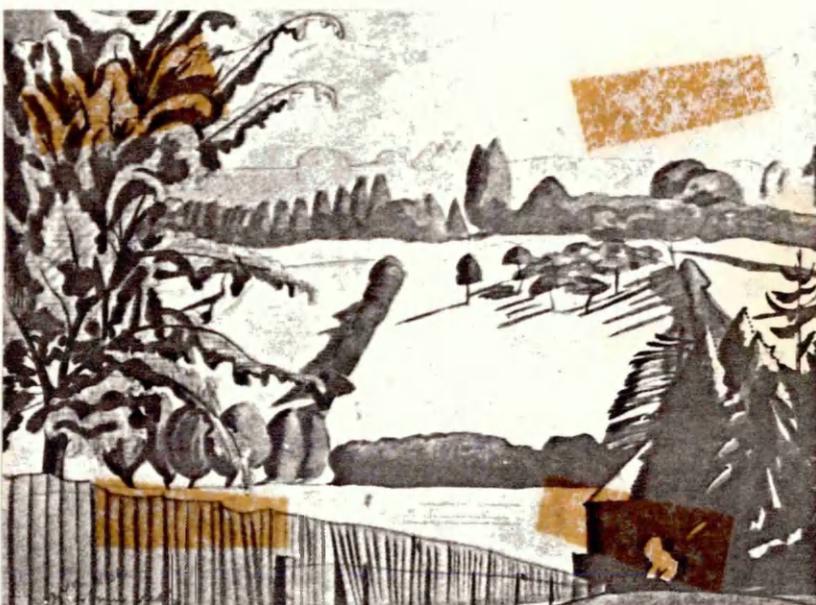
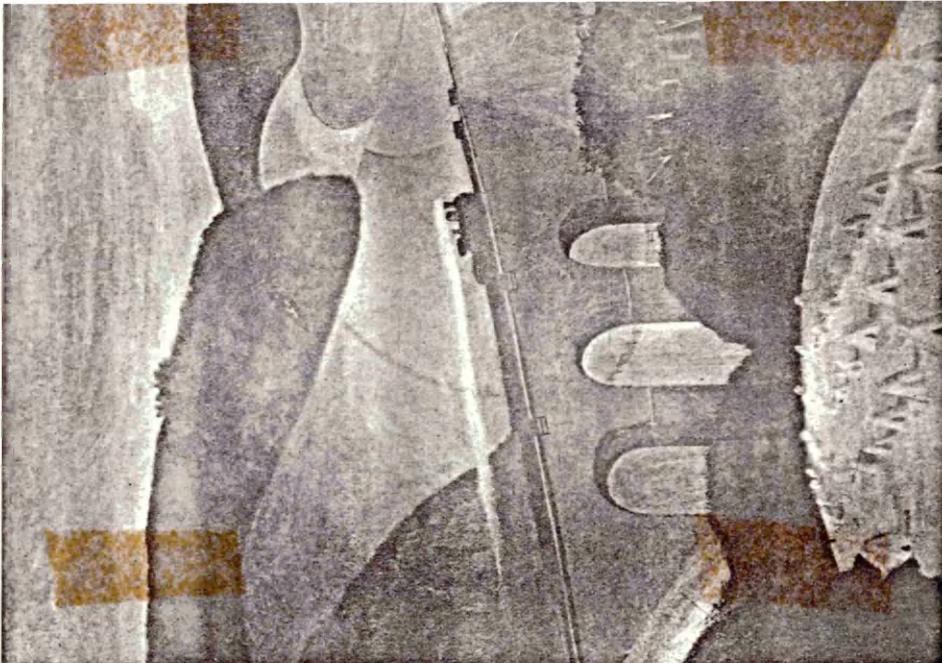
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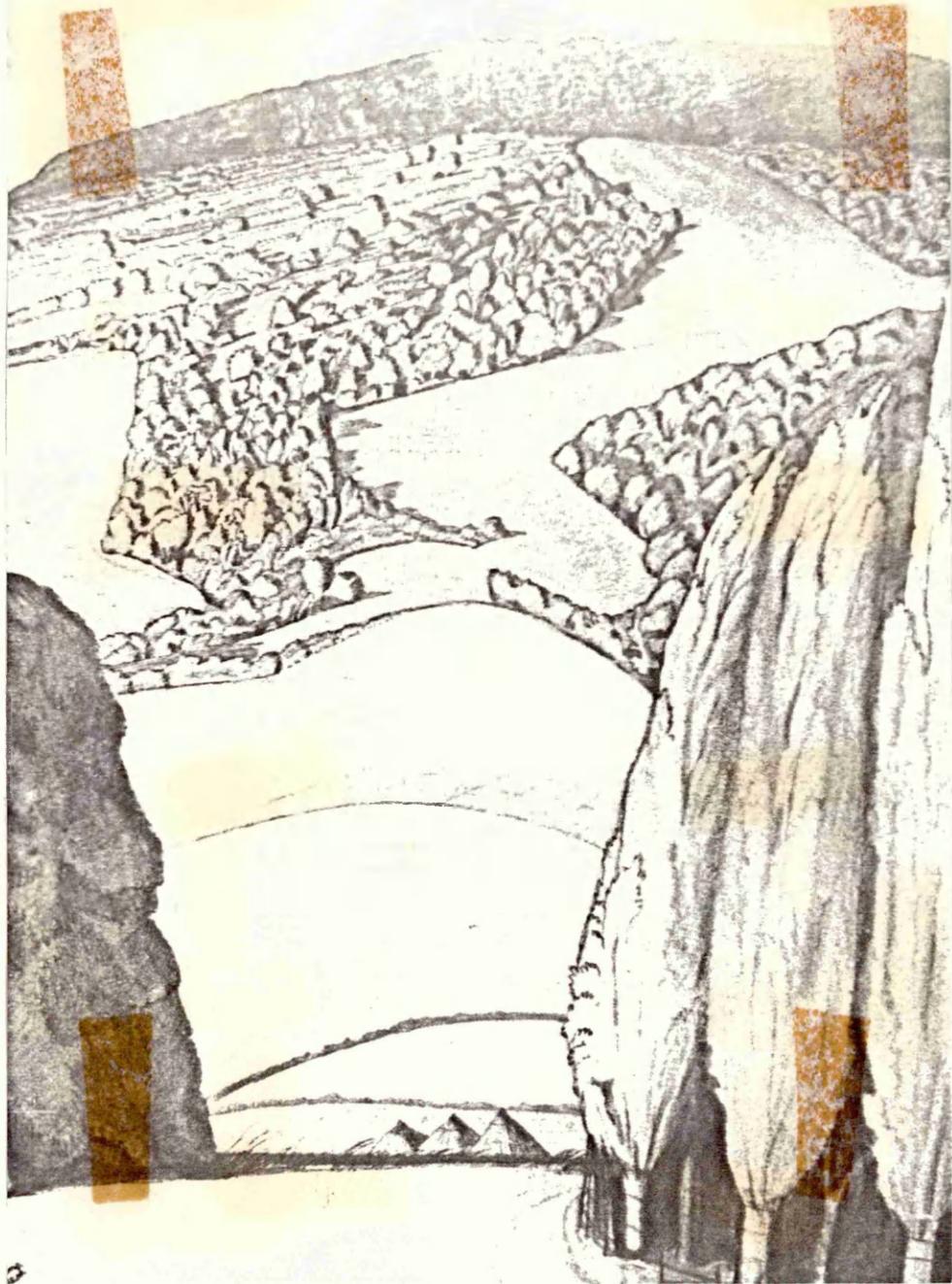


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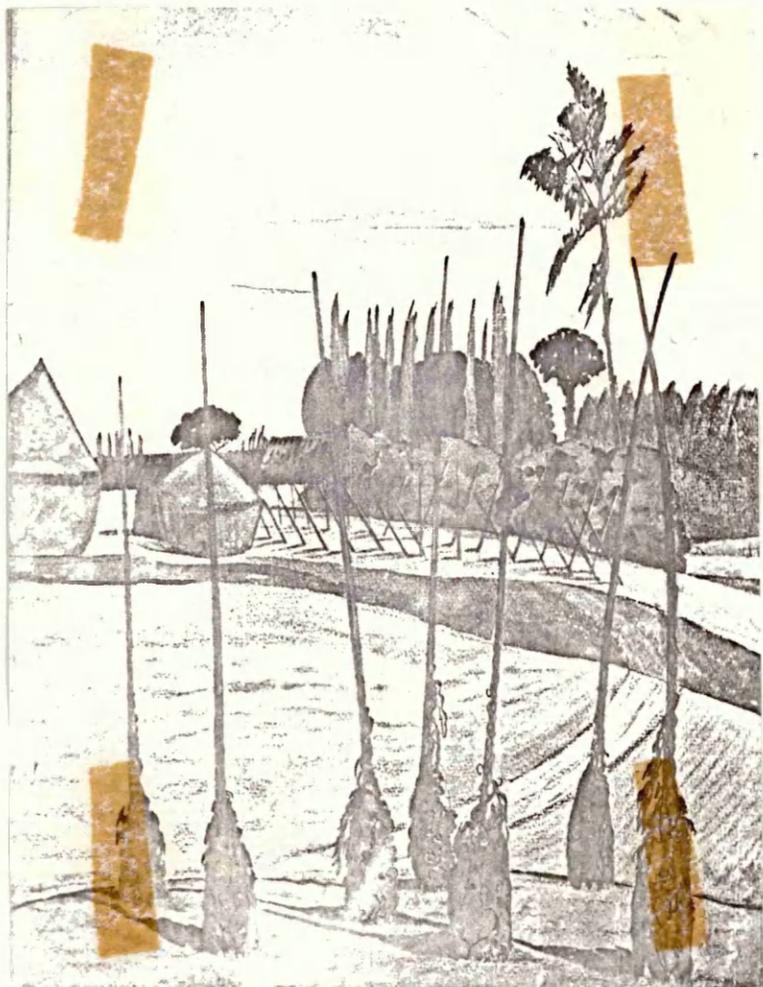
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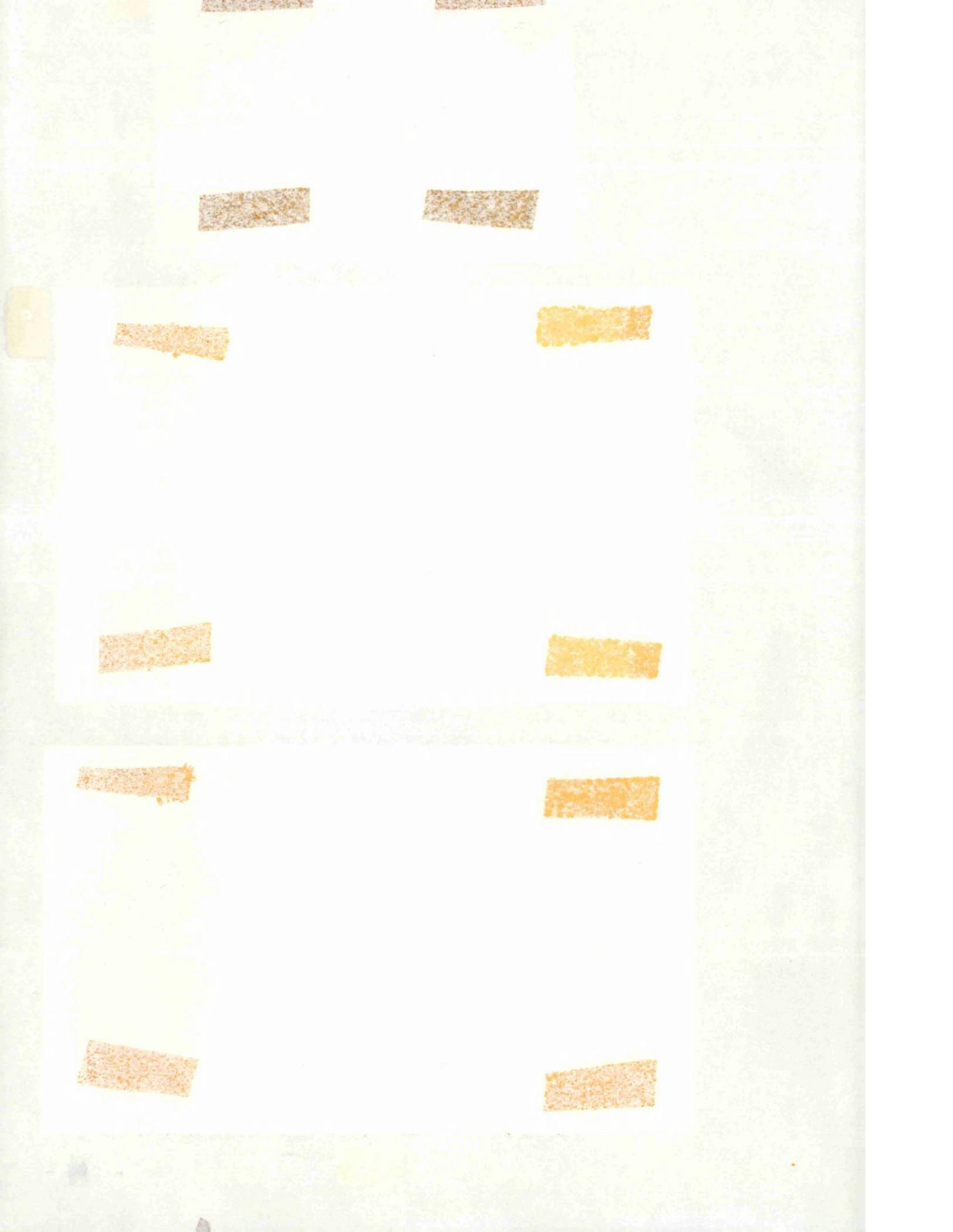




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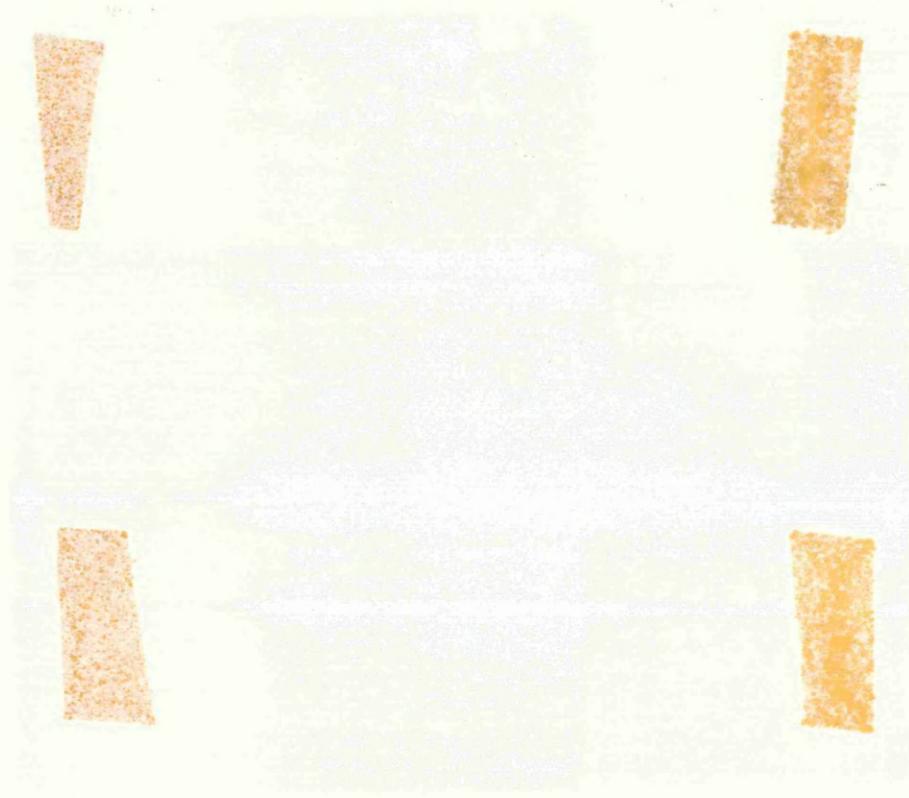
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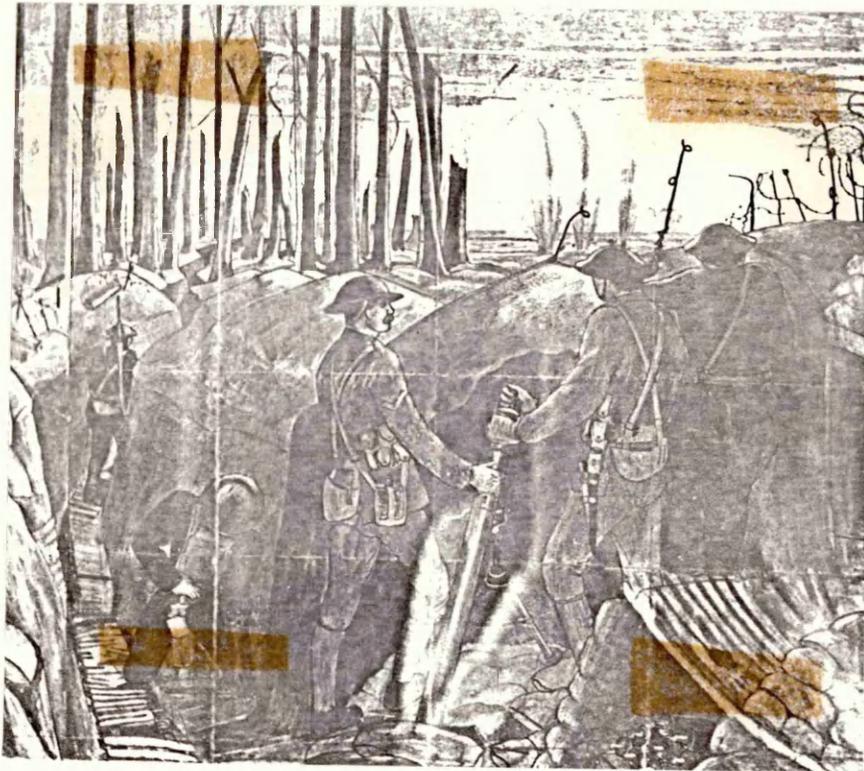


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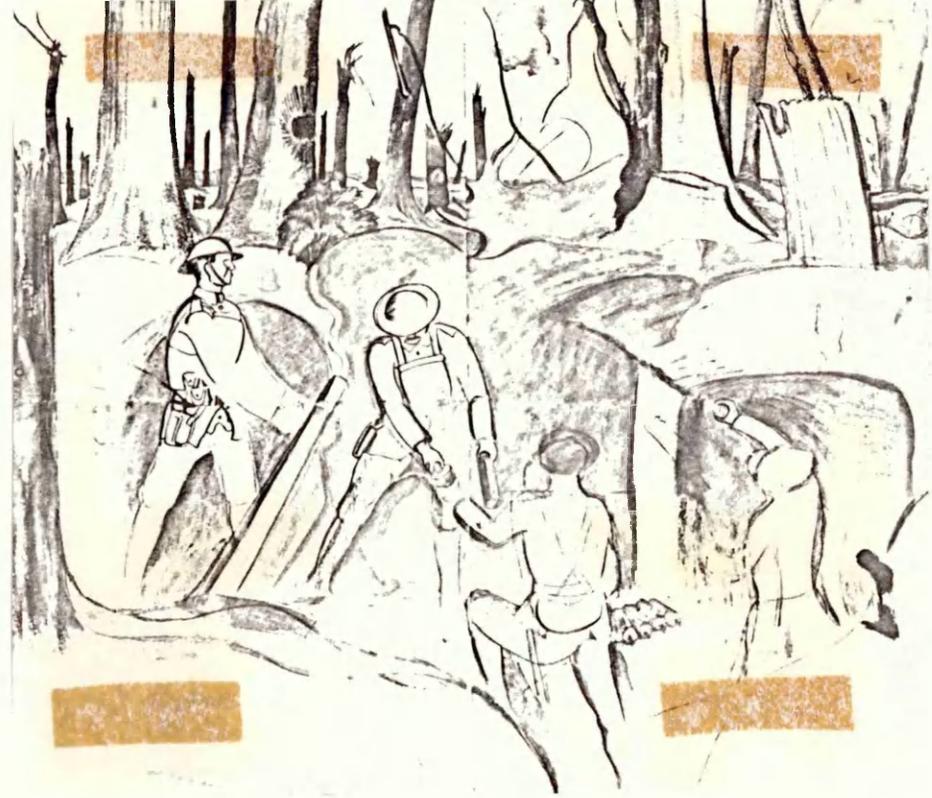


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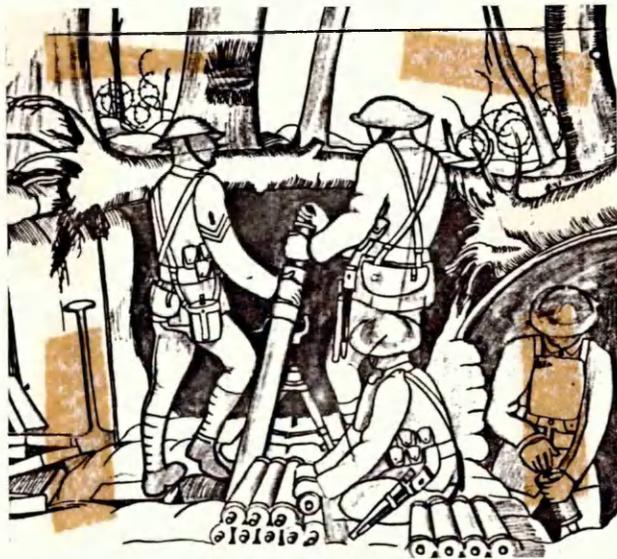
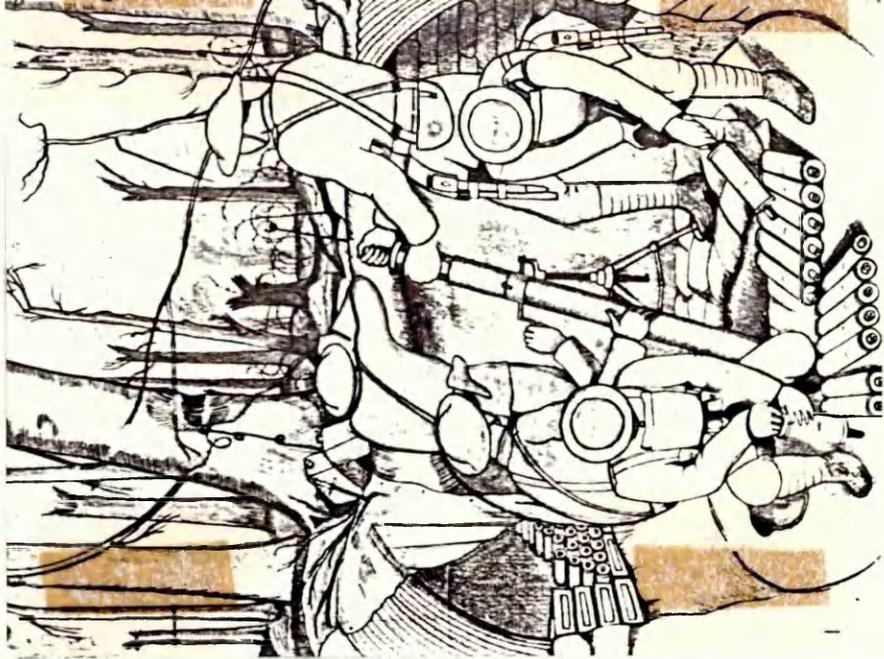


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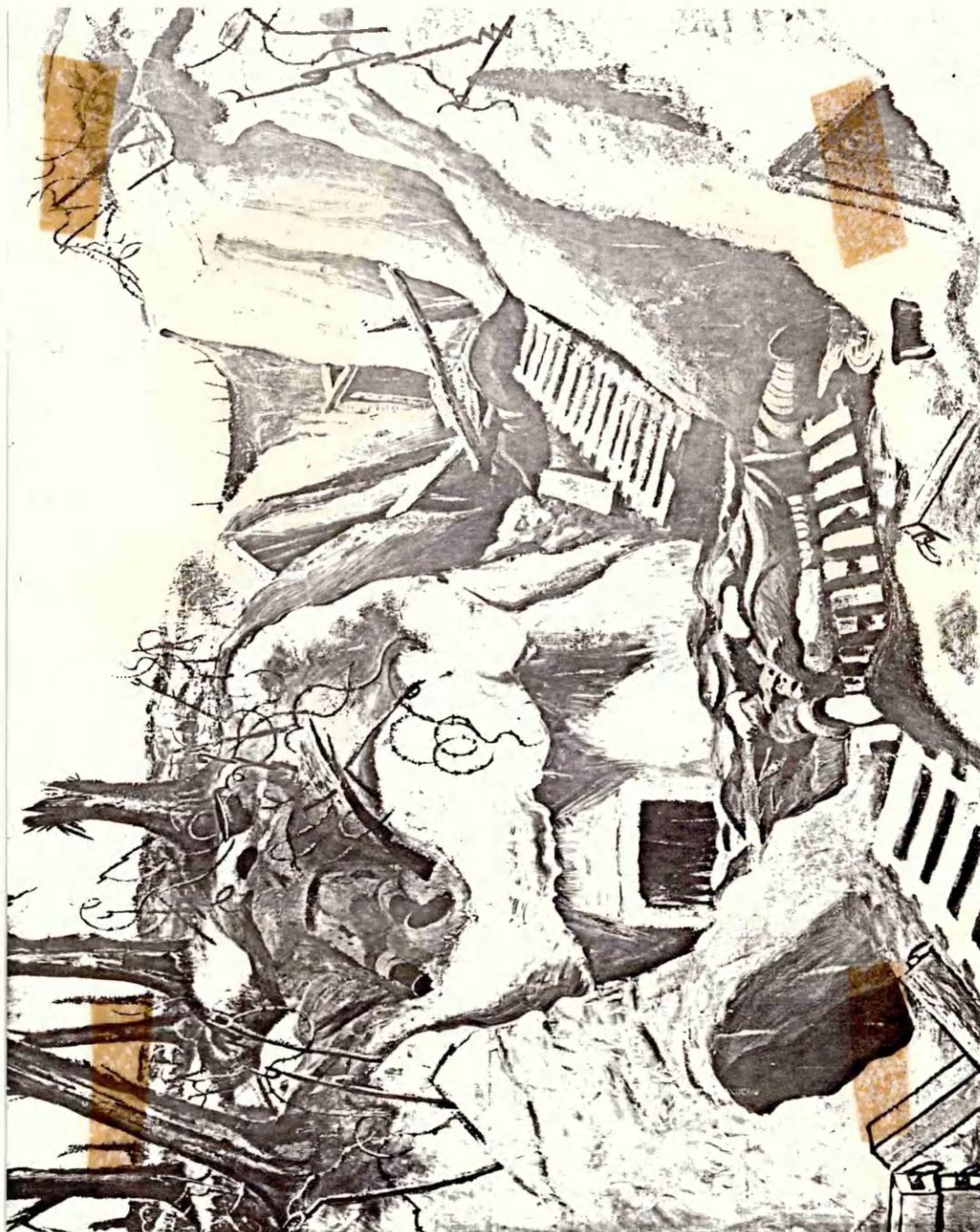


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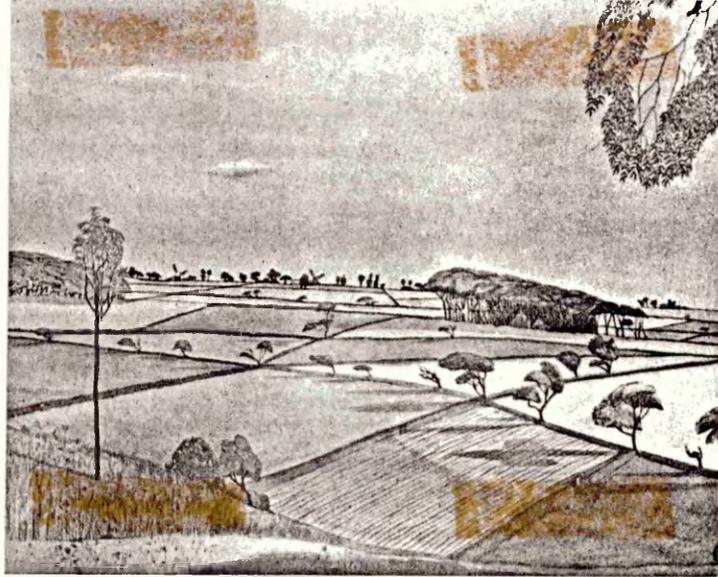


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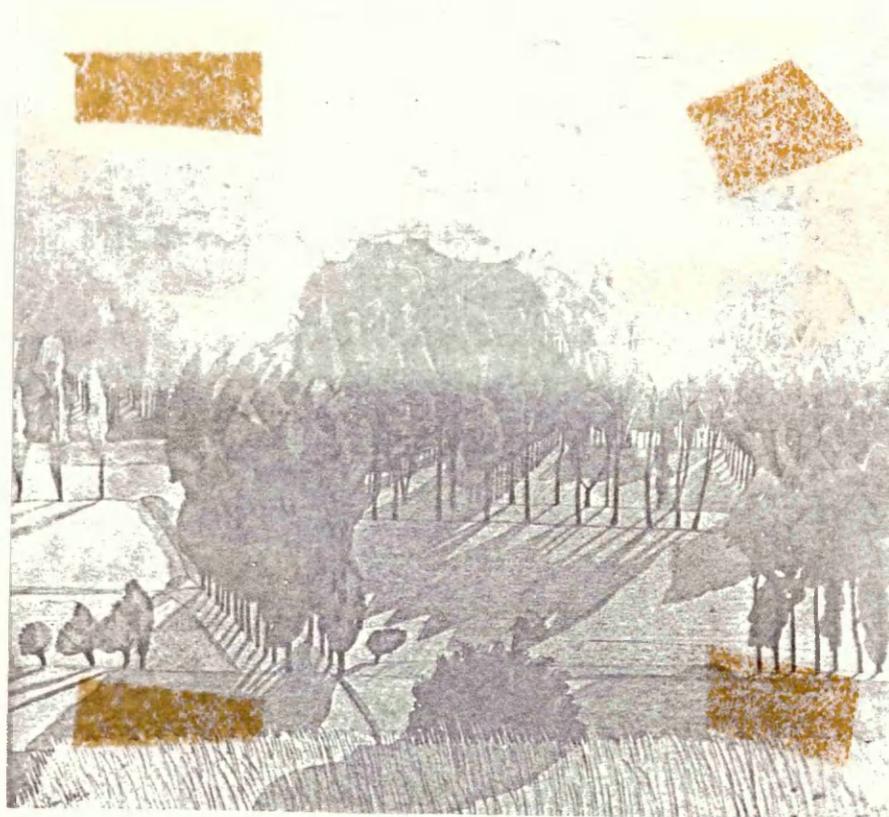


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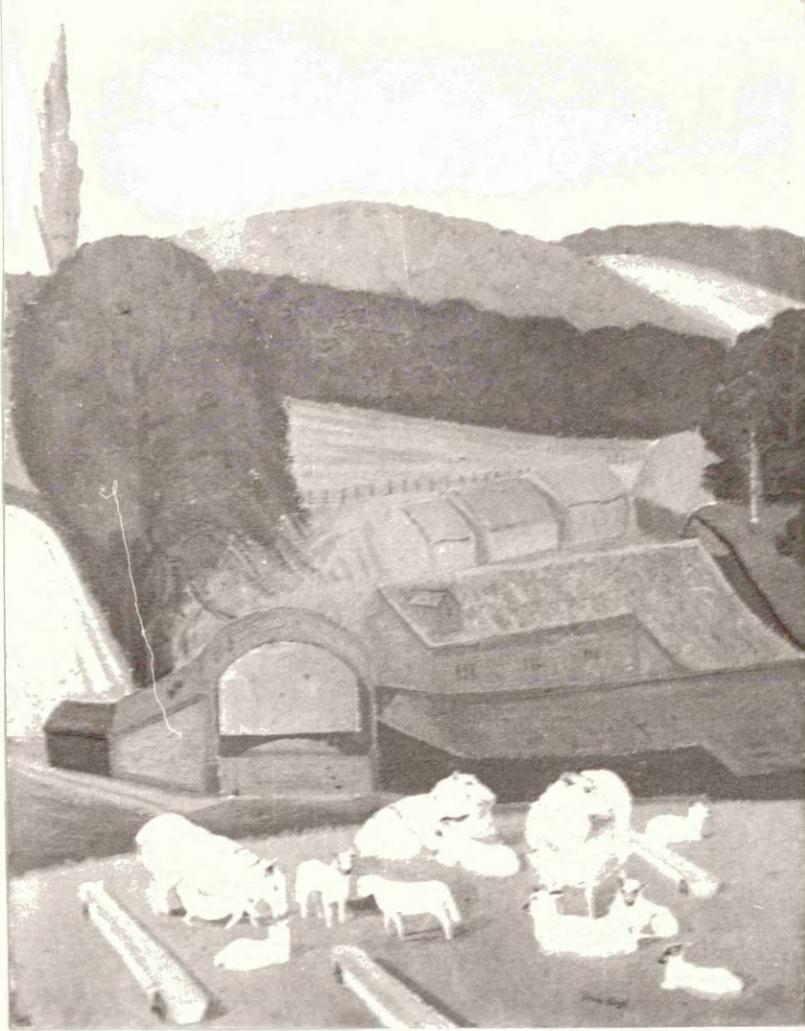
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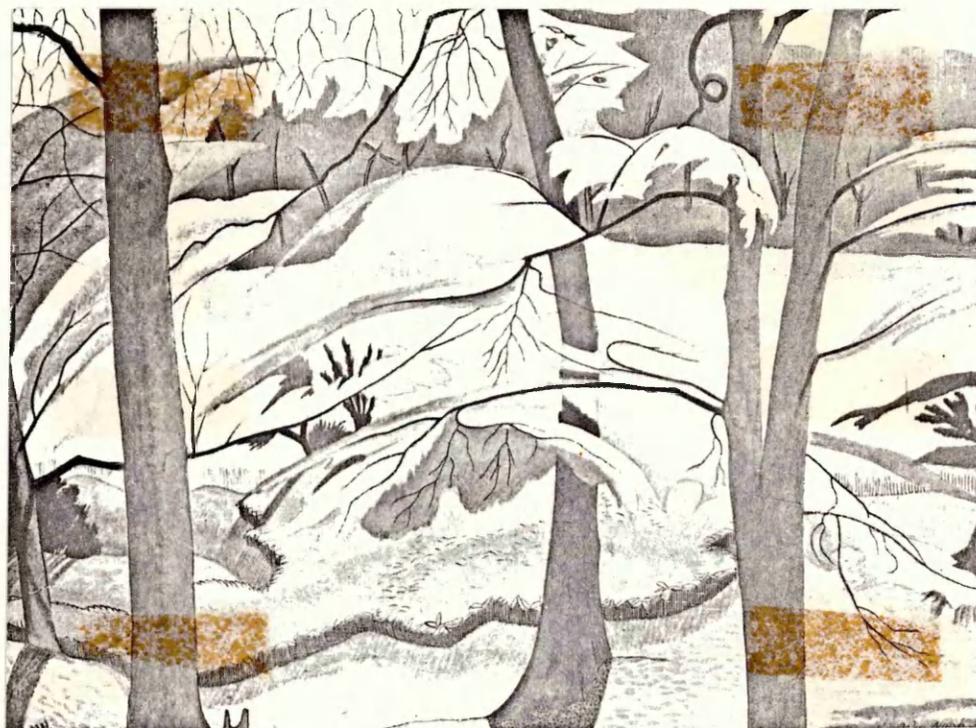


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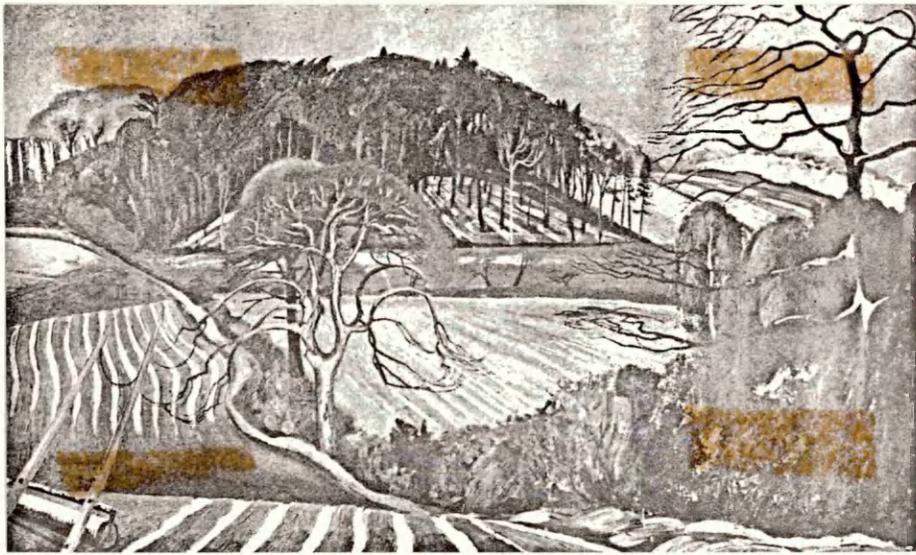






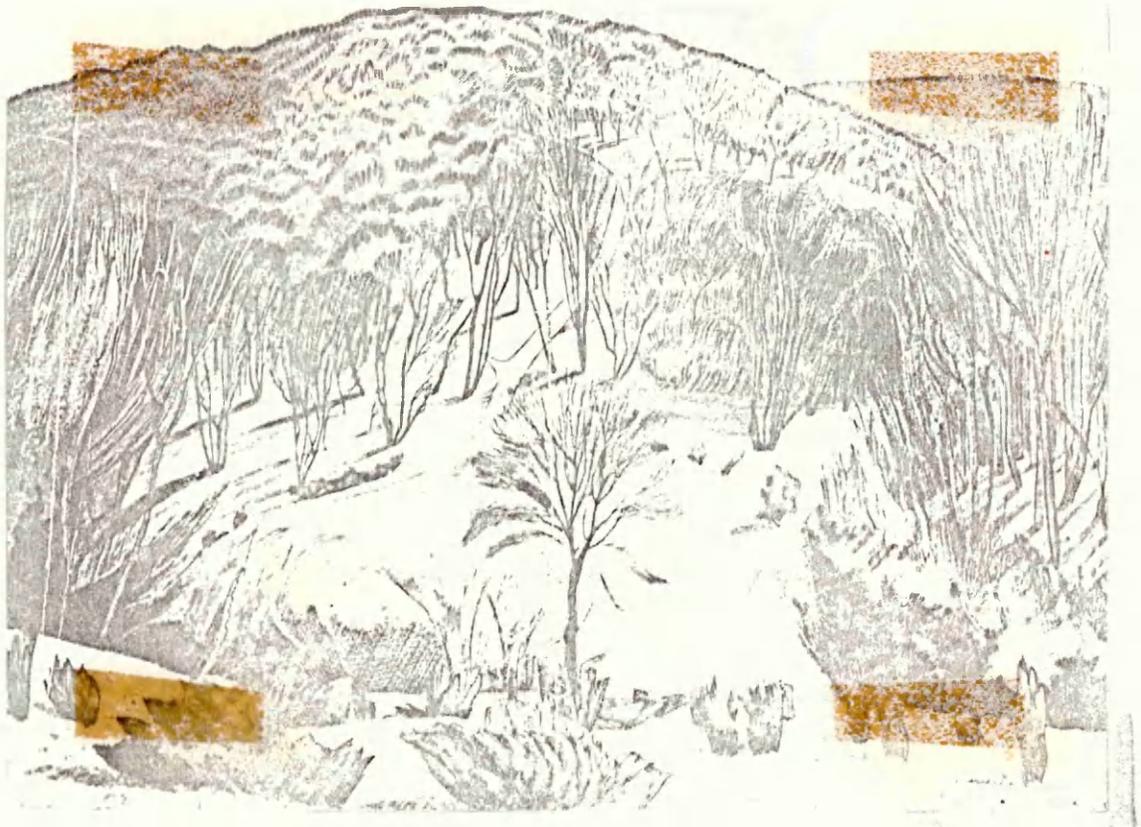


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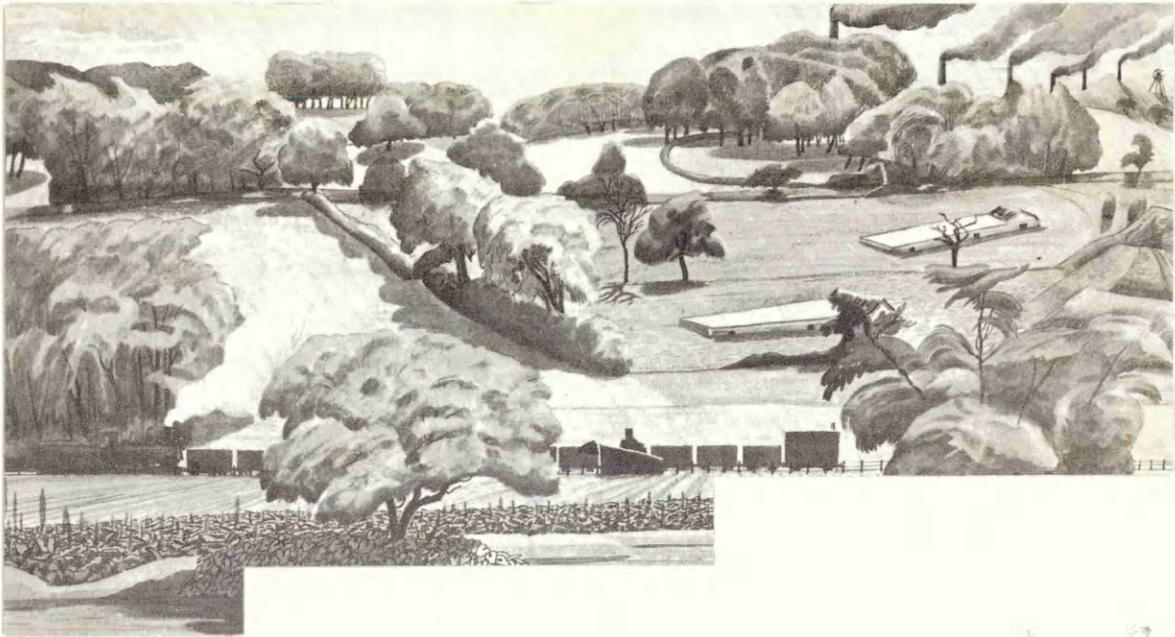


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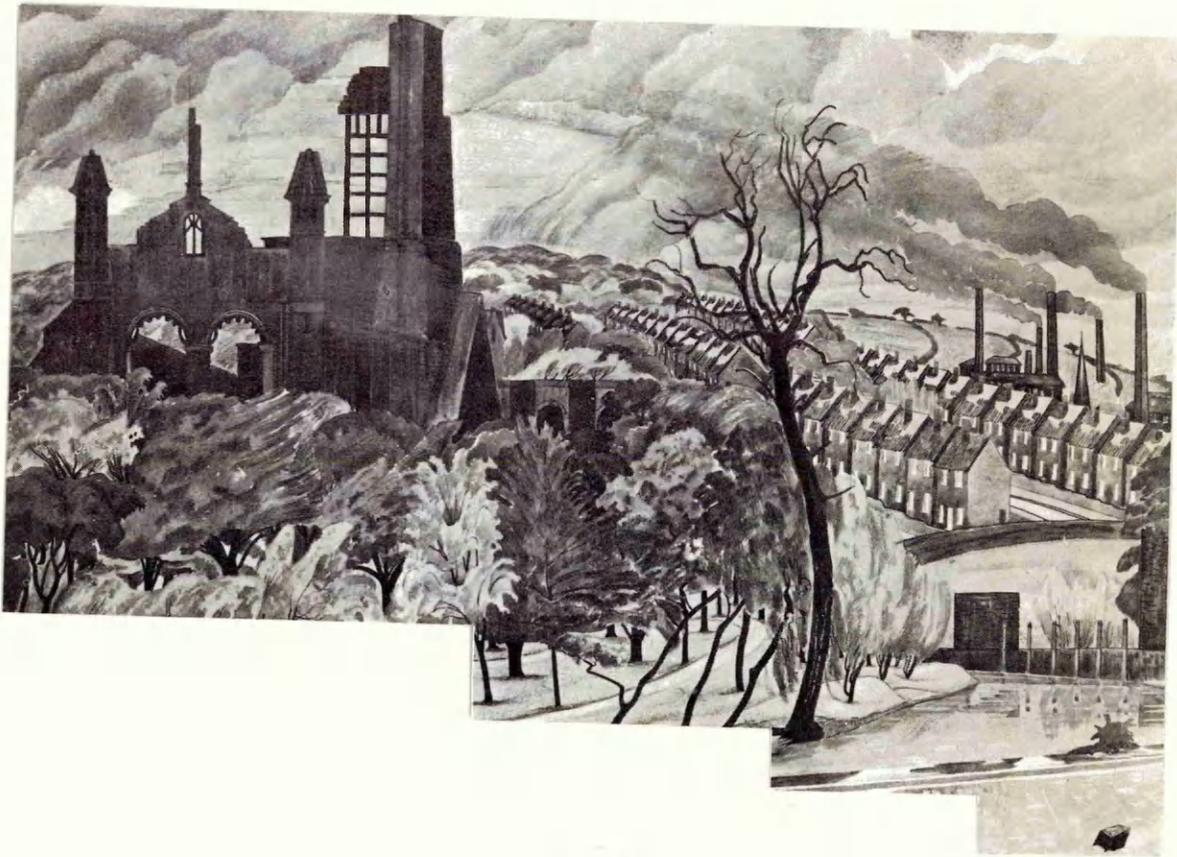


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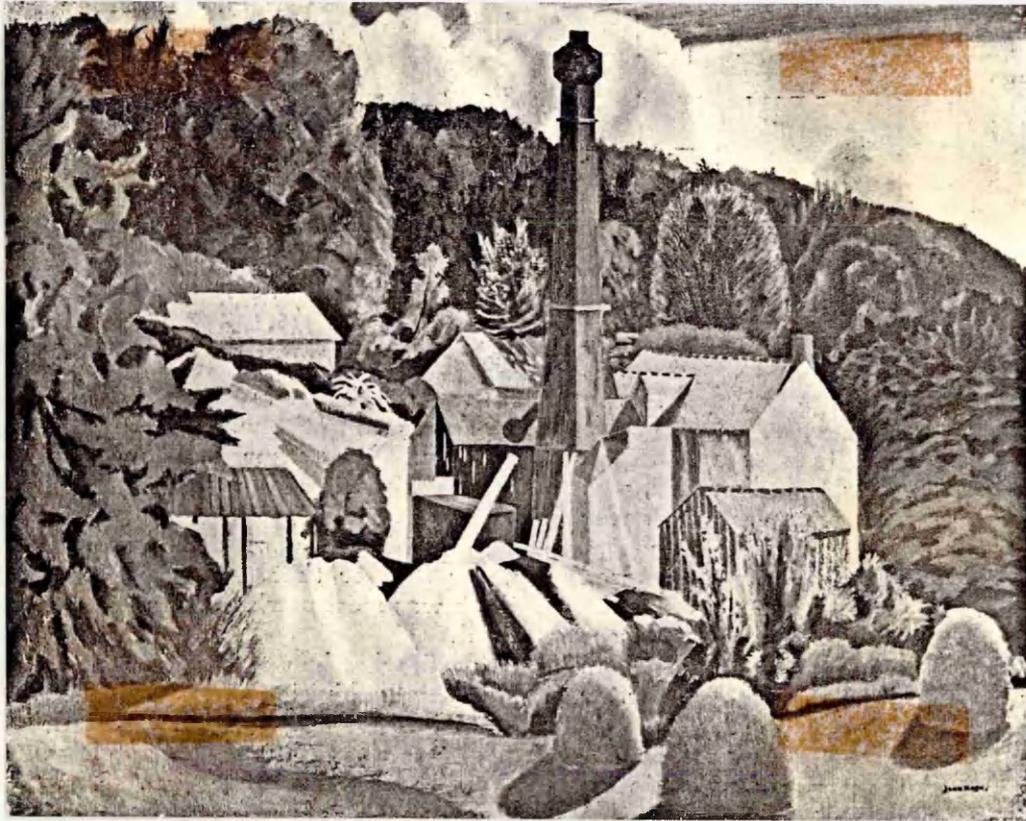


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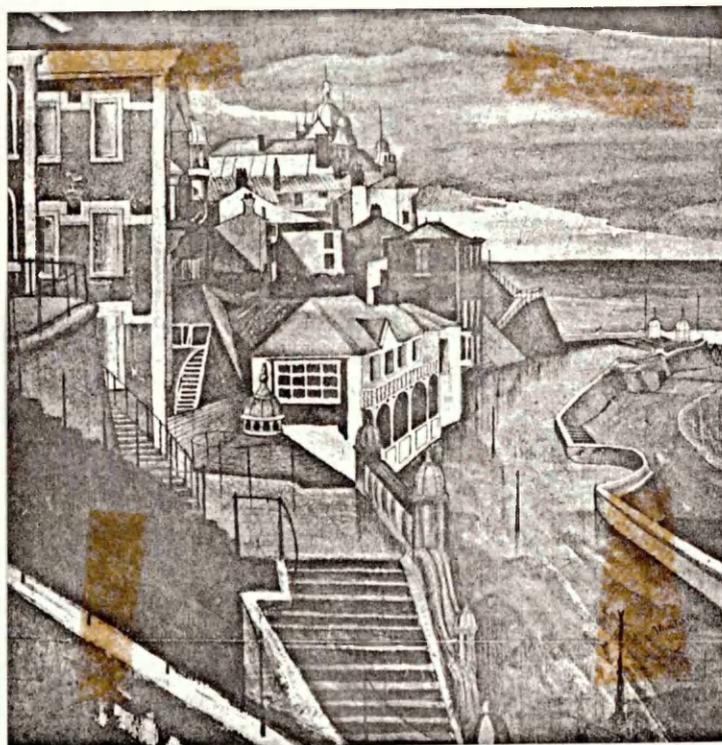
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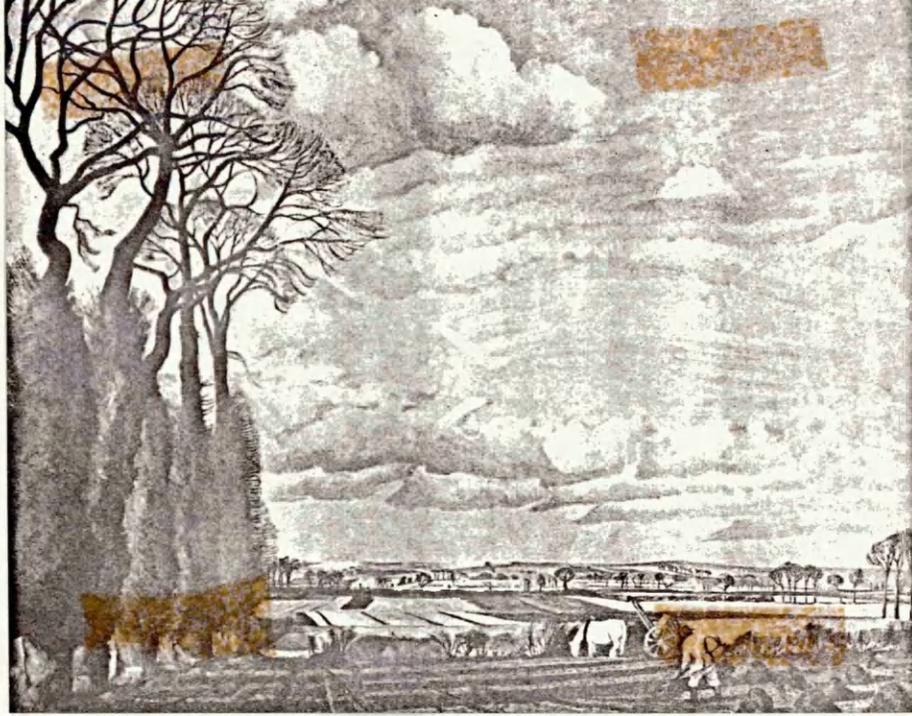


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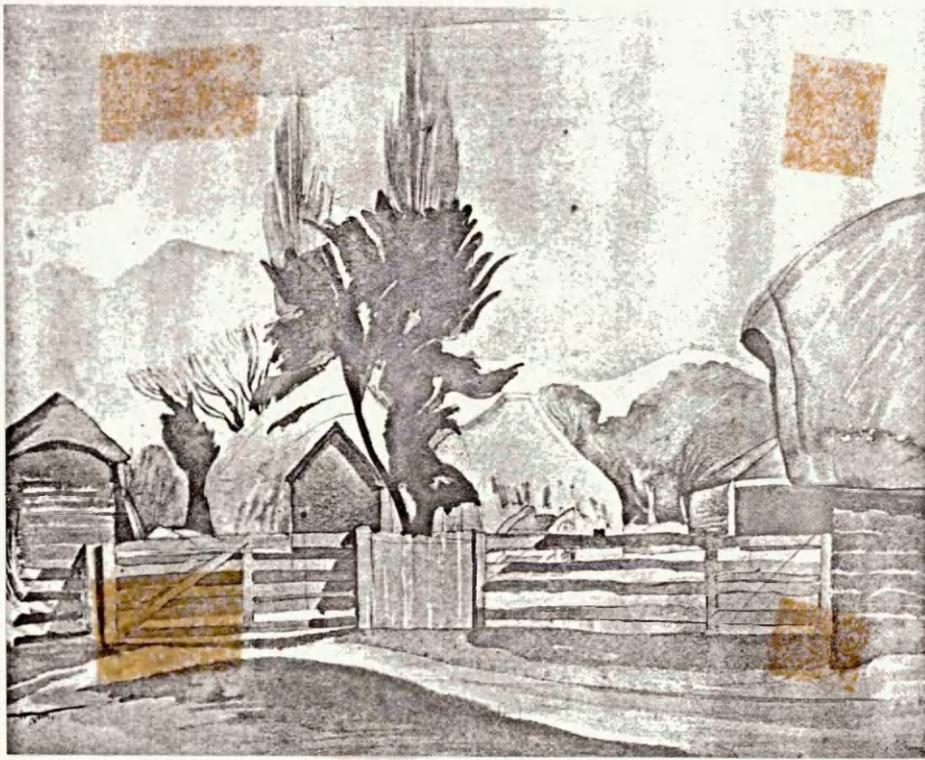


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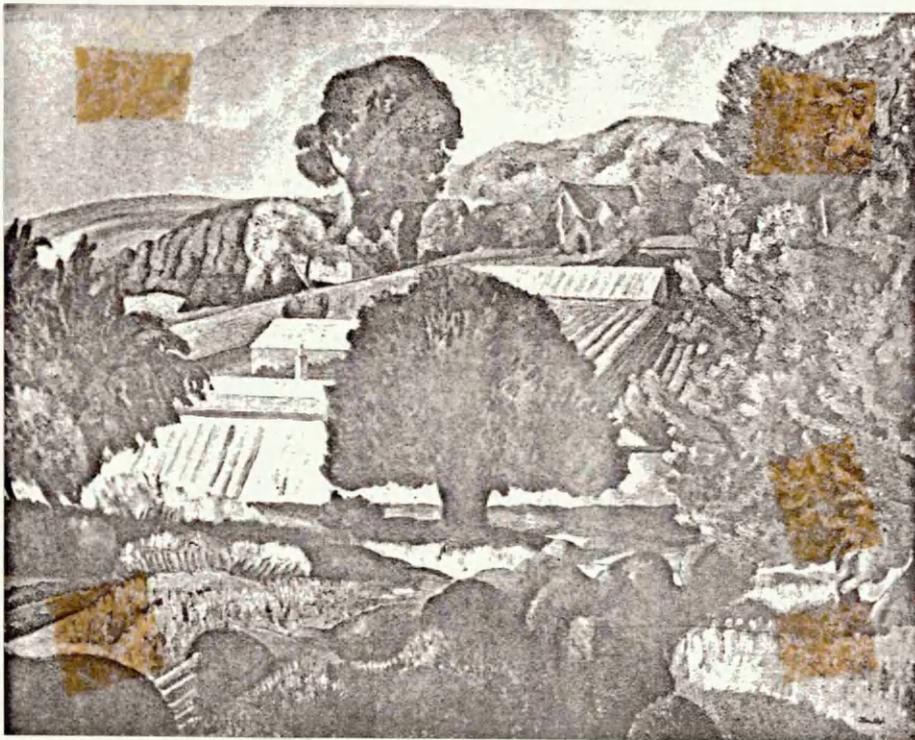


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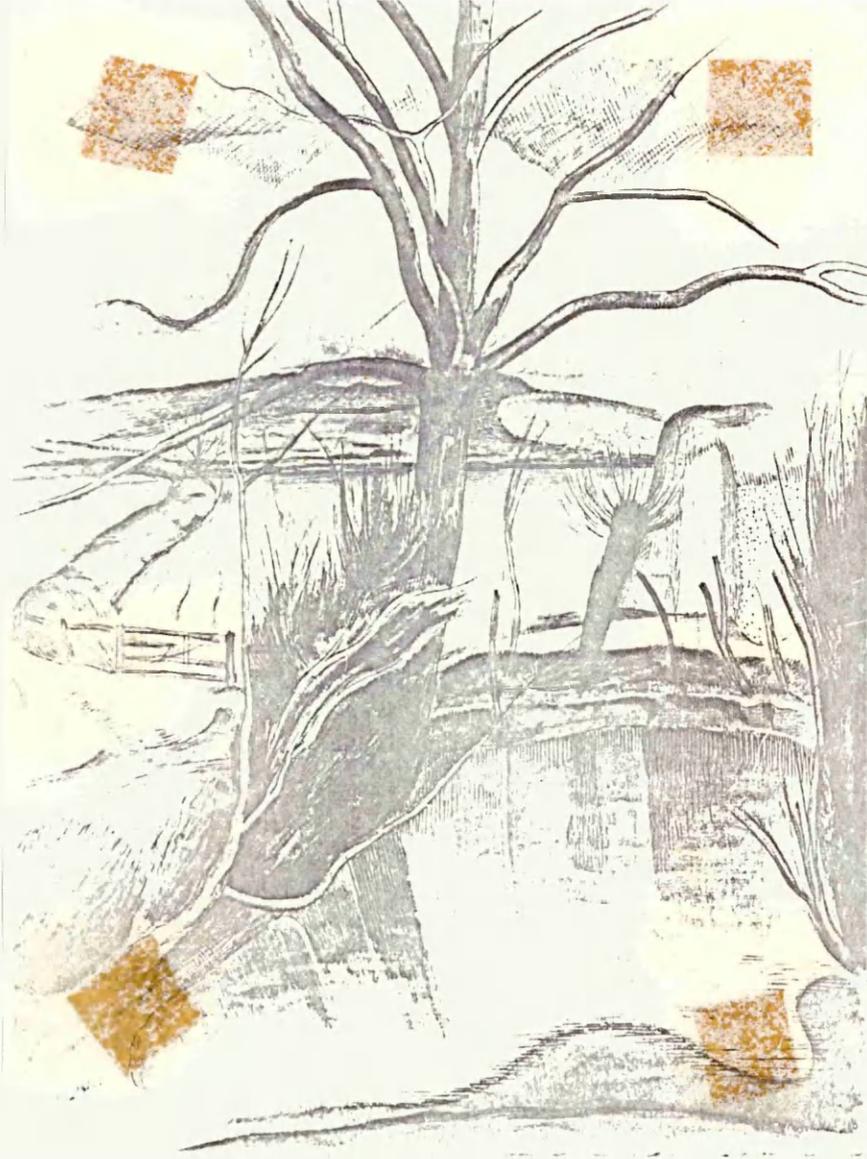


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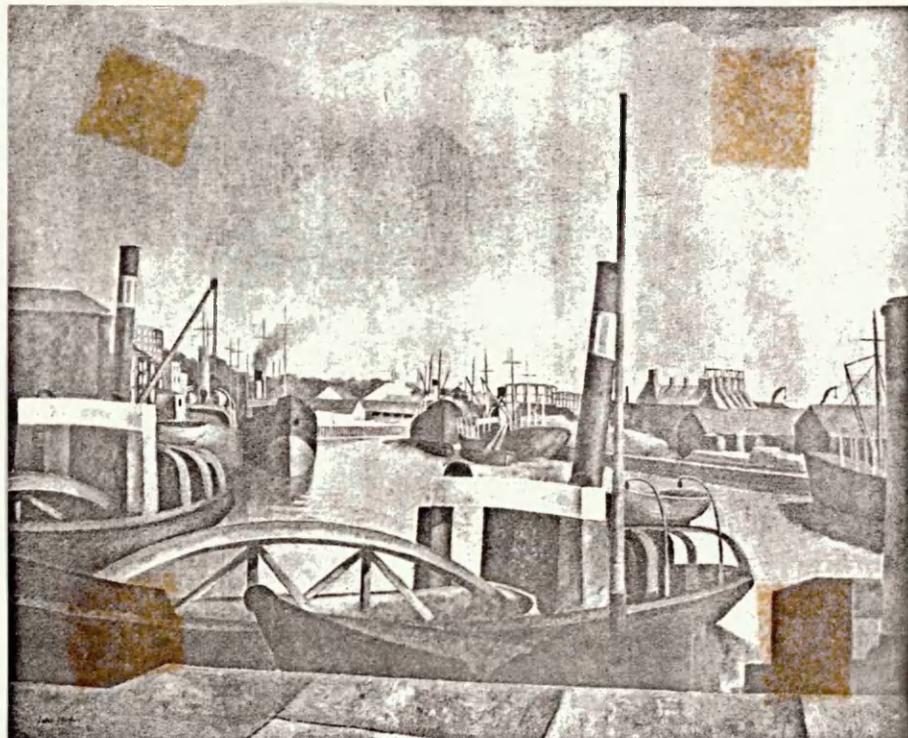


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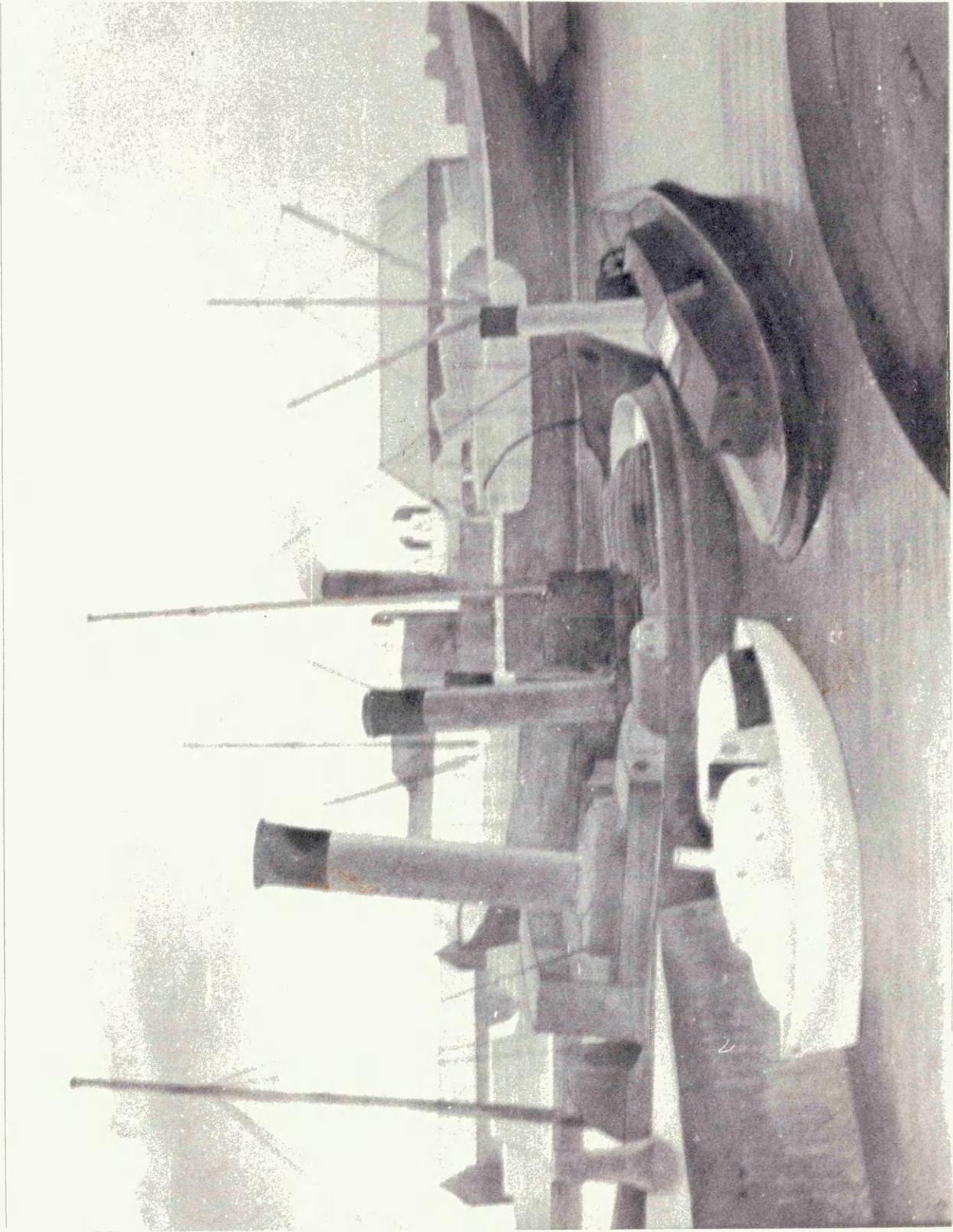
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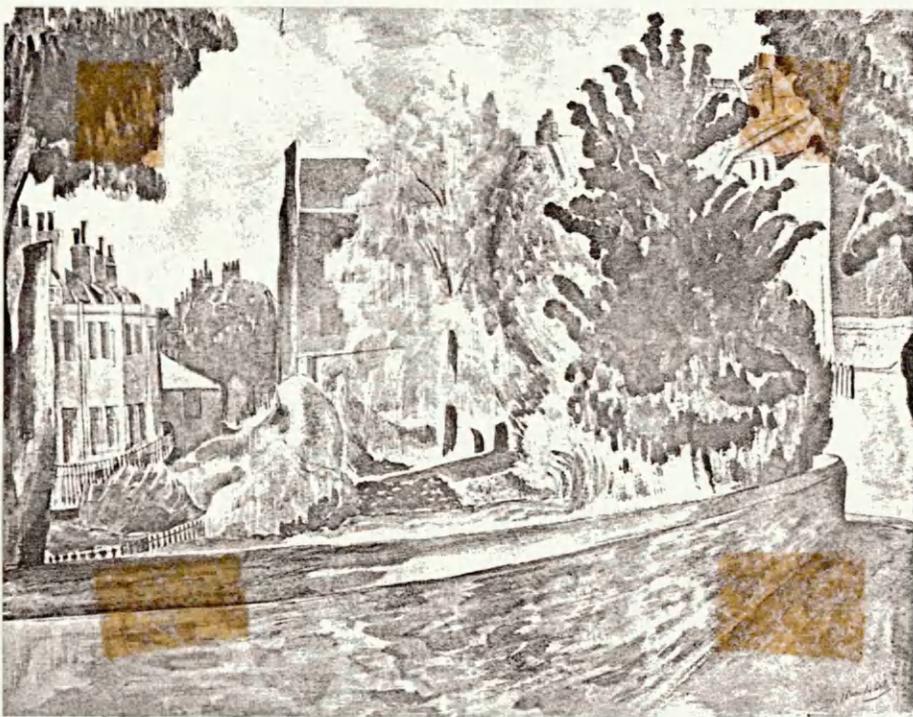
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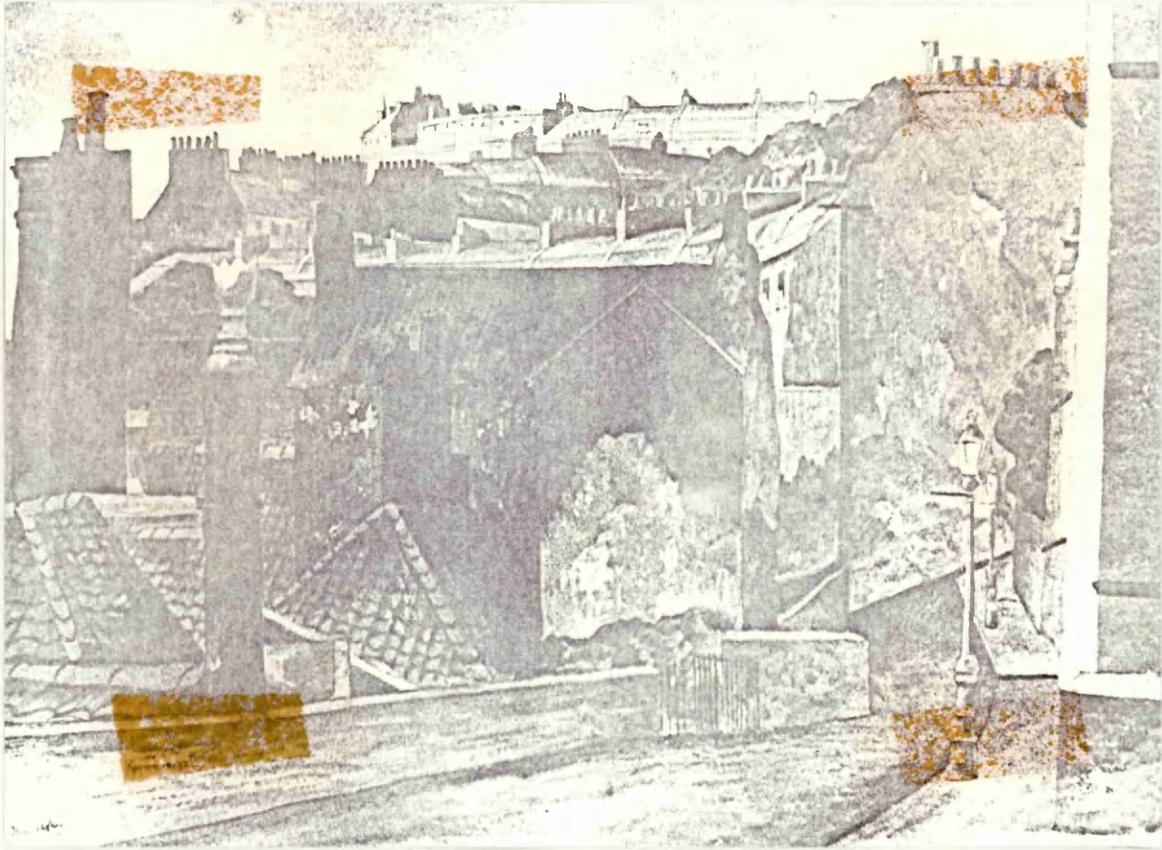
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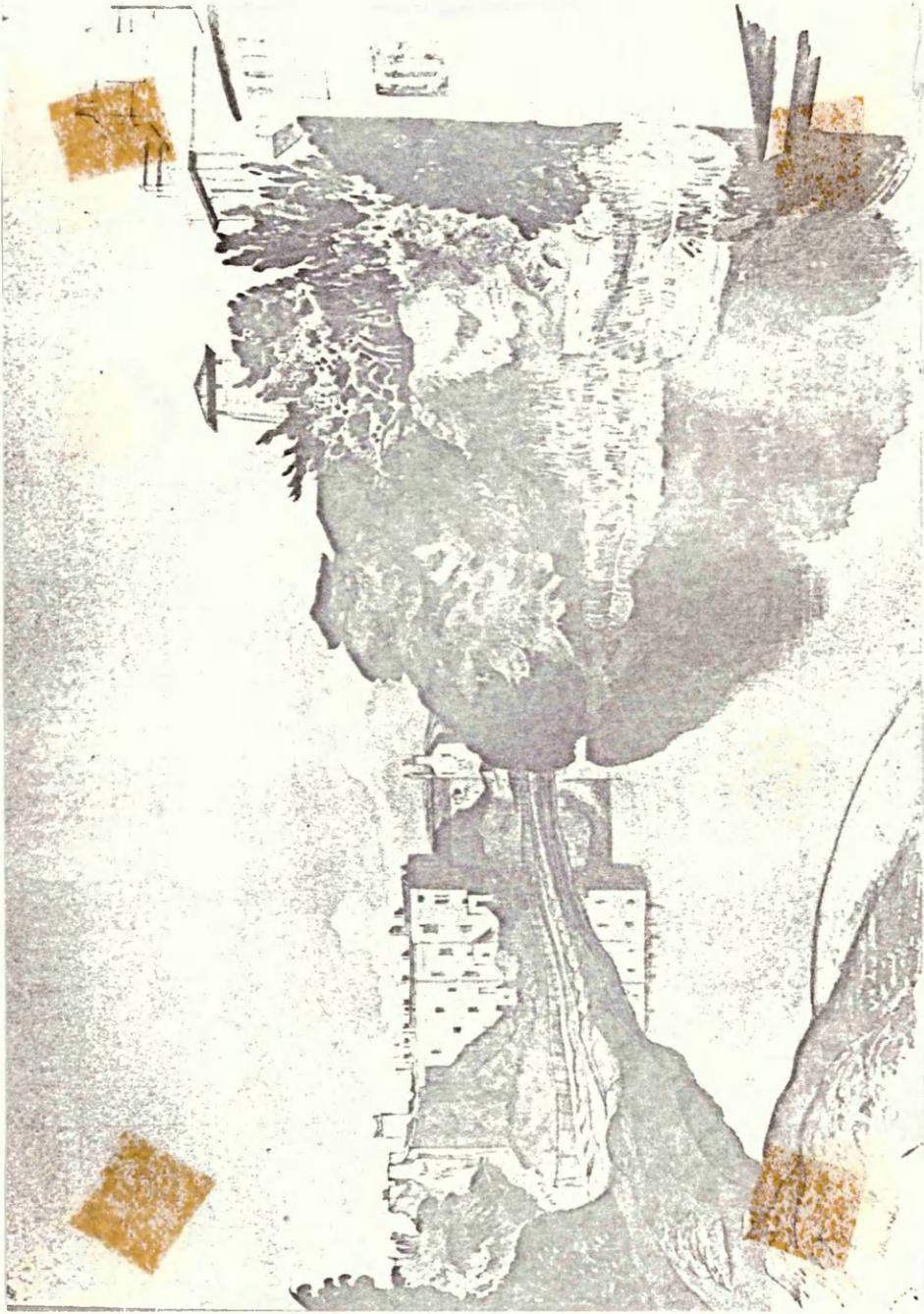
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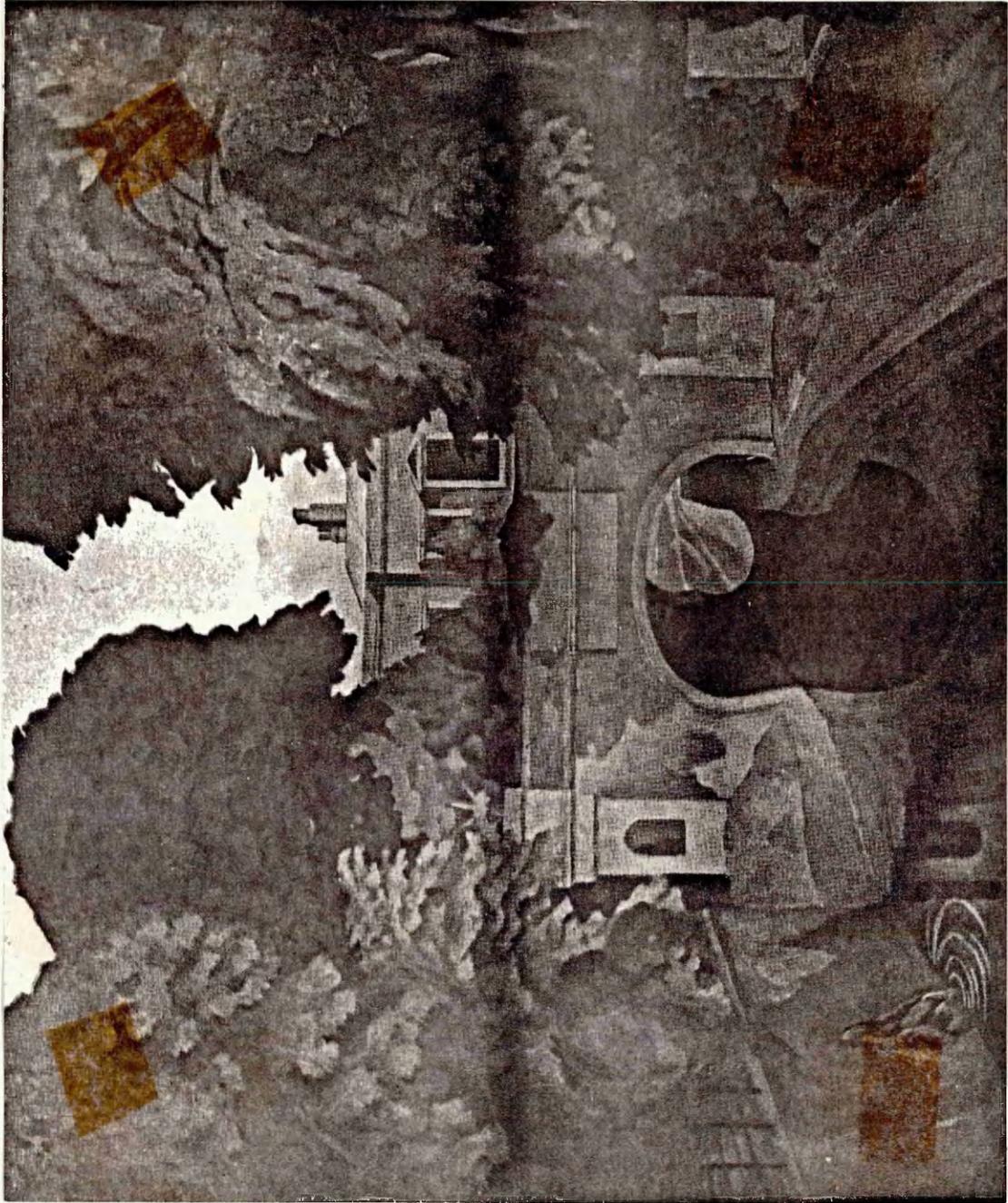


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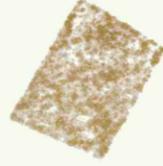






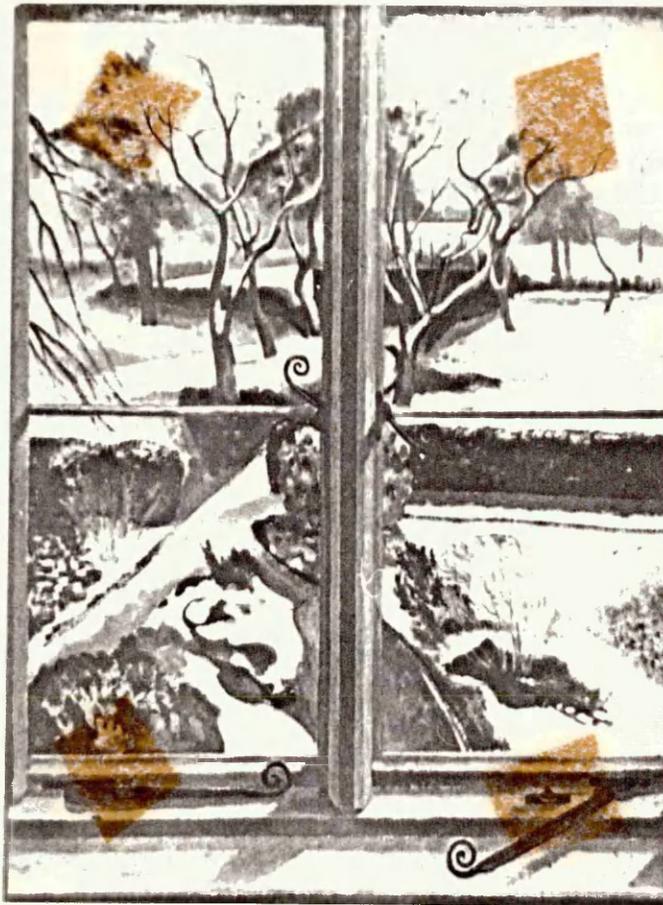








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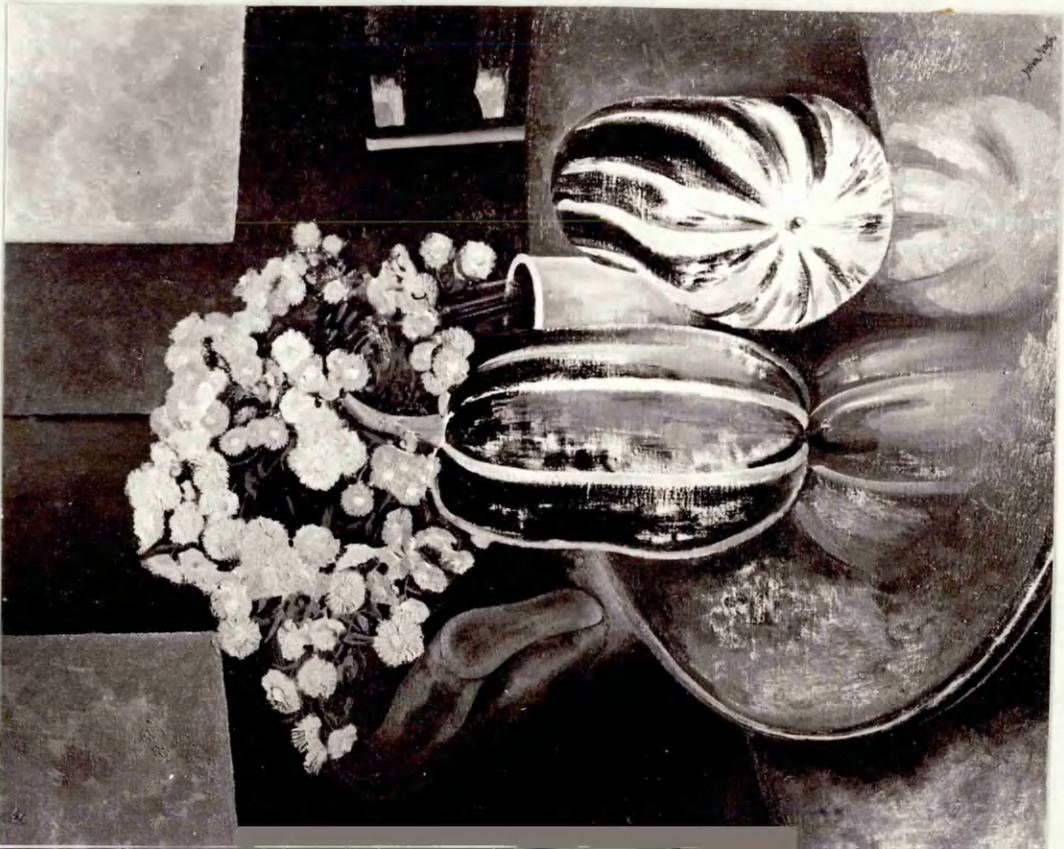


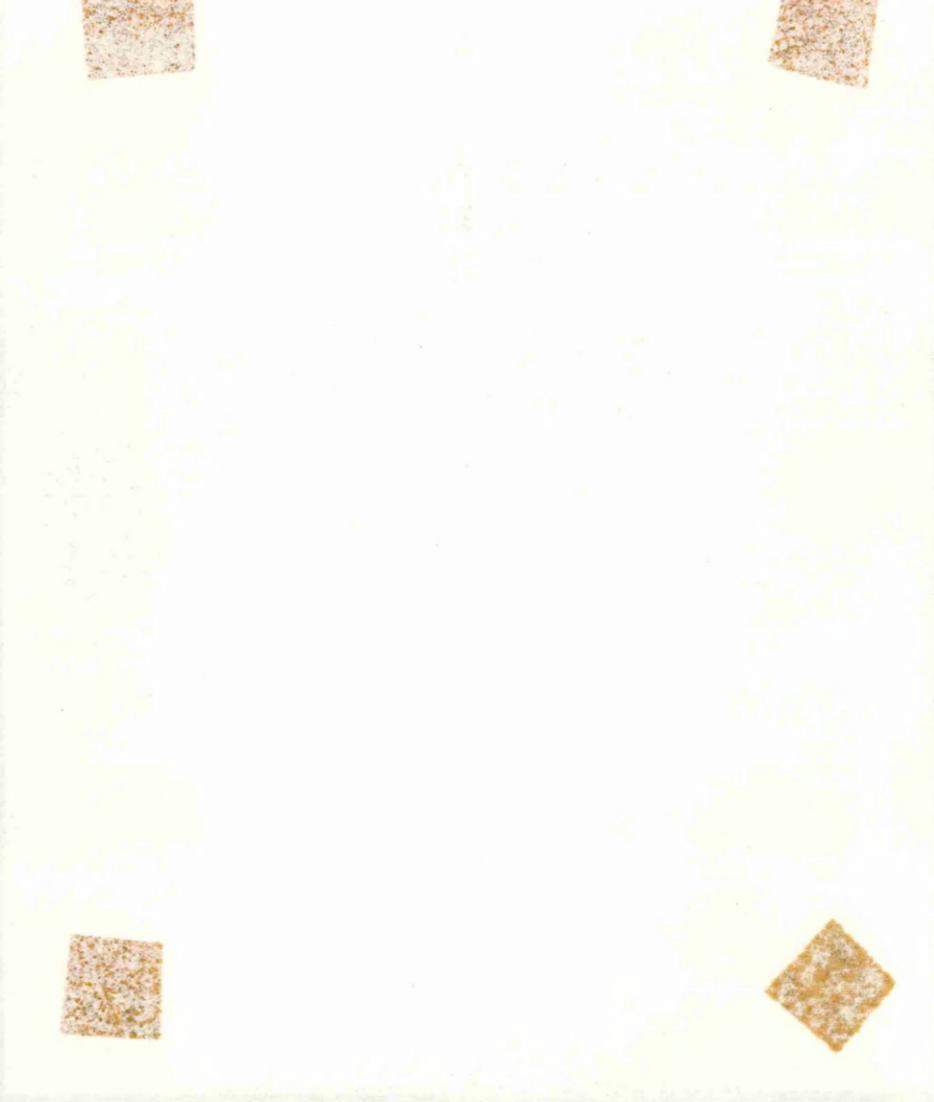
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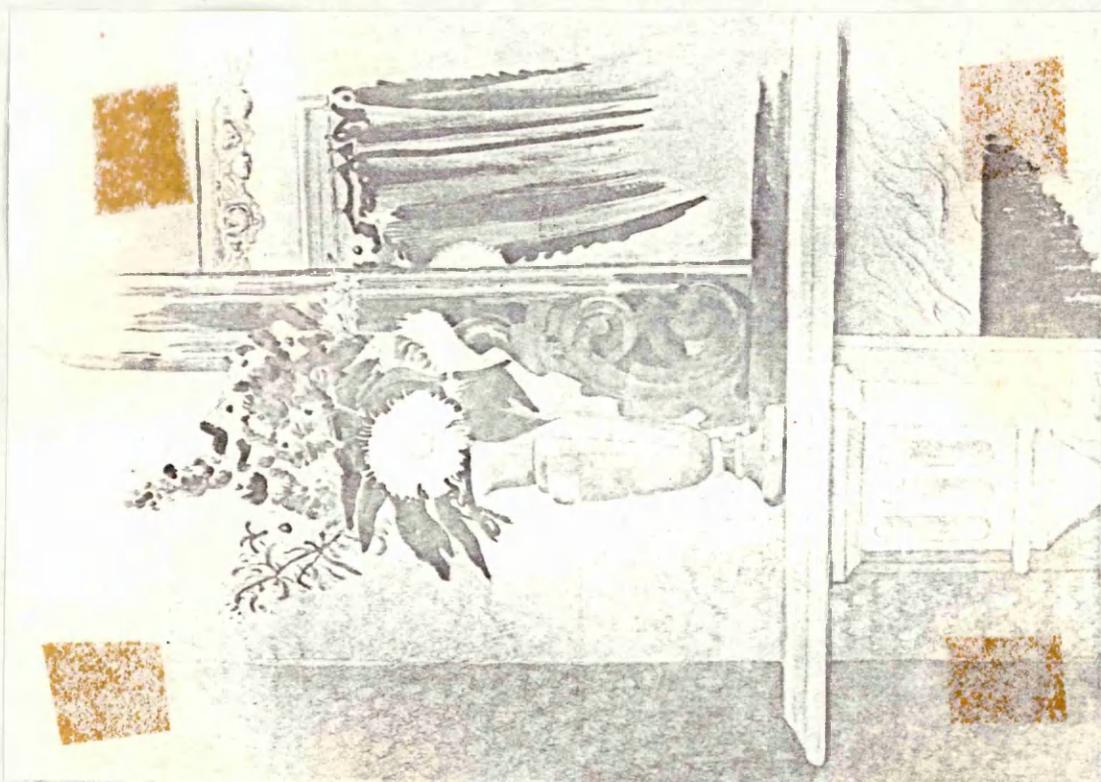




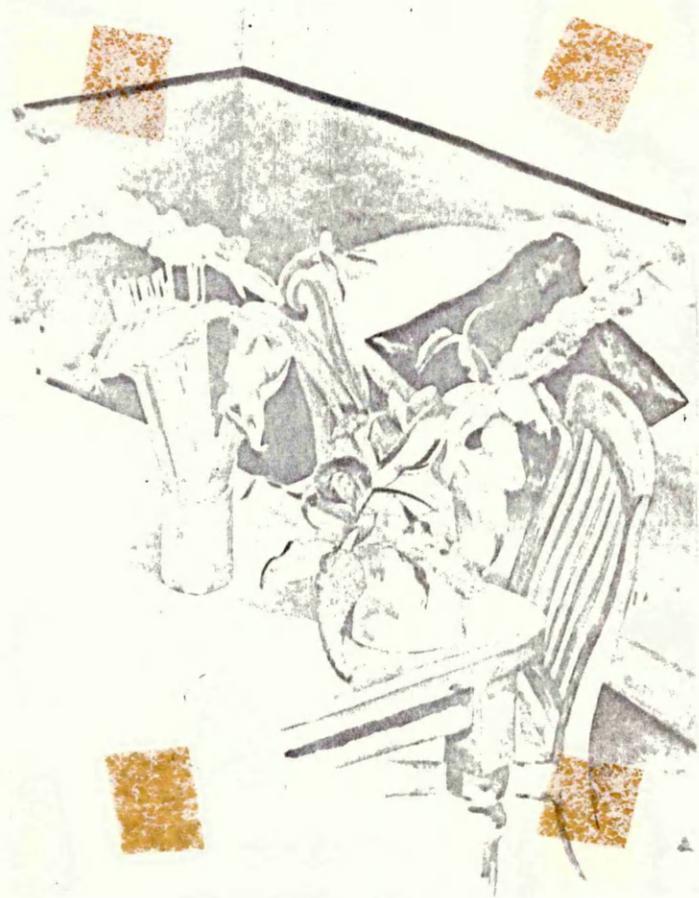


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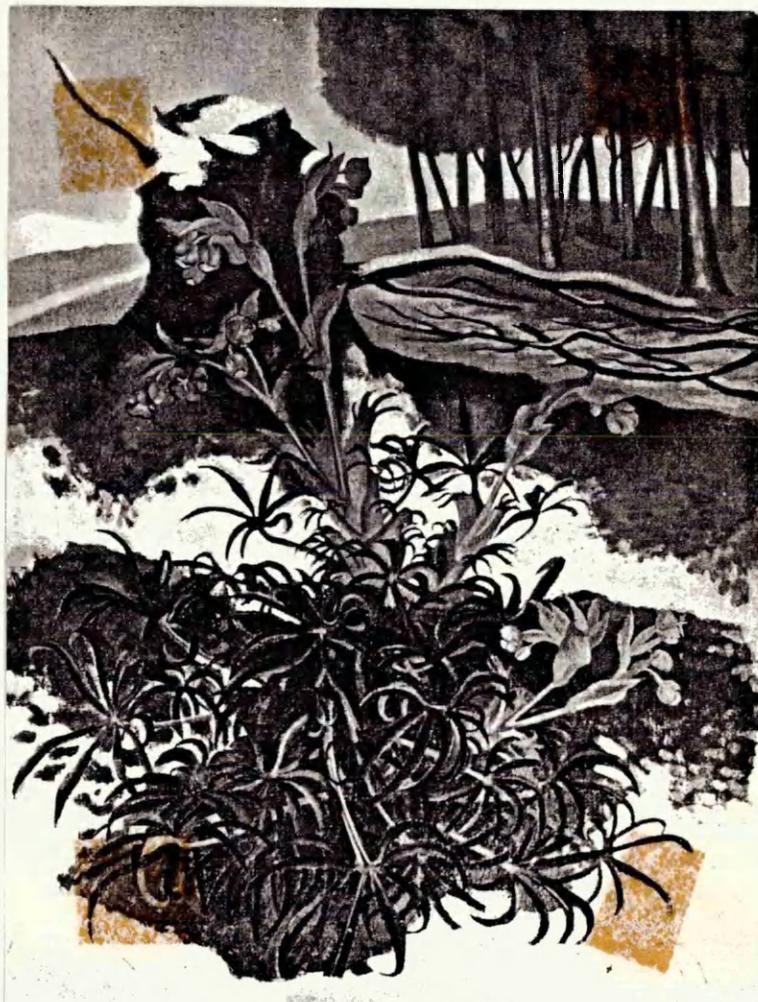


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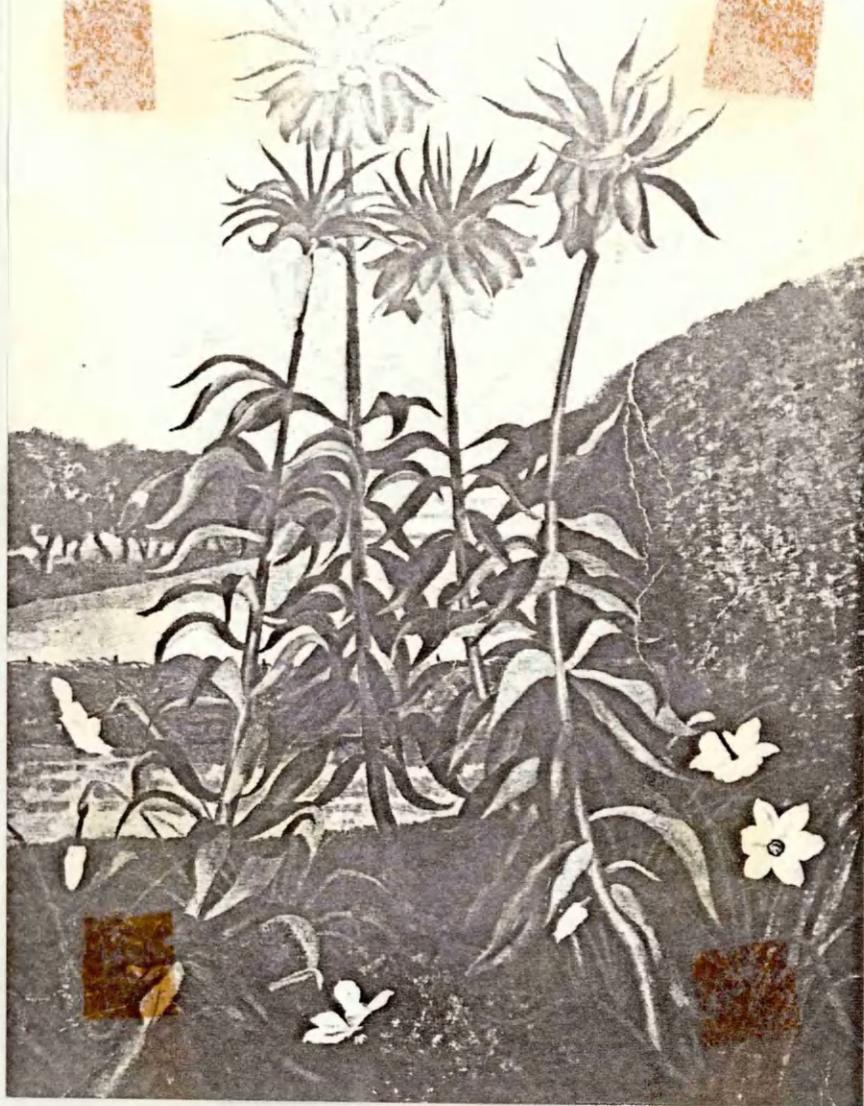


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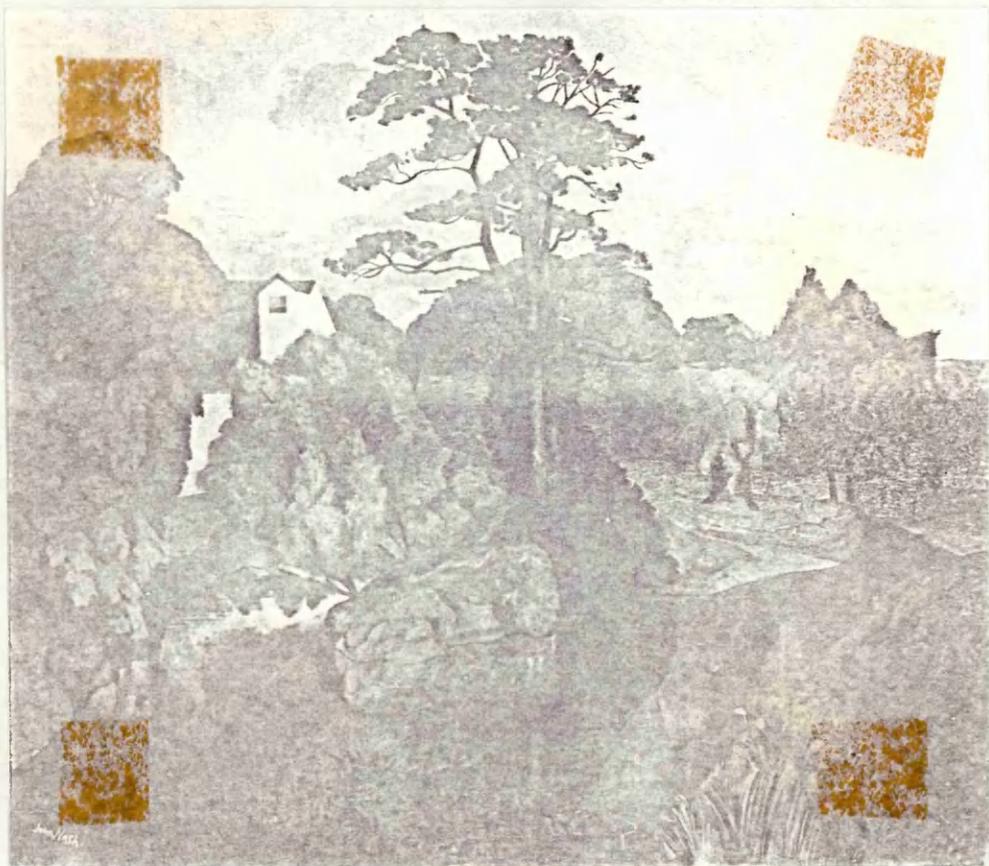


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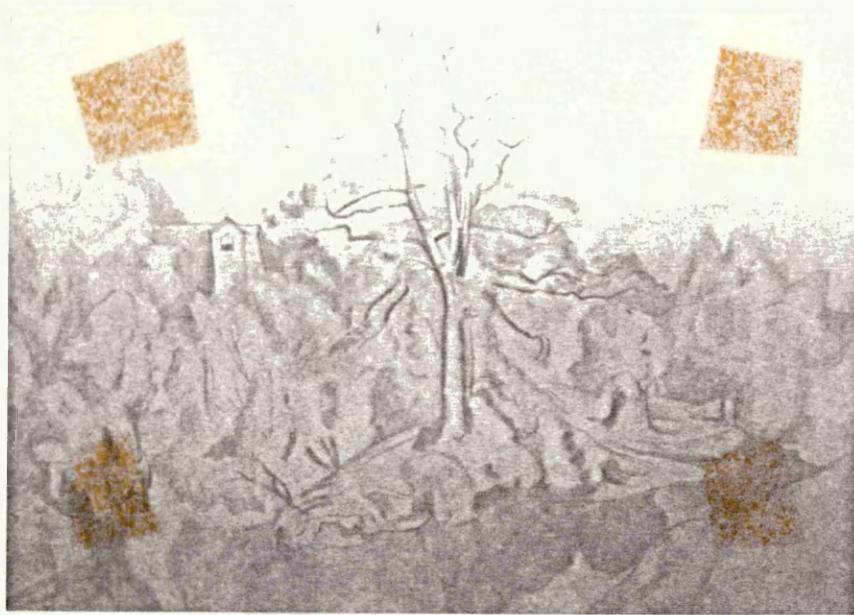


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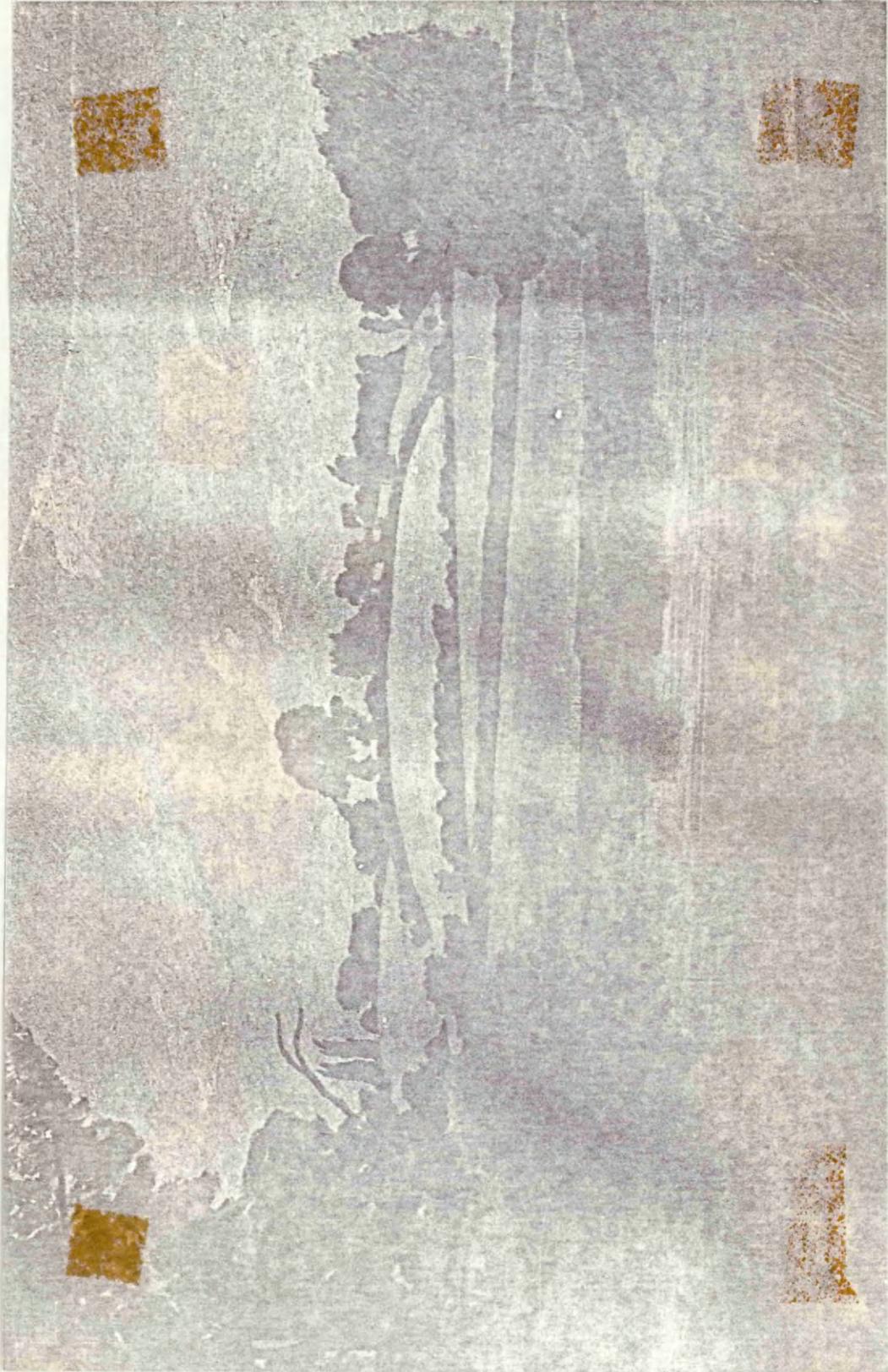


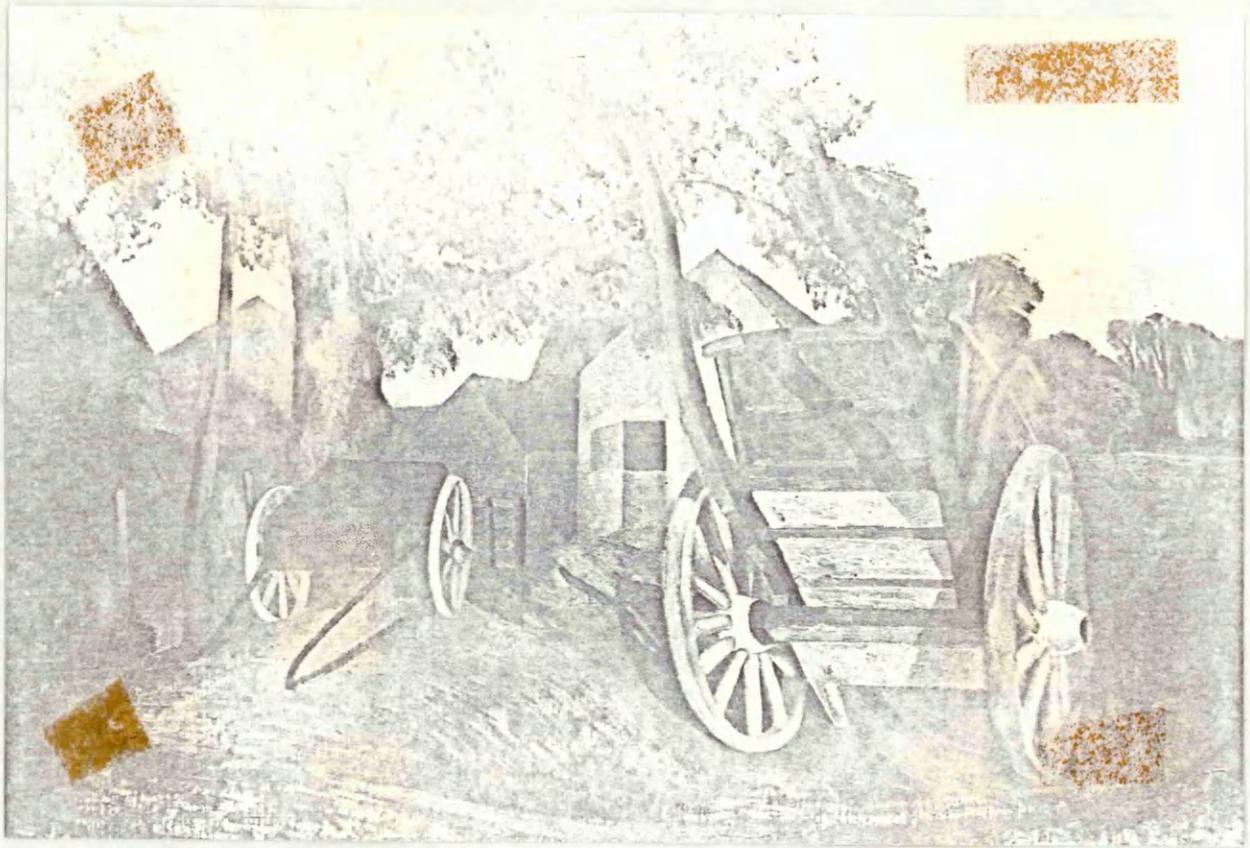
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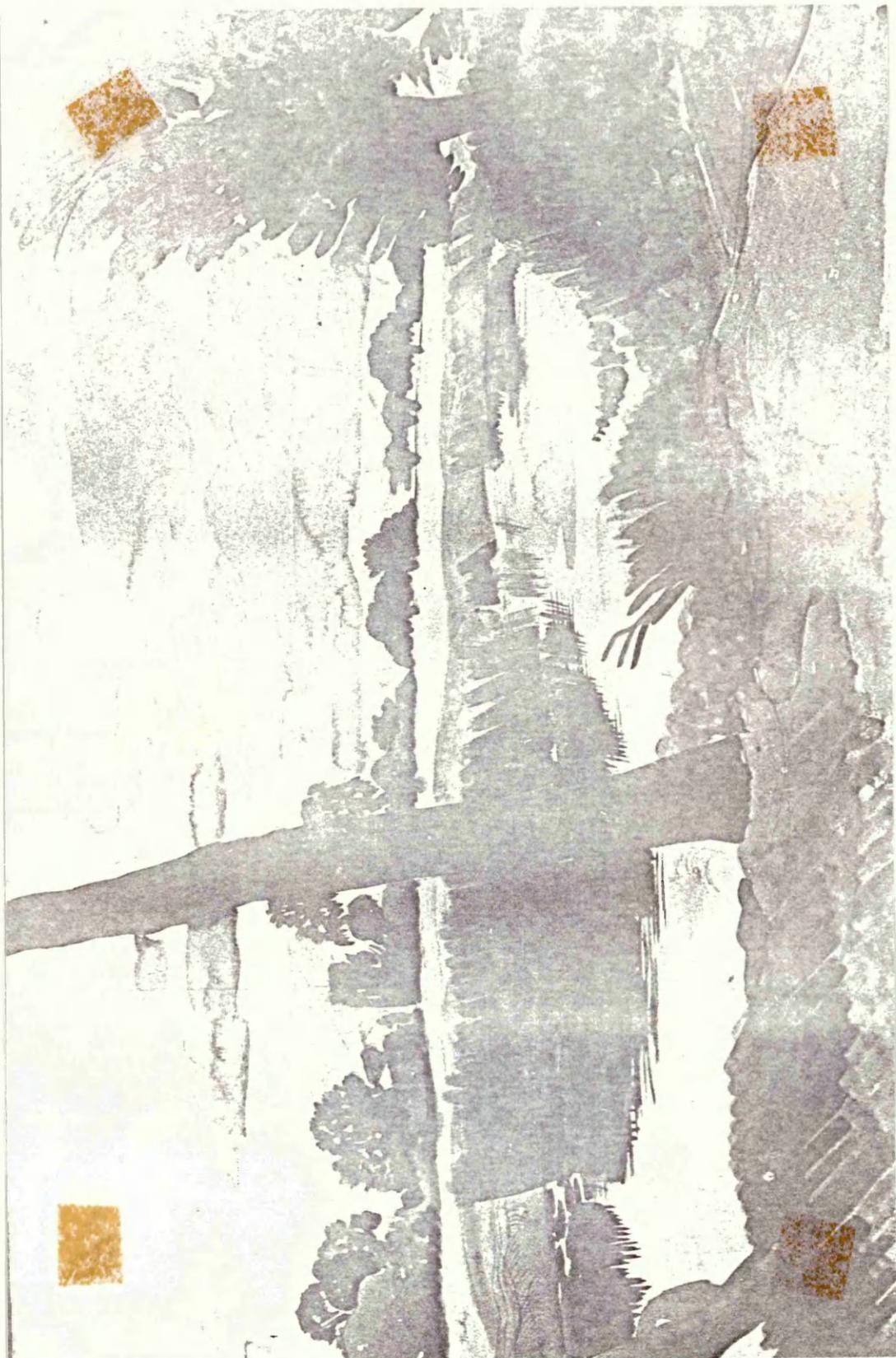


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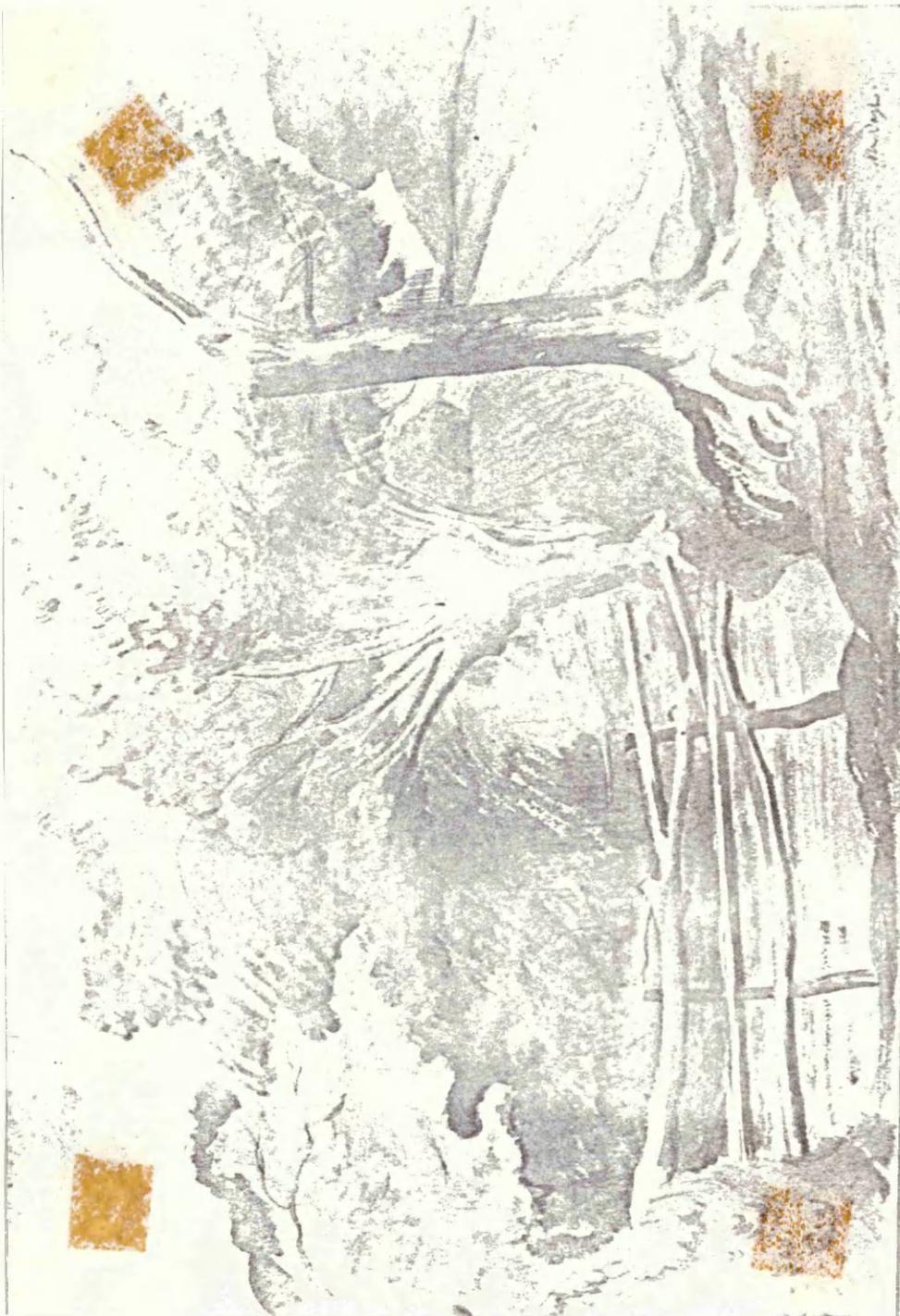


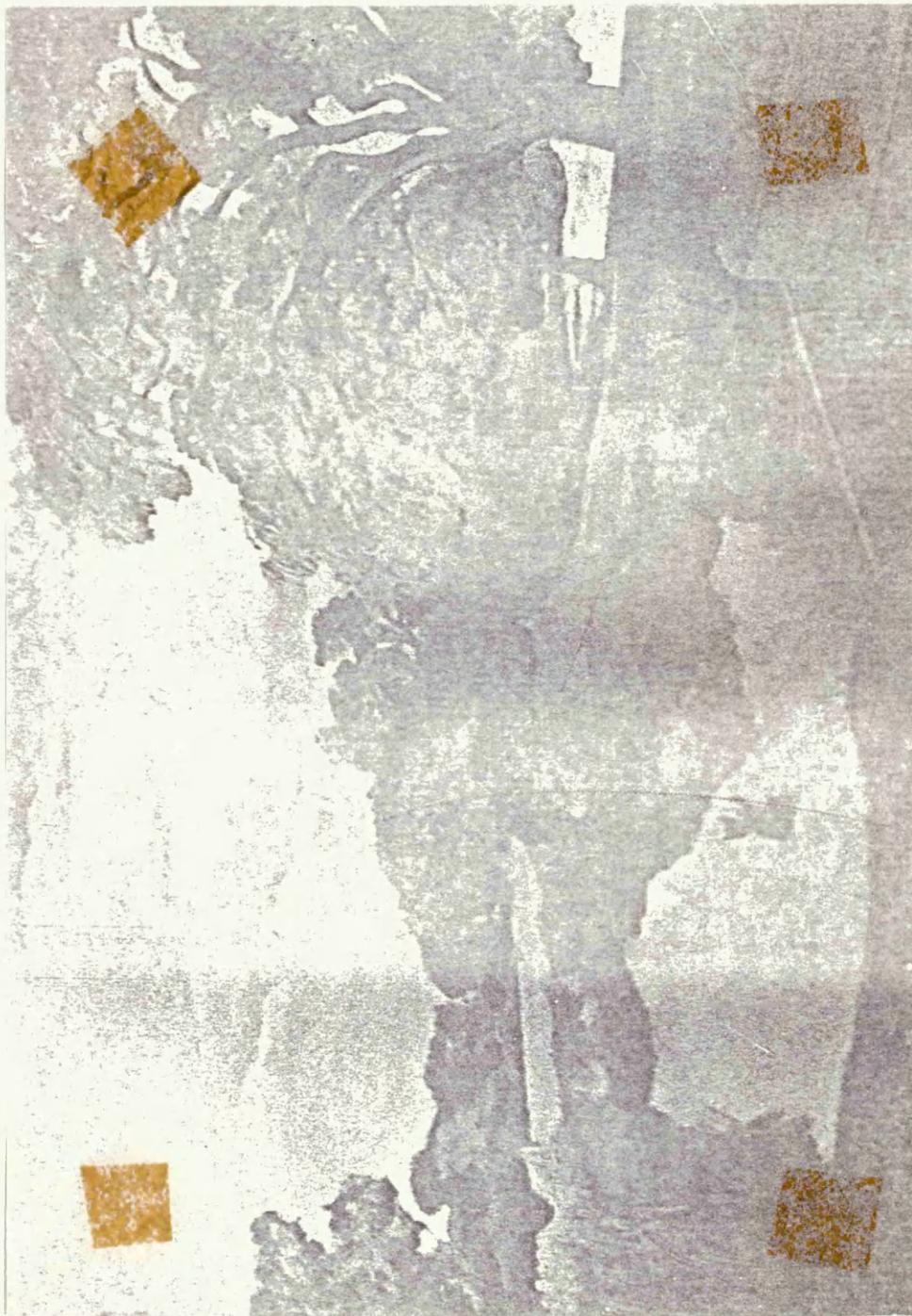
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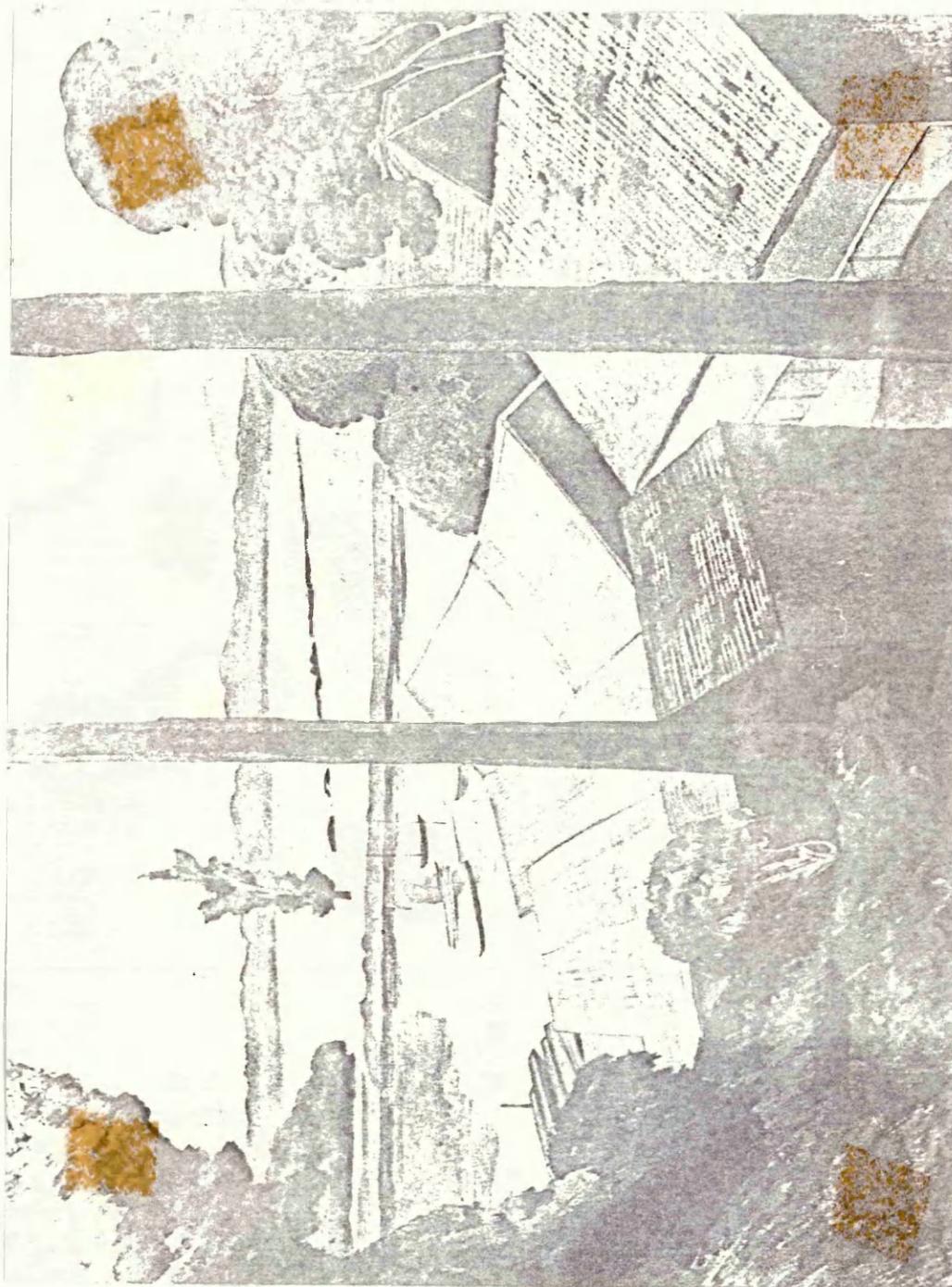


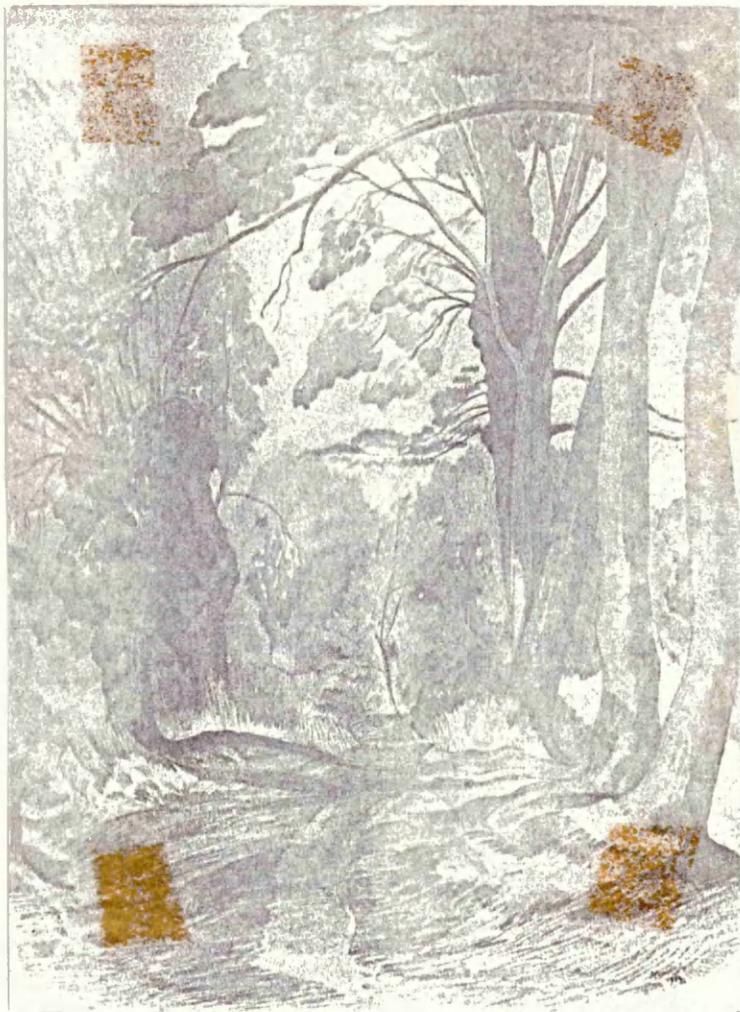


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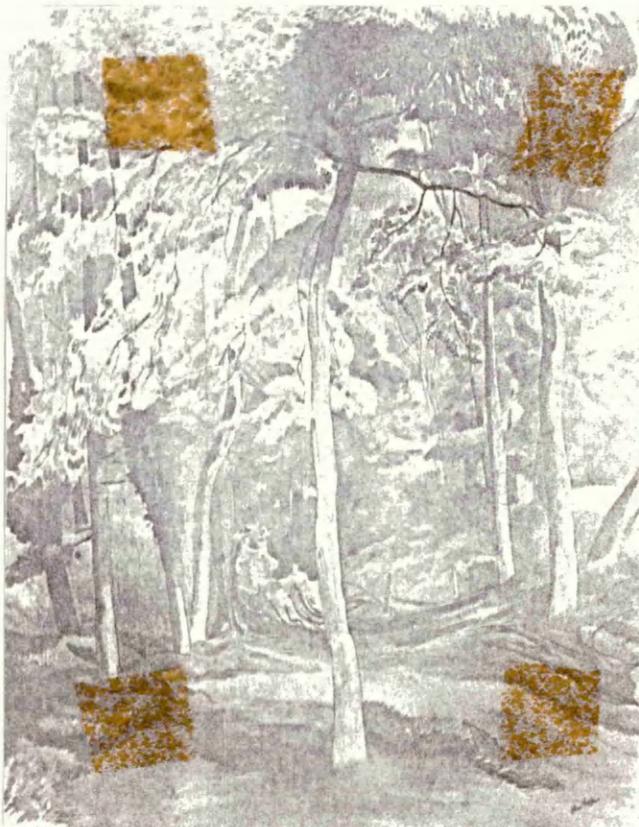








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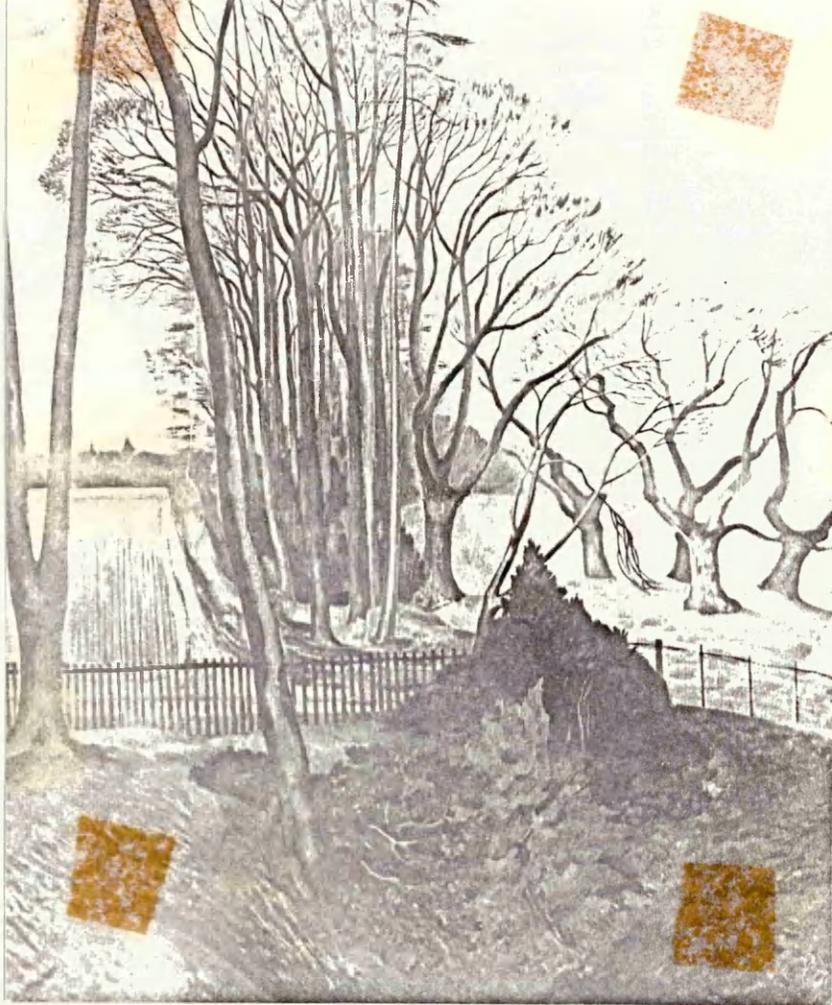




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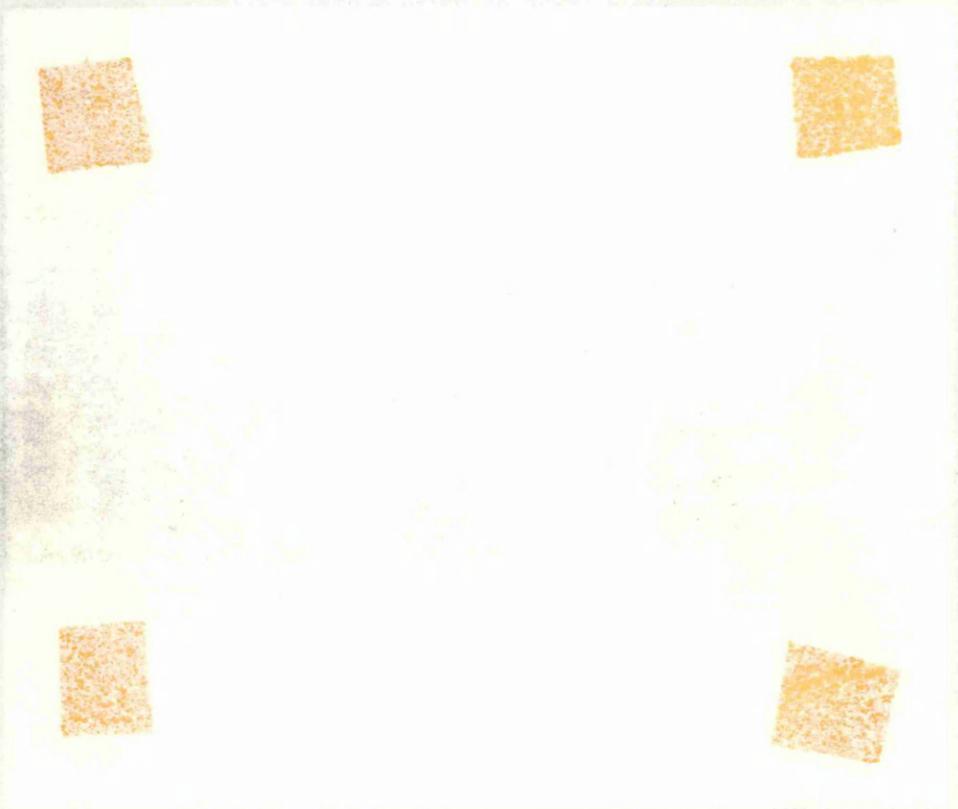
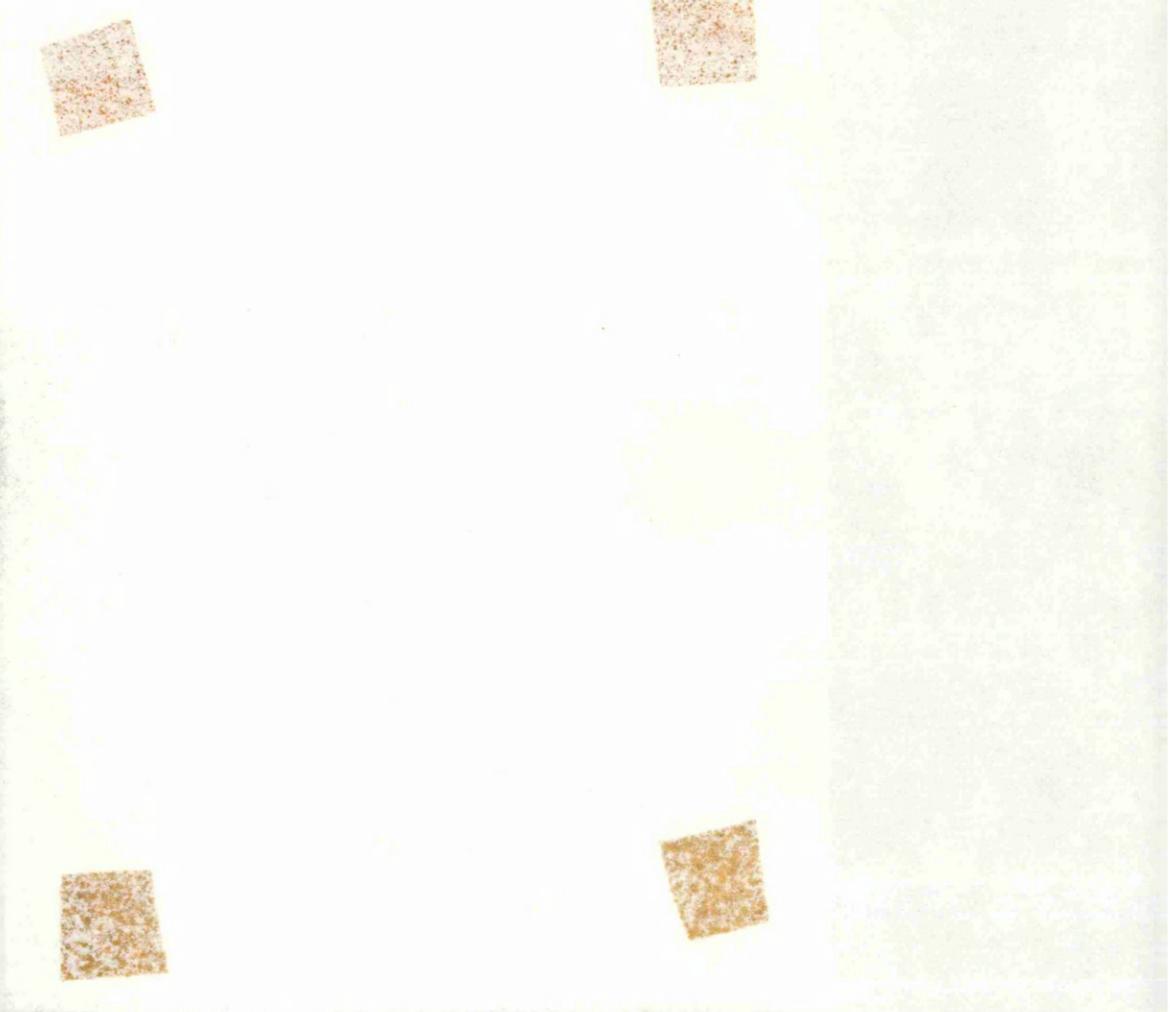




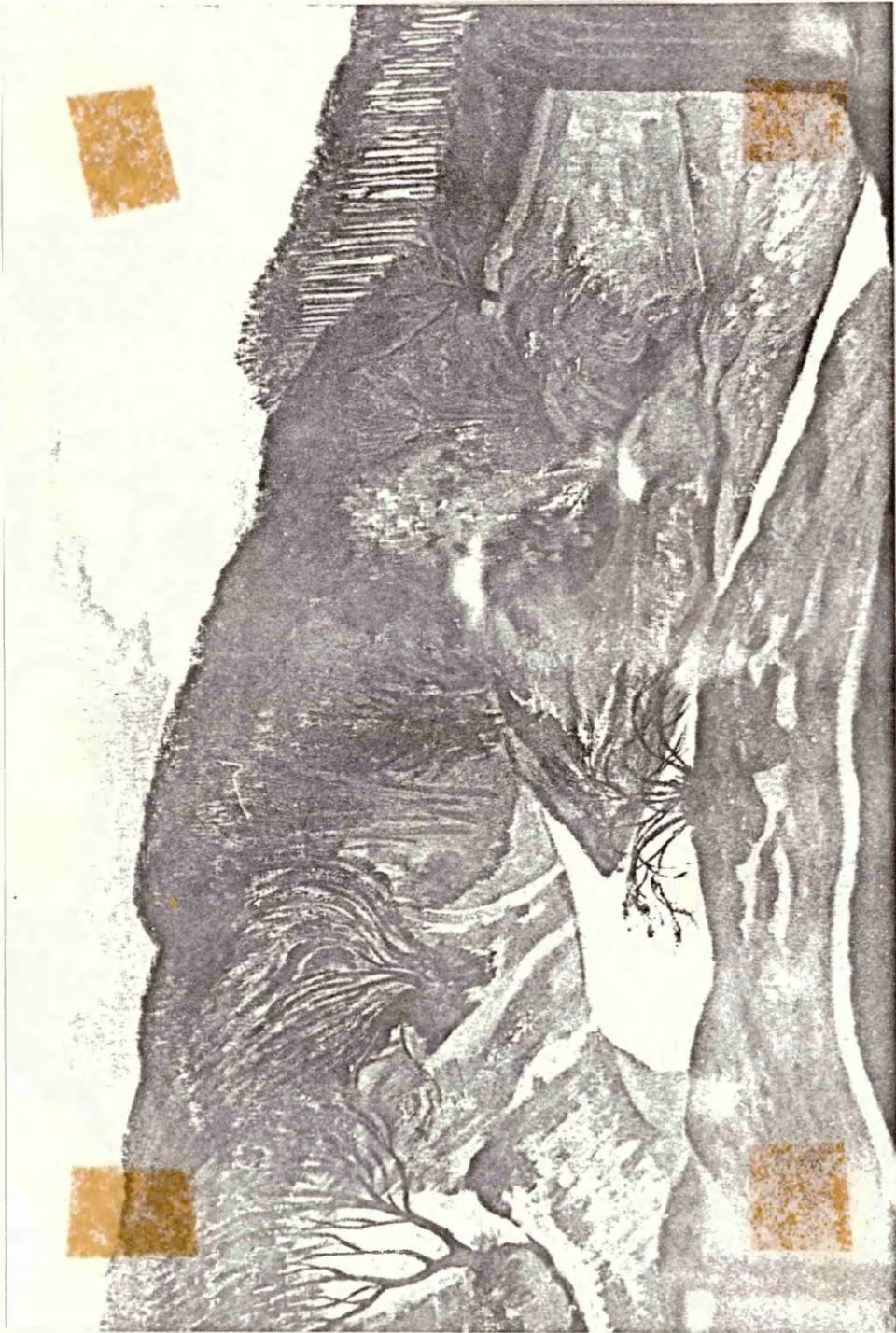
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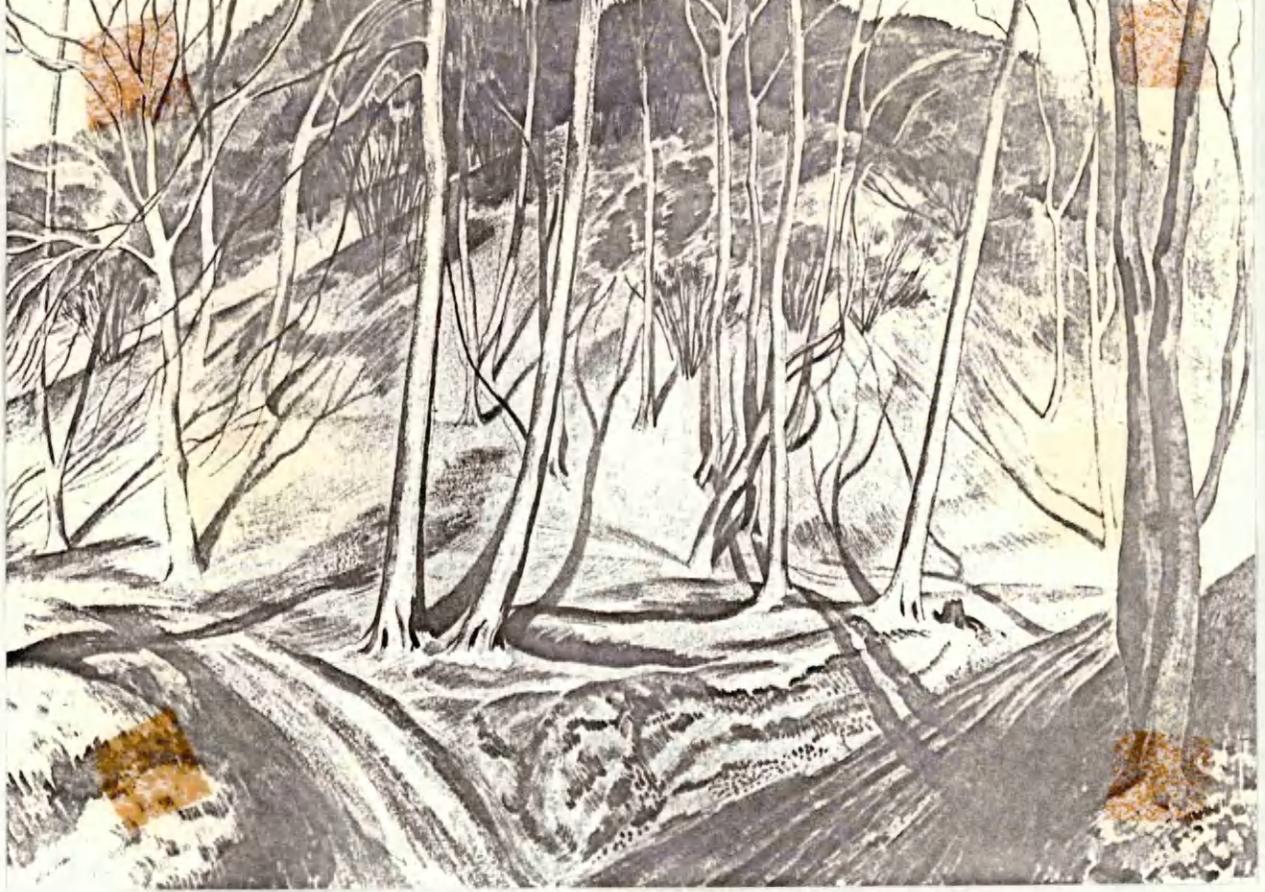
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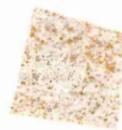




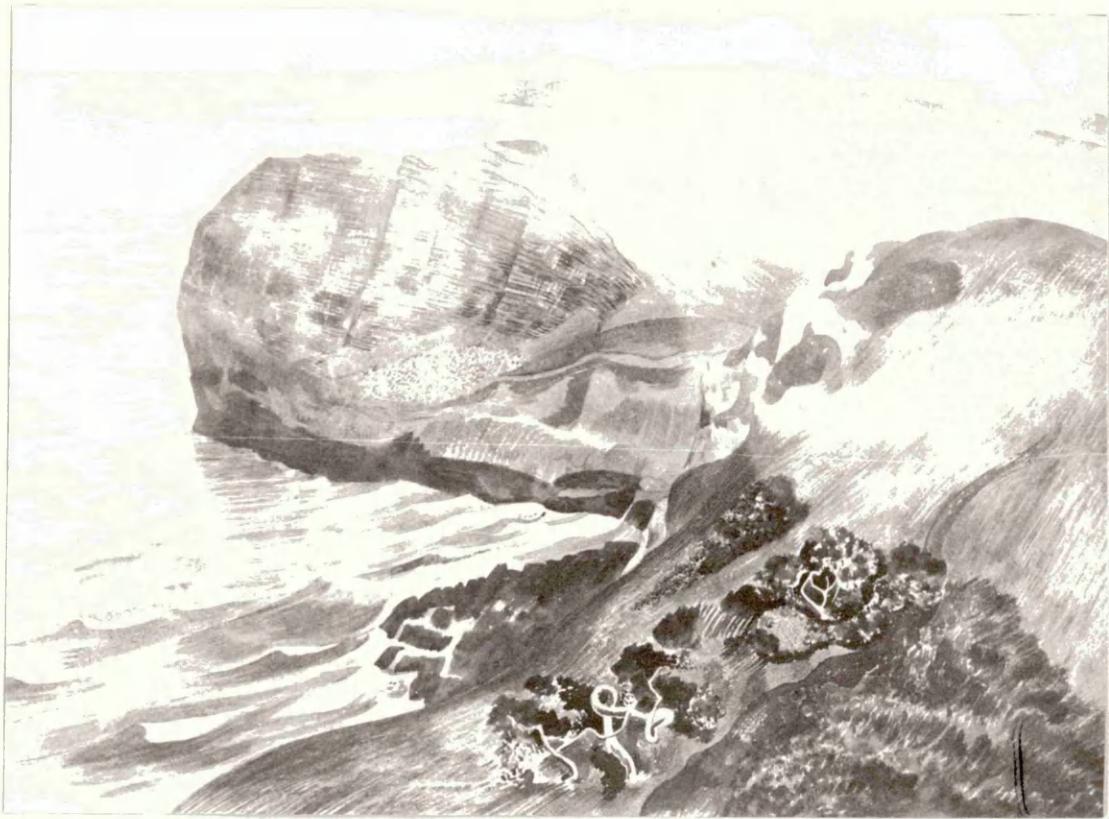
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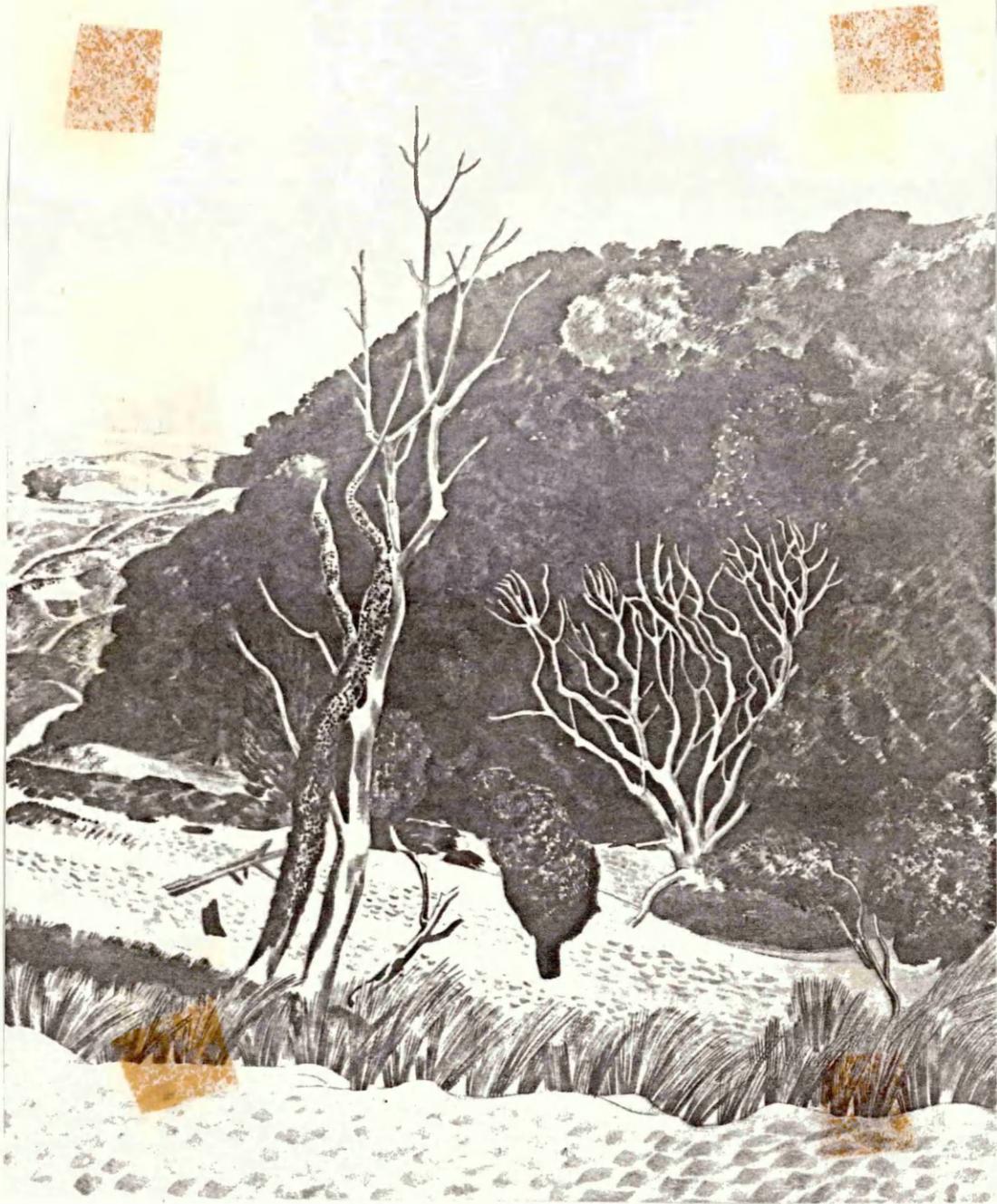
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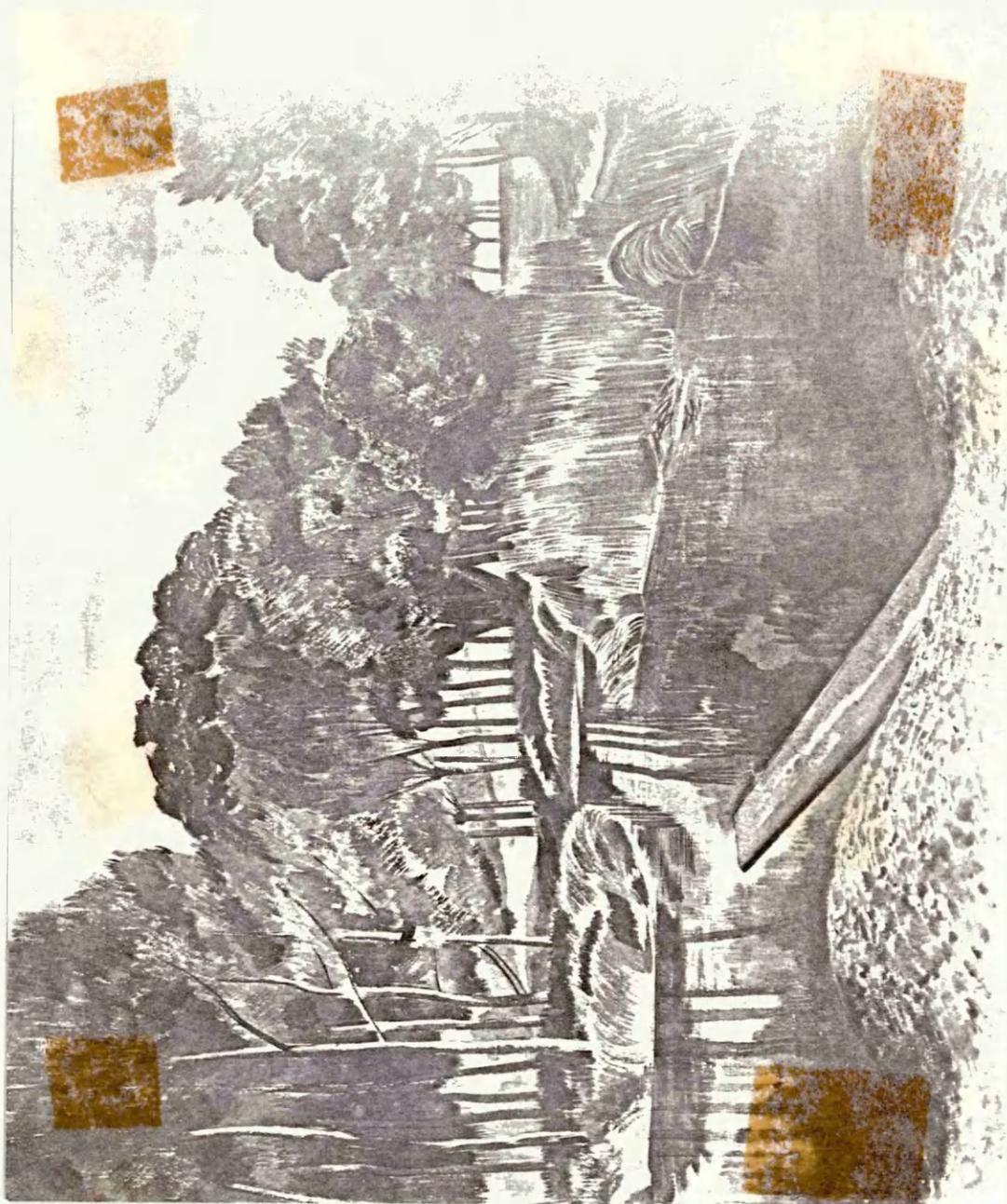


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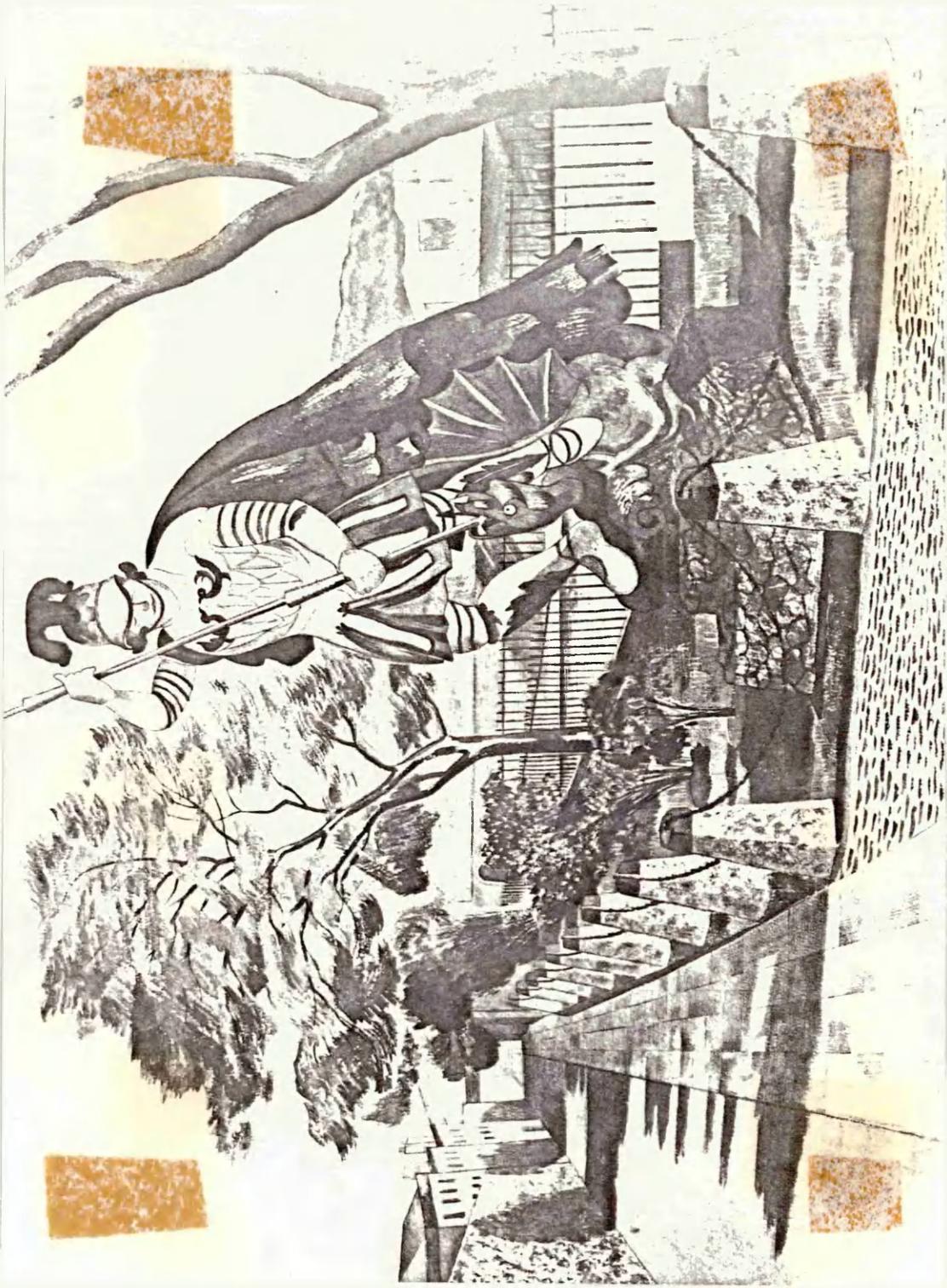


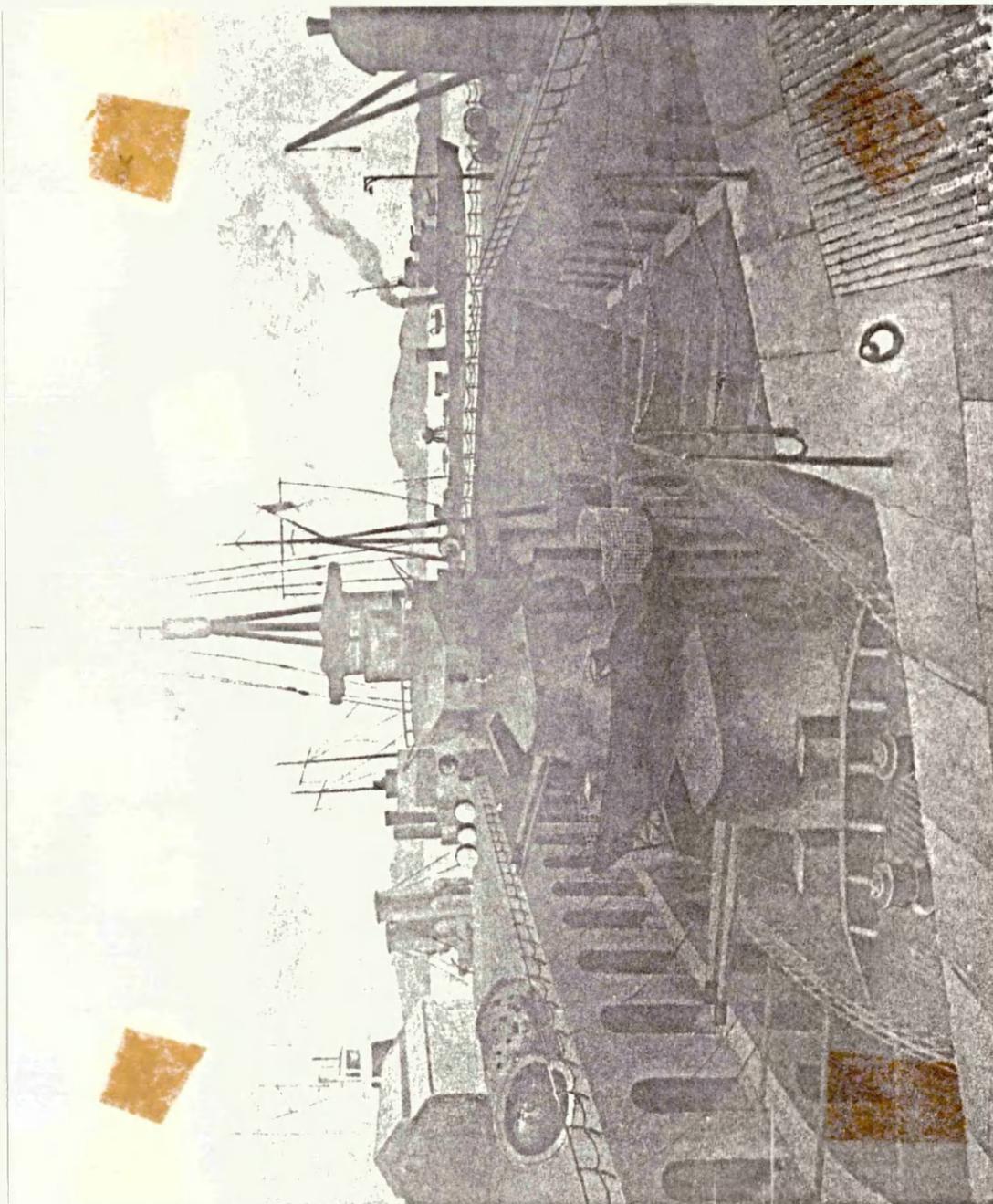
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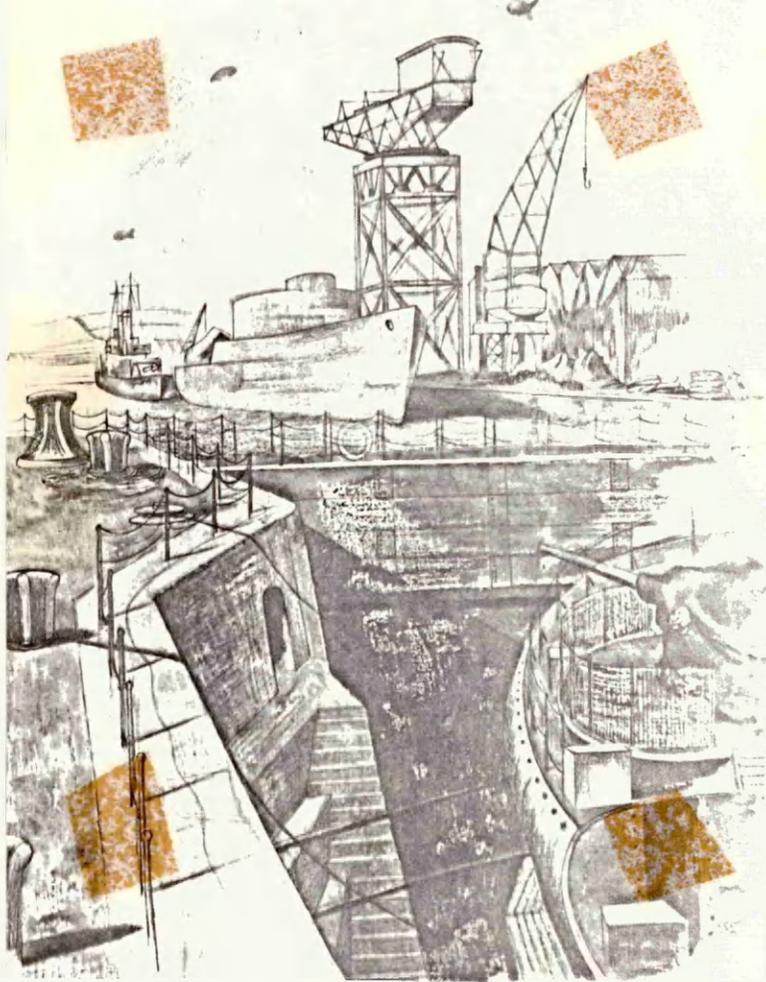
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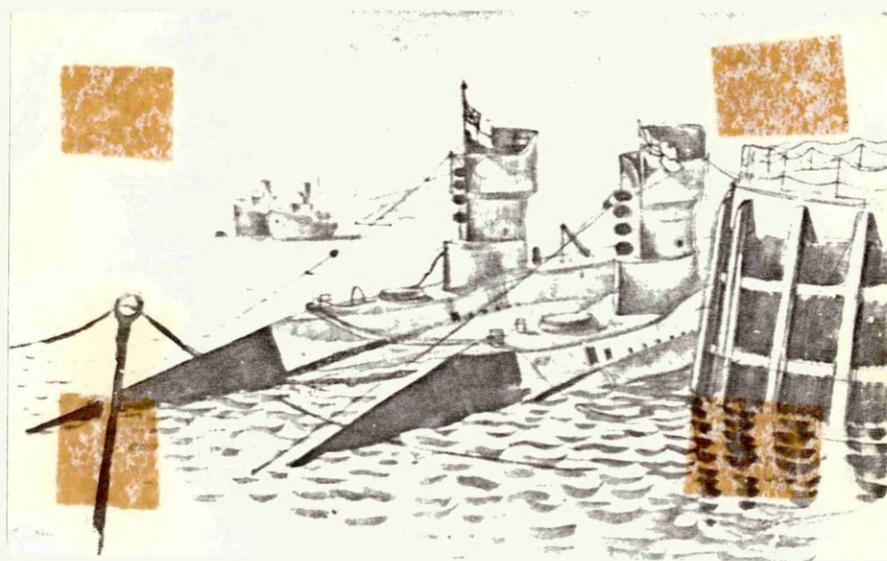






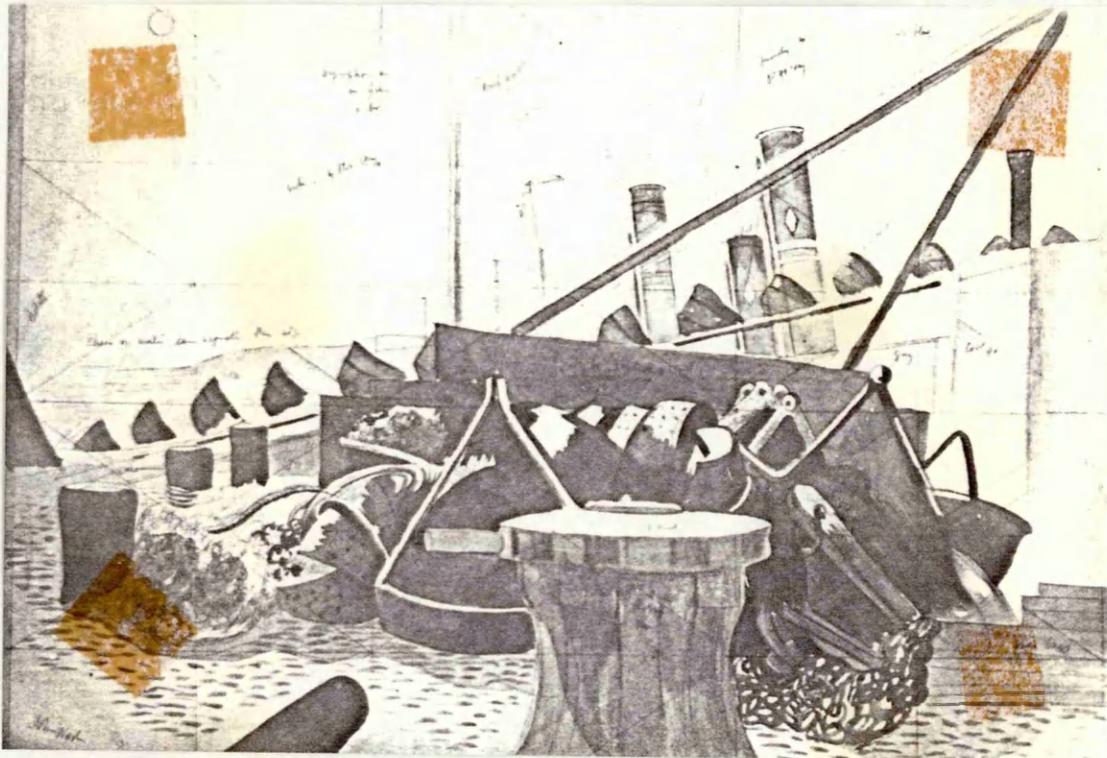
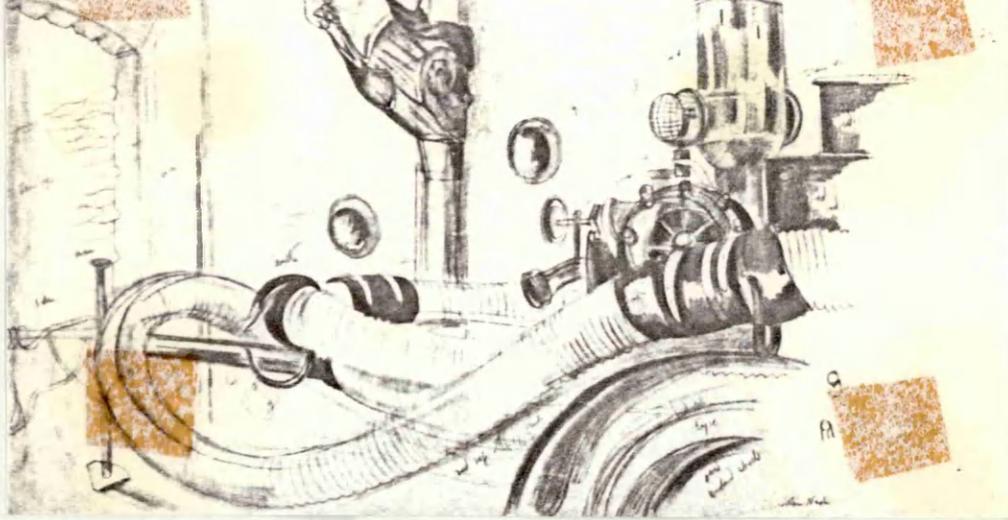


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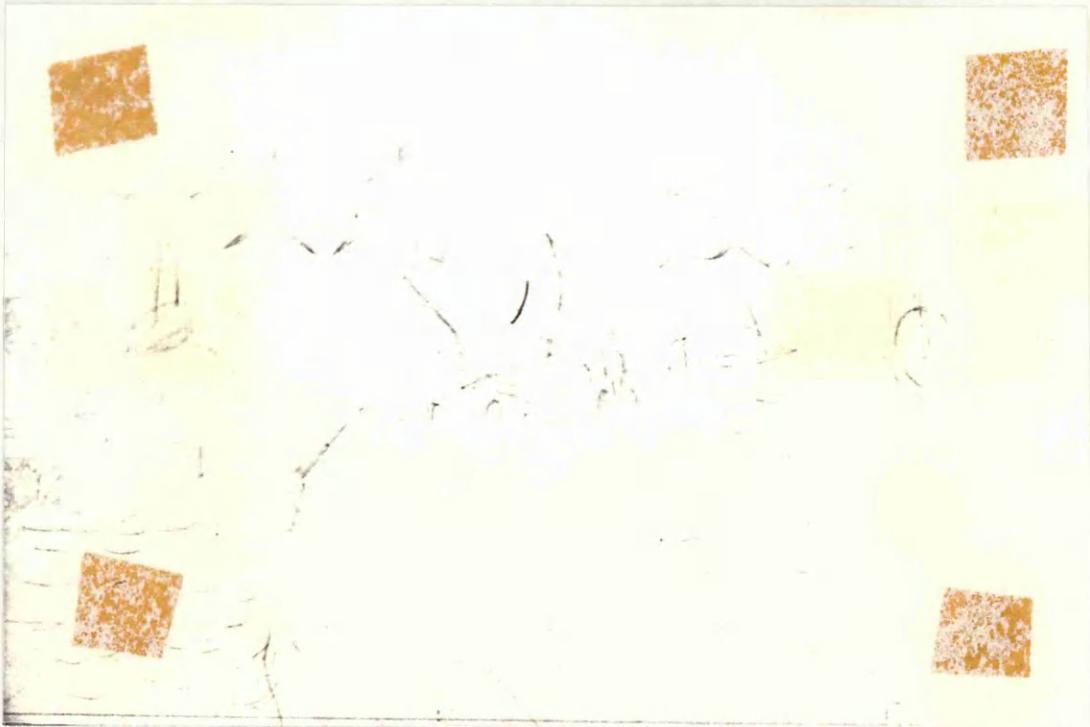


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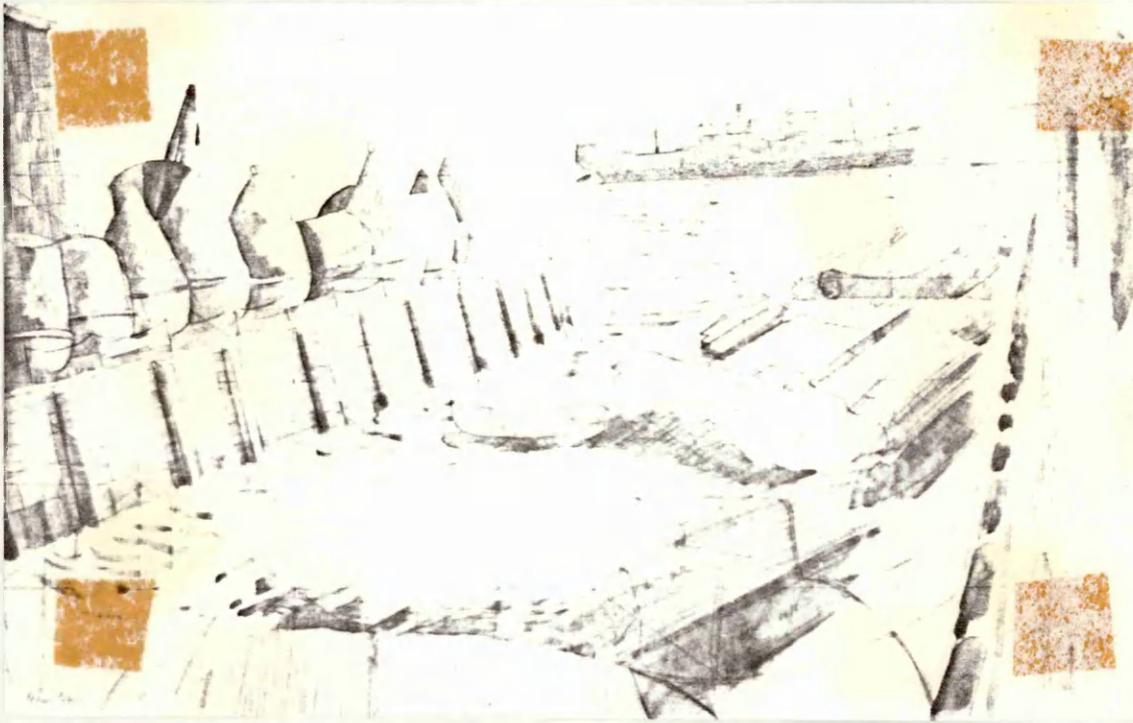
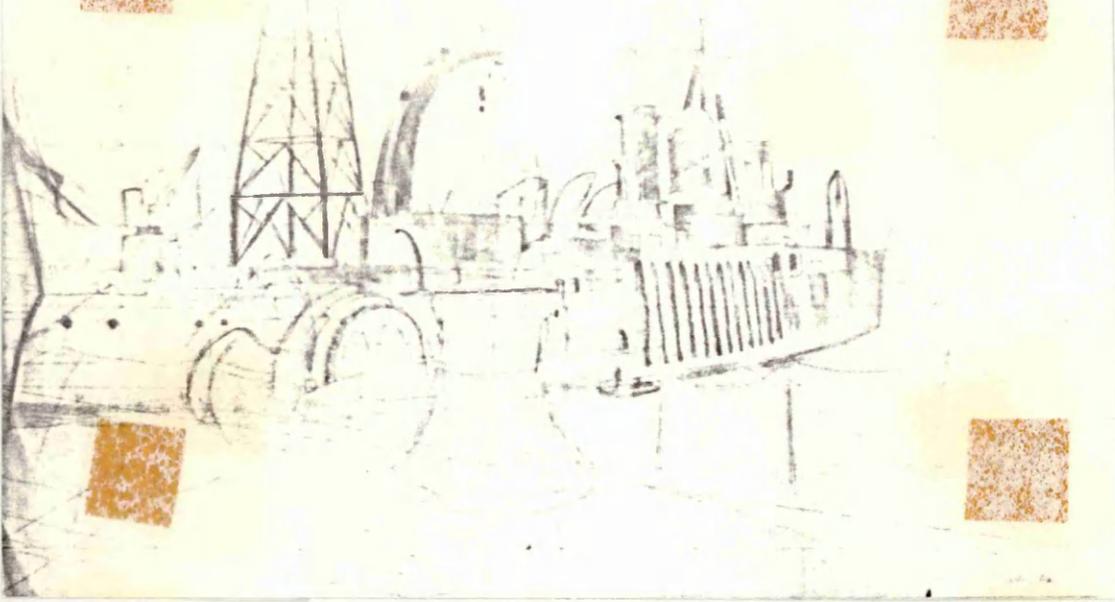


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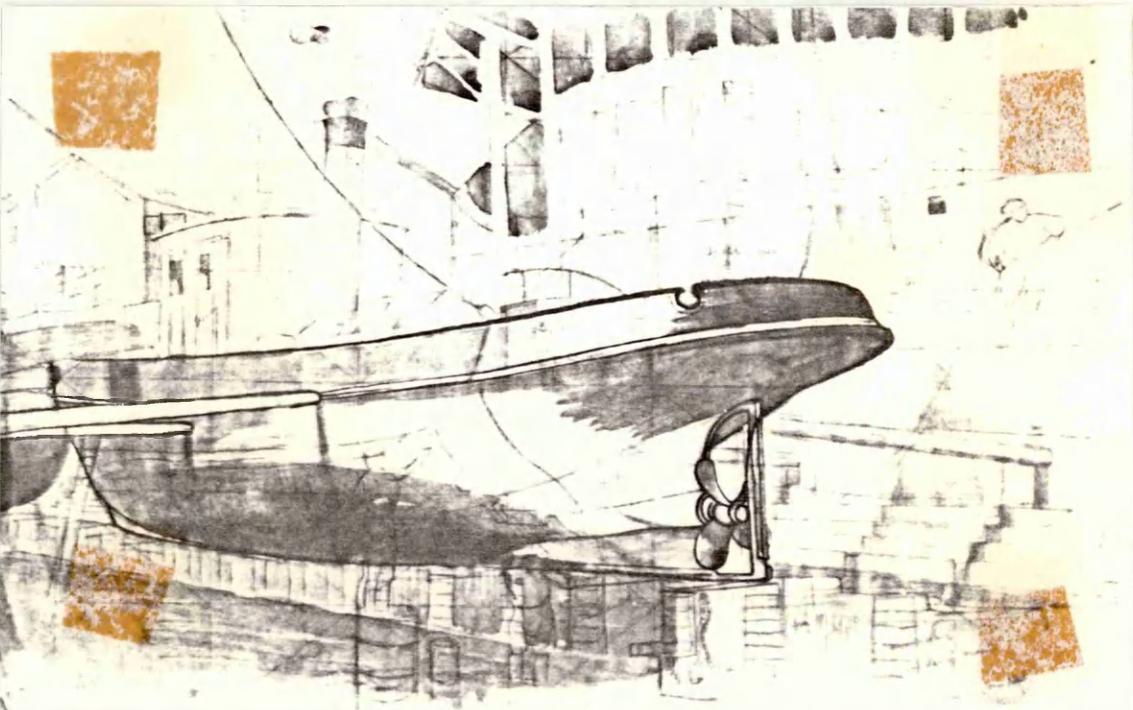


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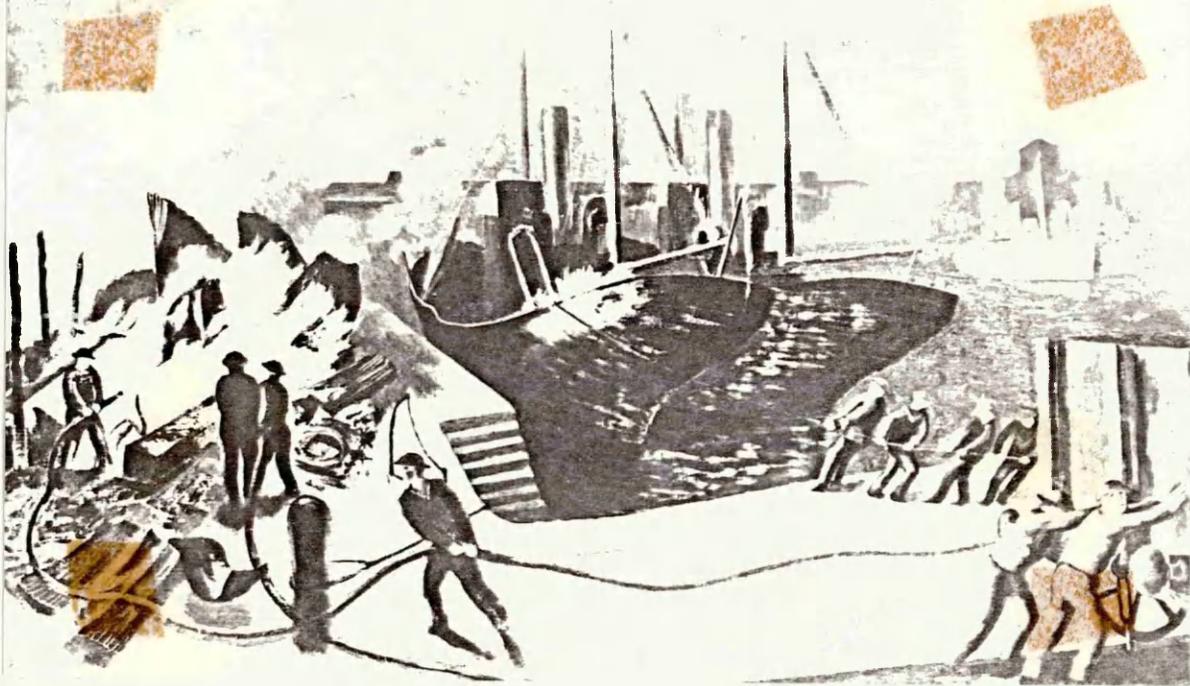
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131.

269





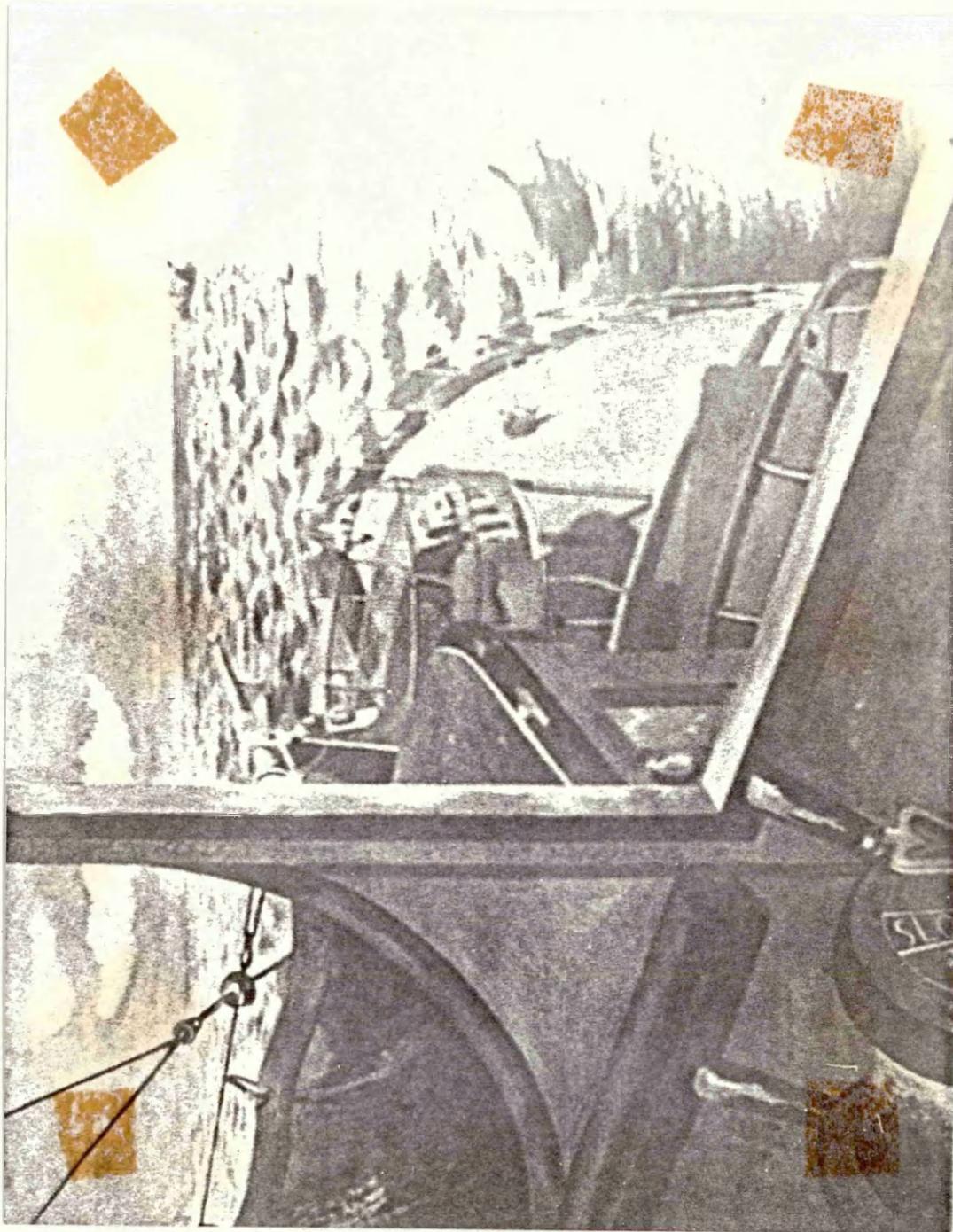
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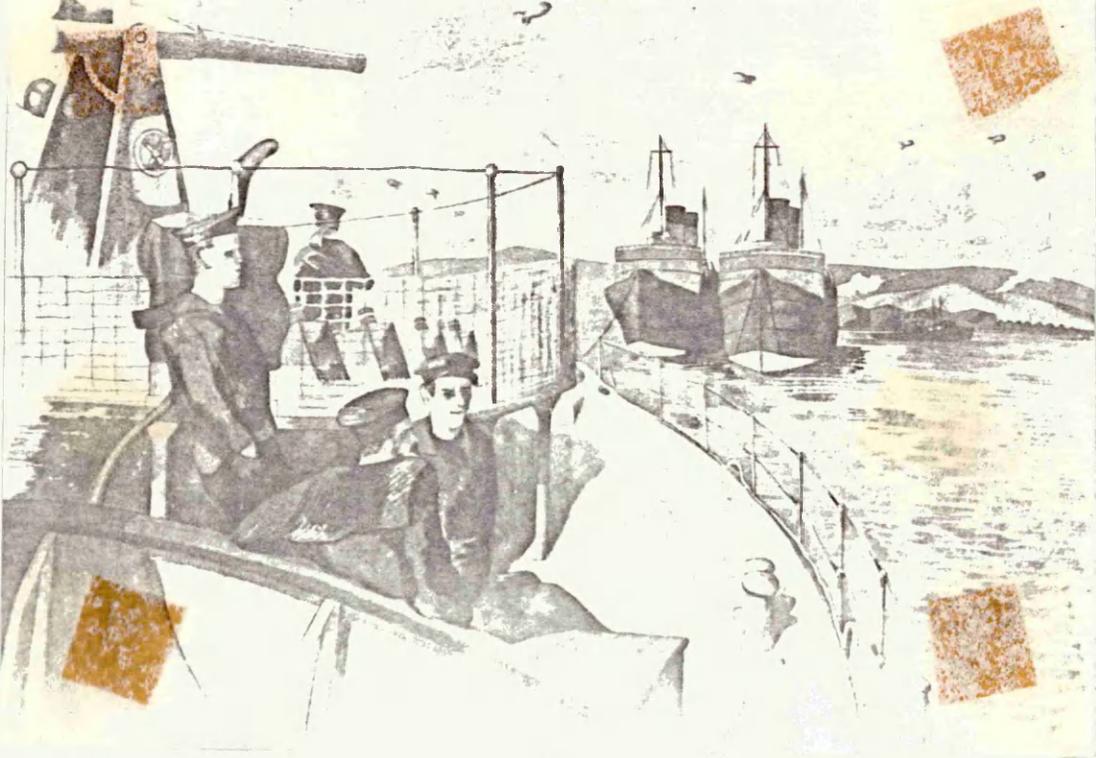


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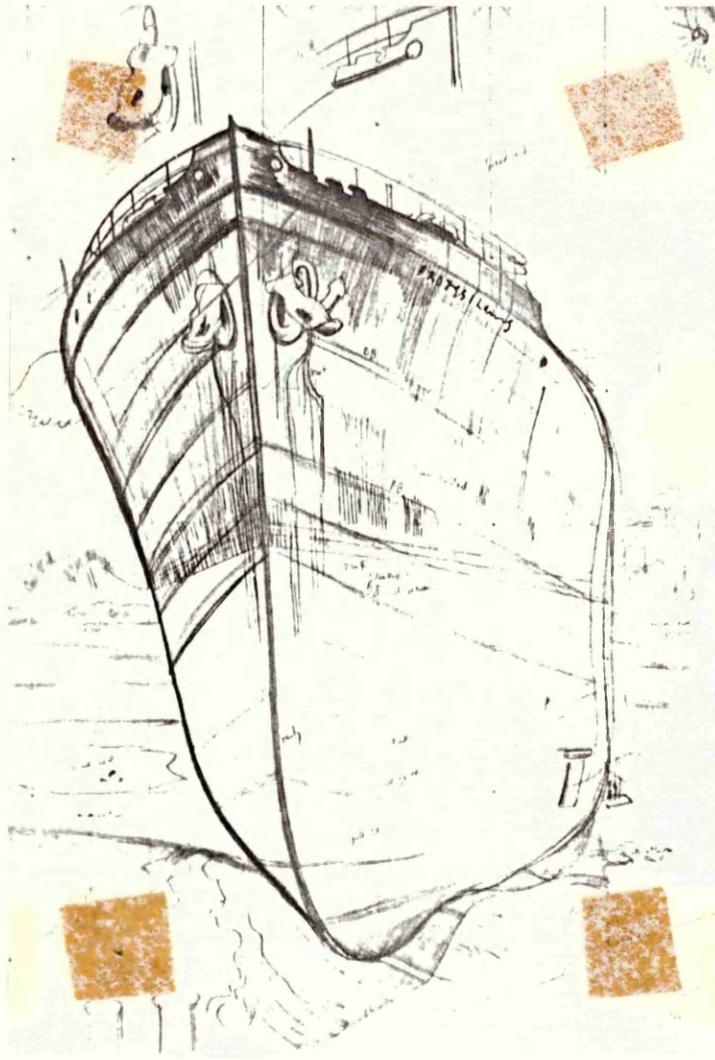


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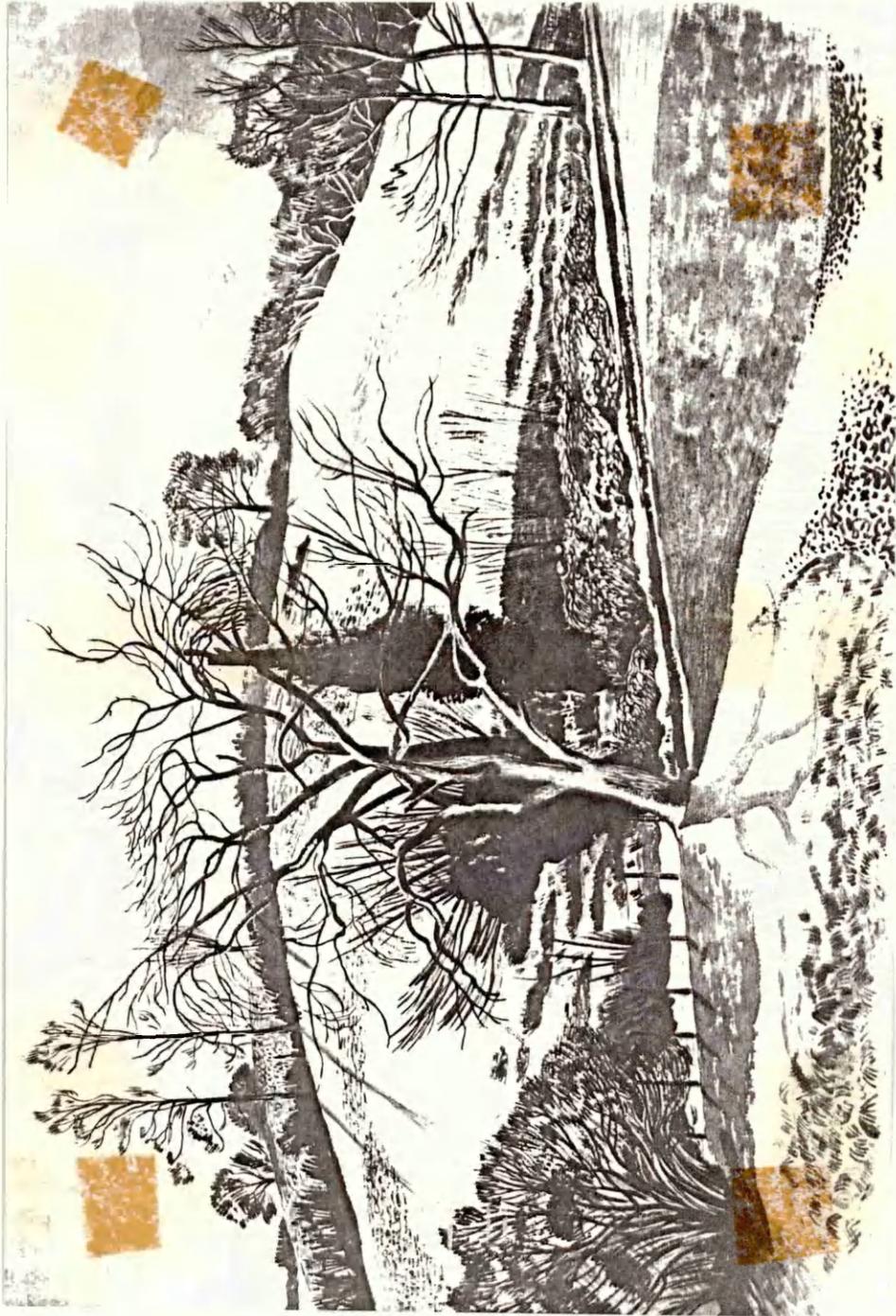


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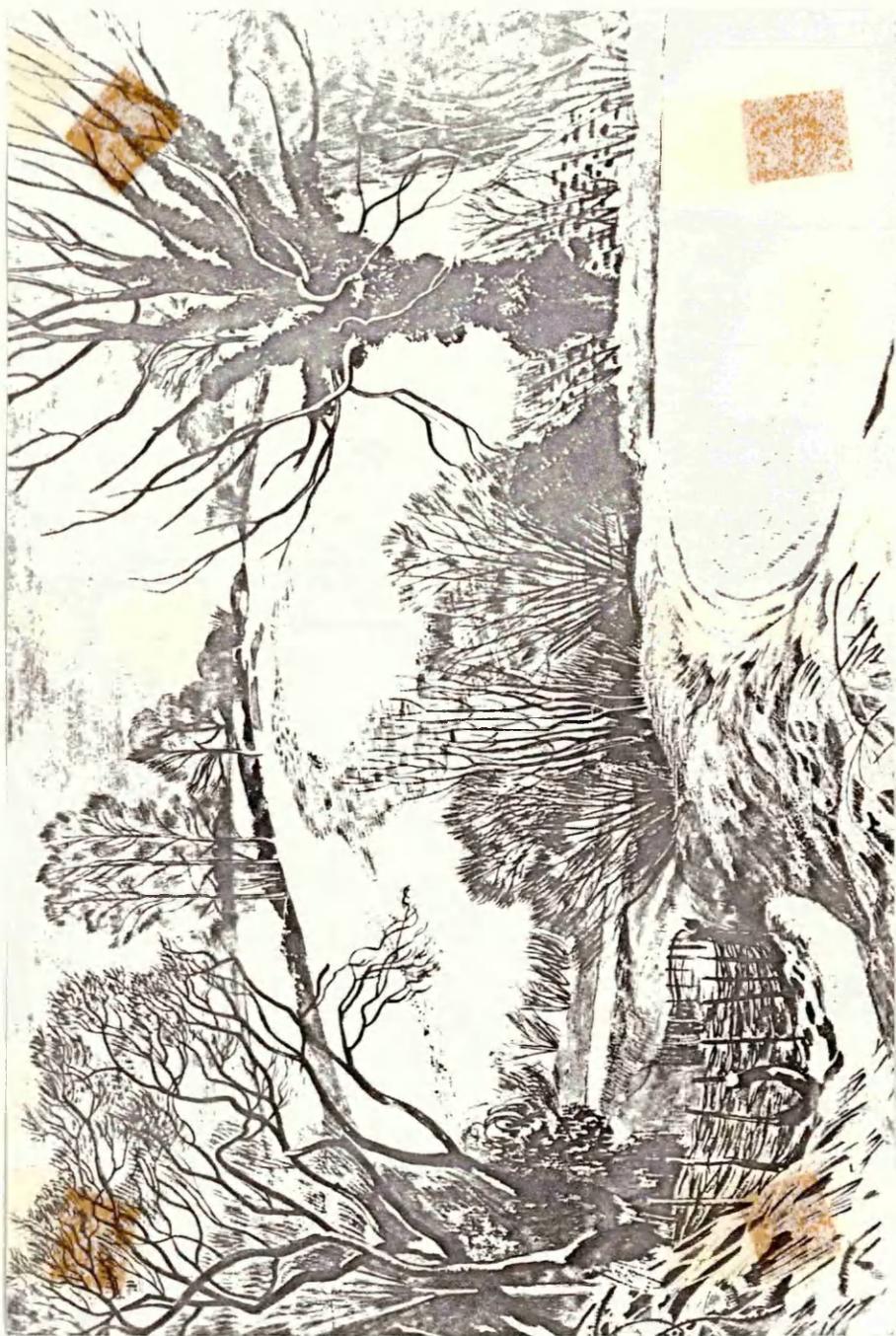




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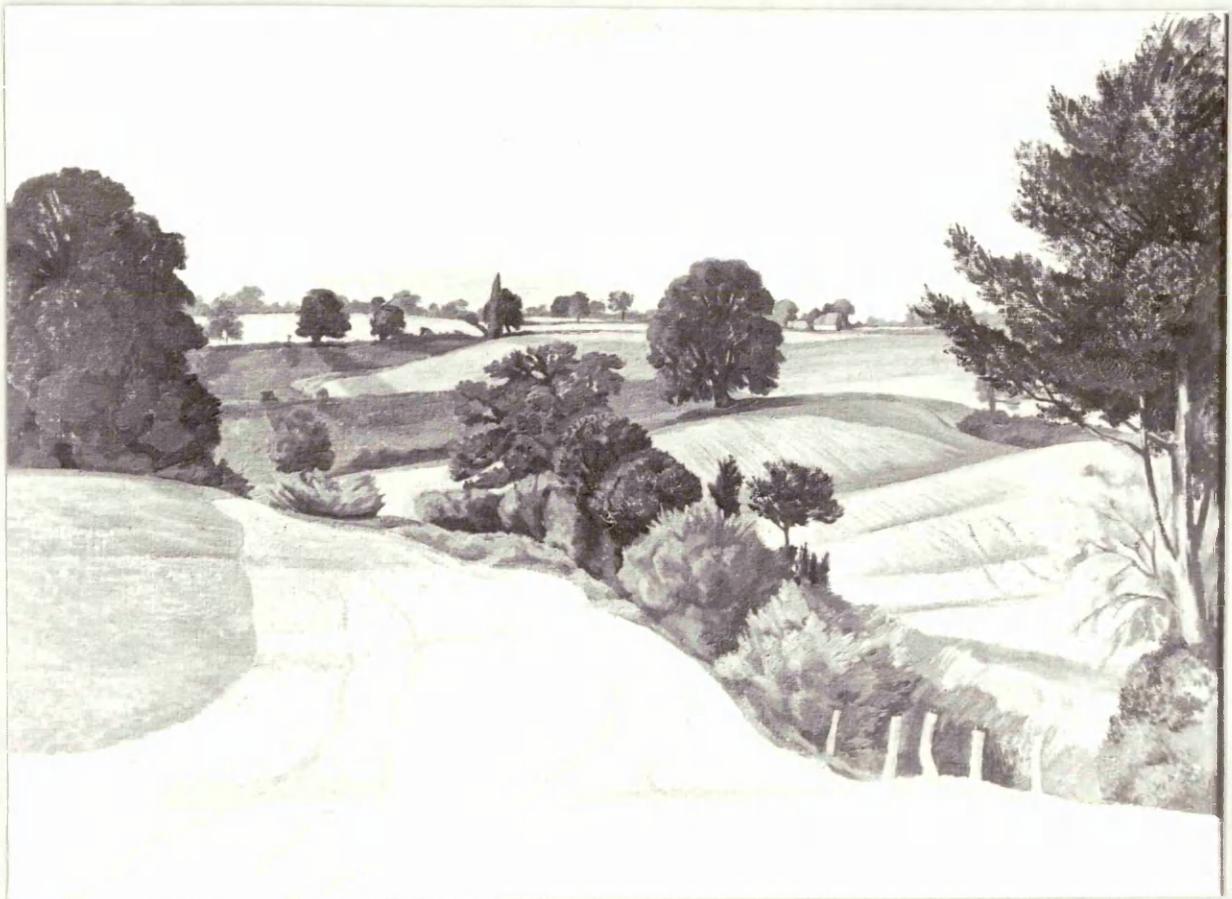


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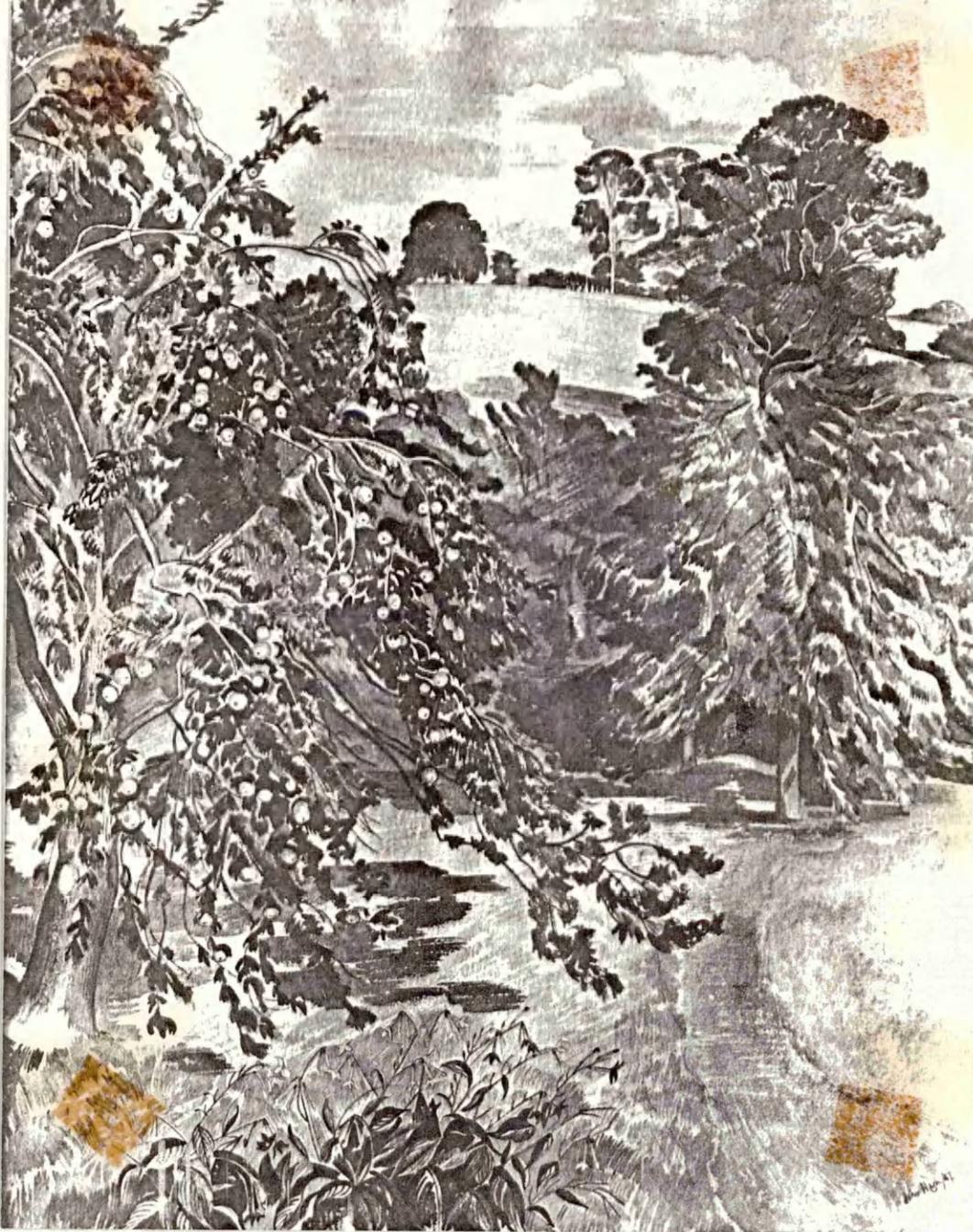


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143.





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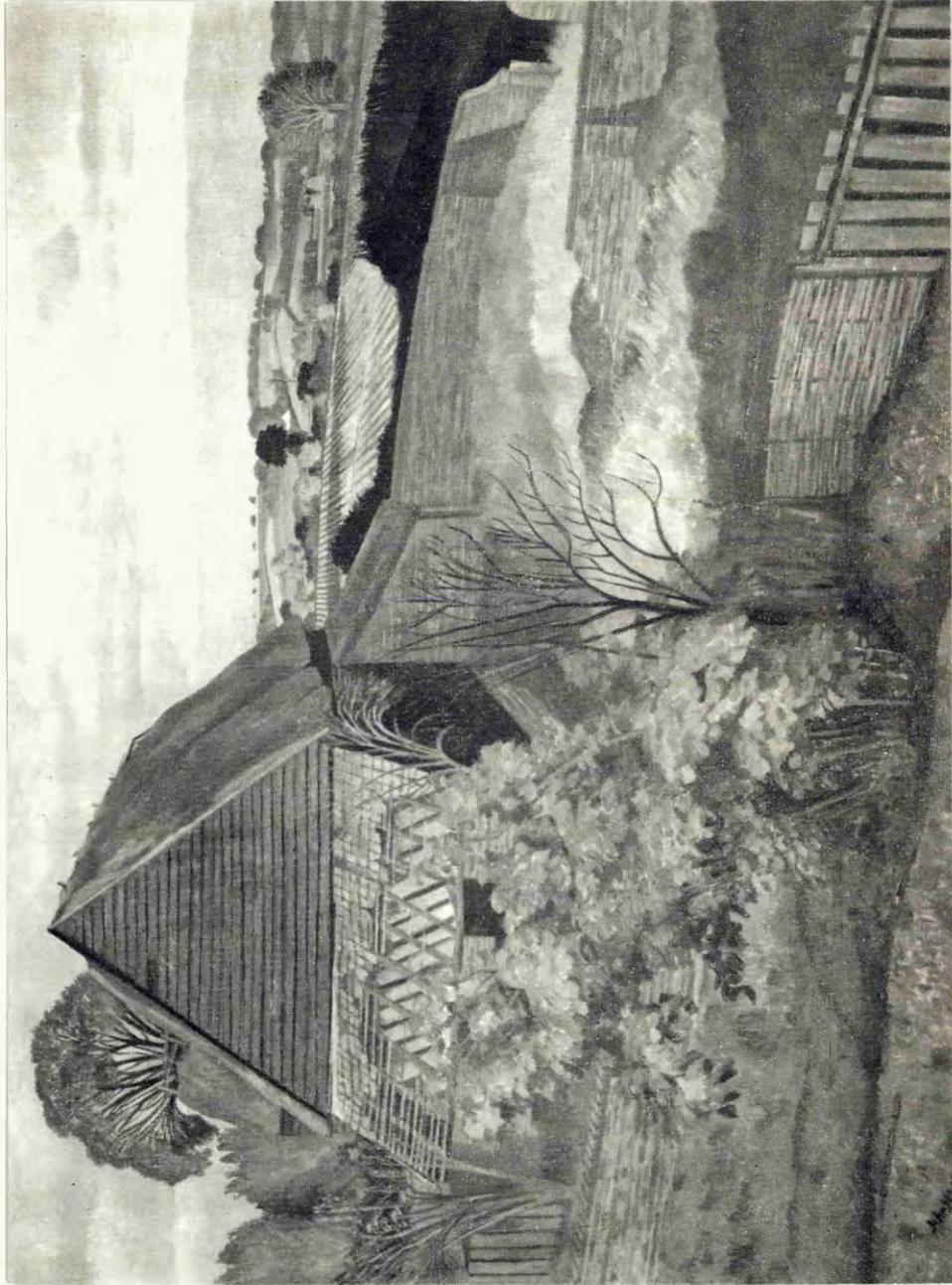
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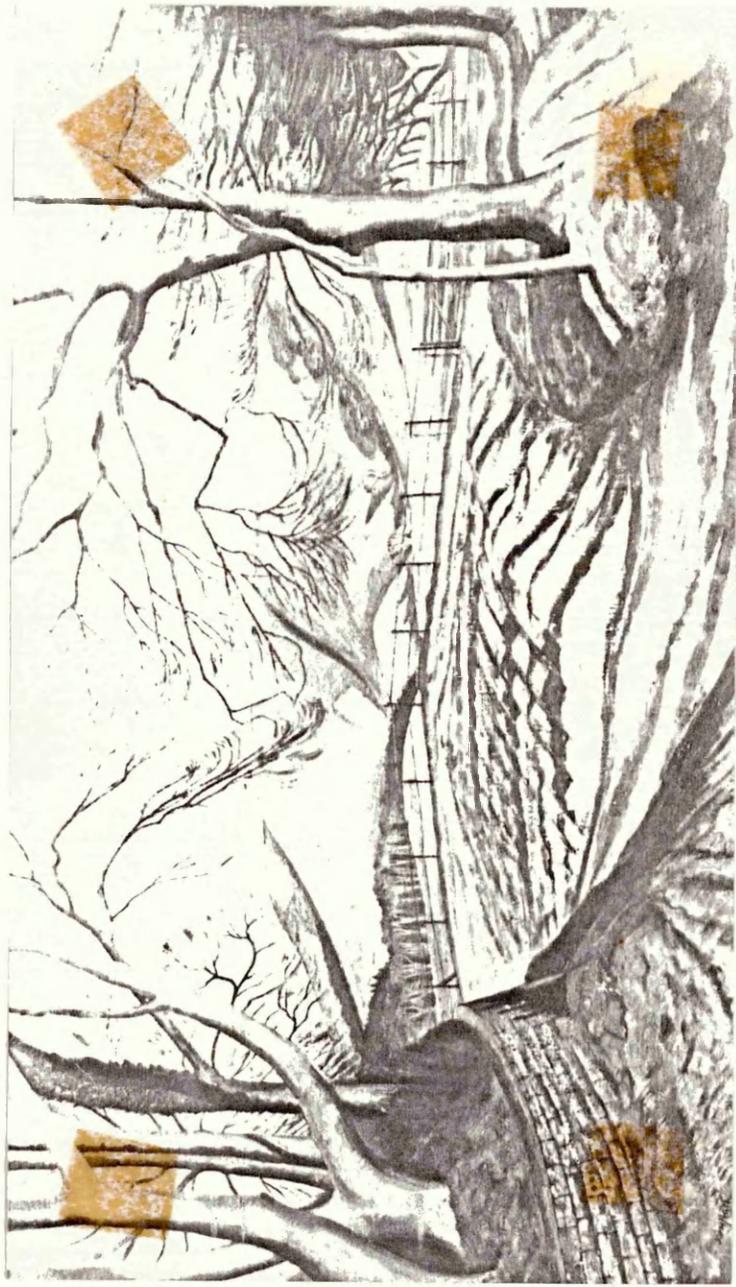
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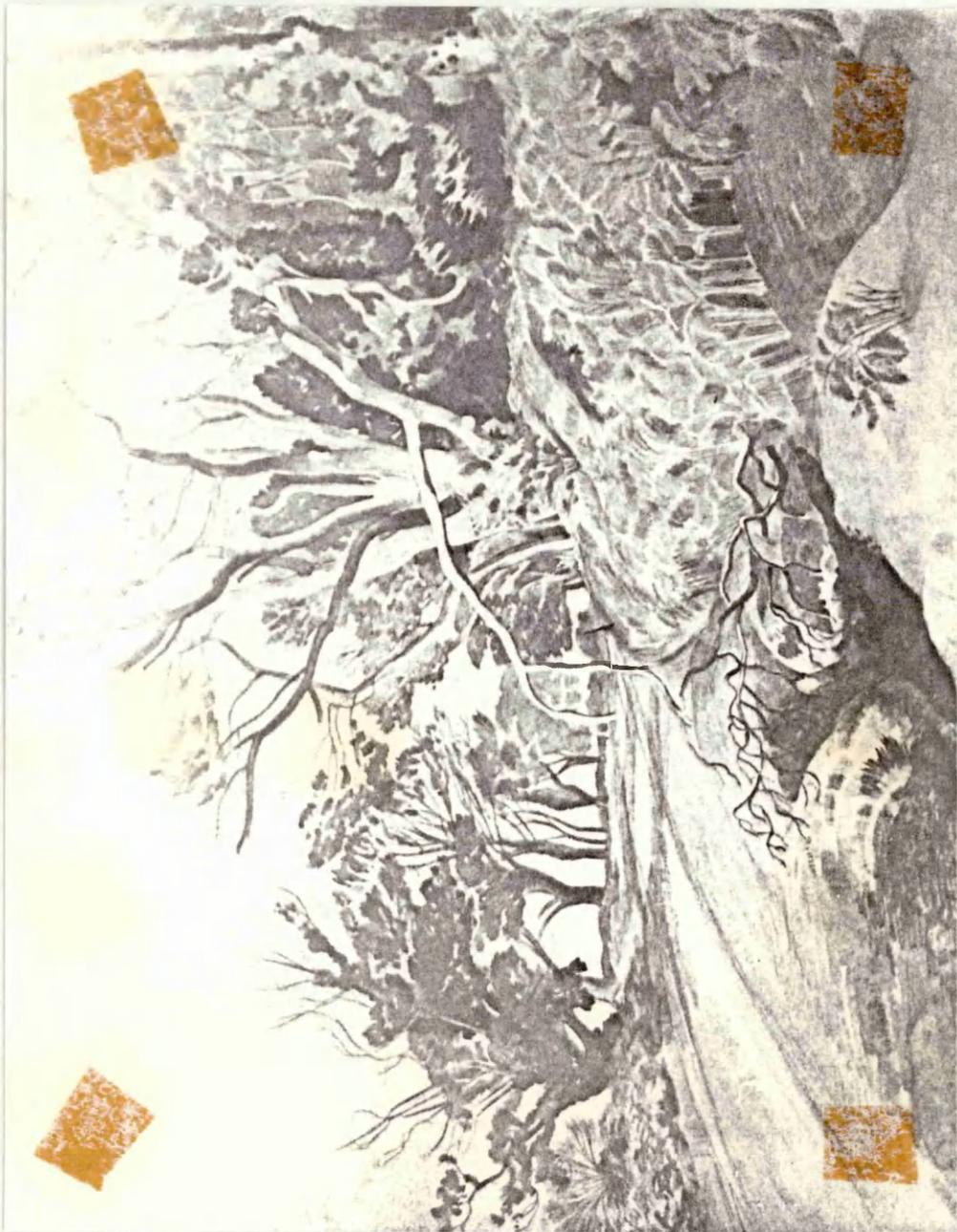
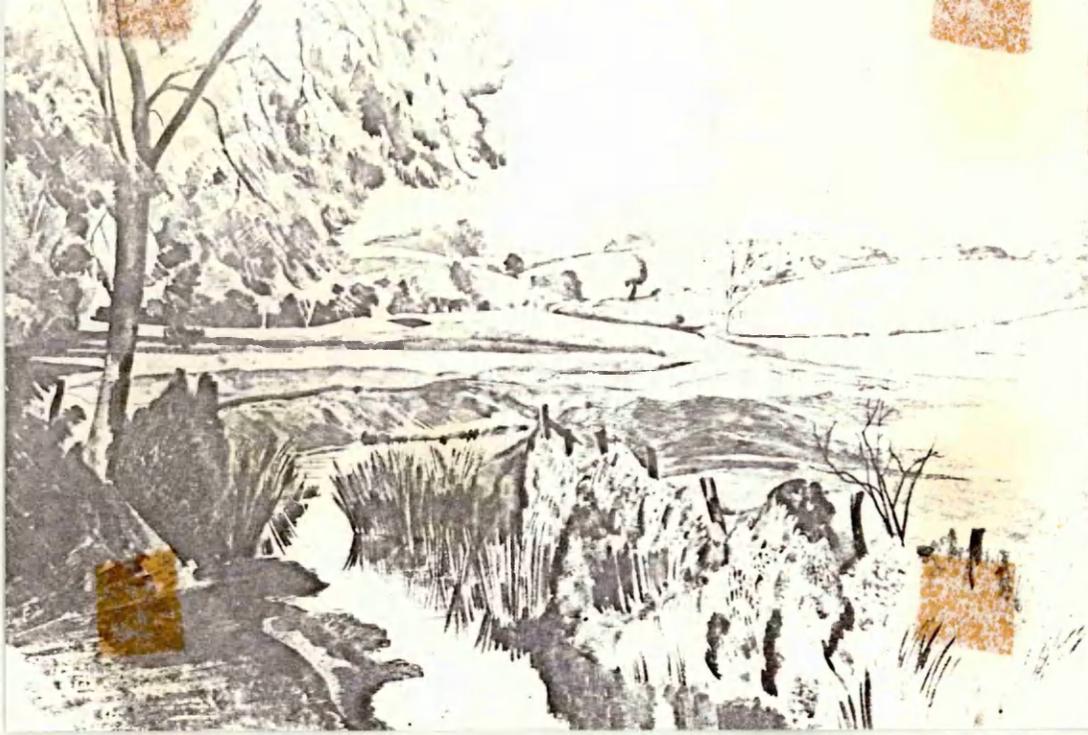


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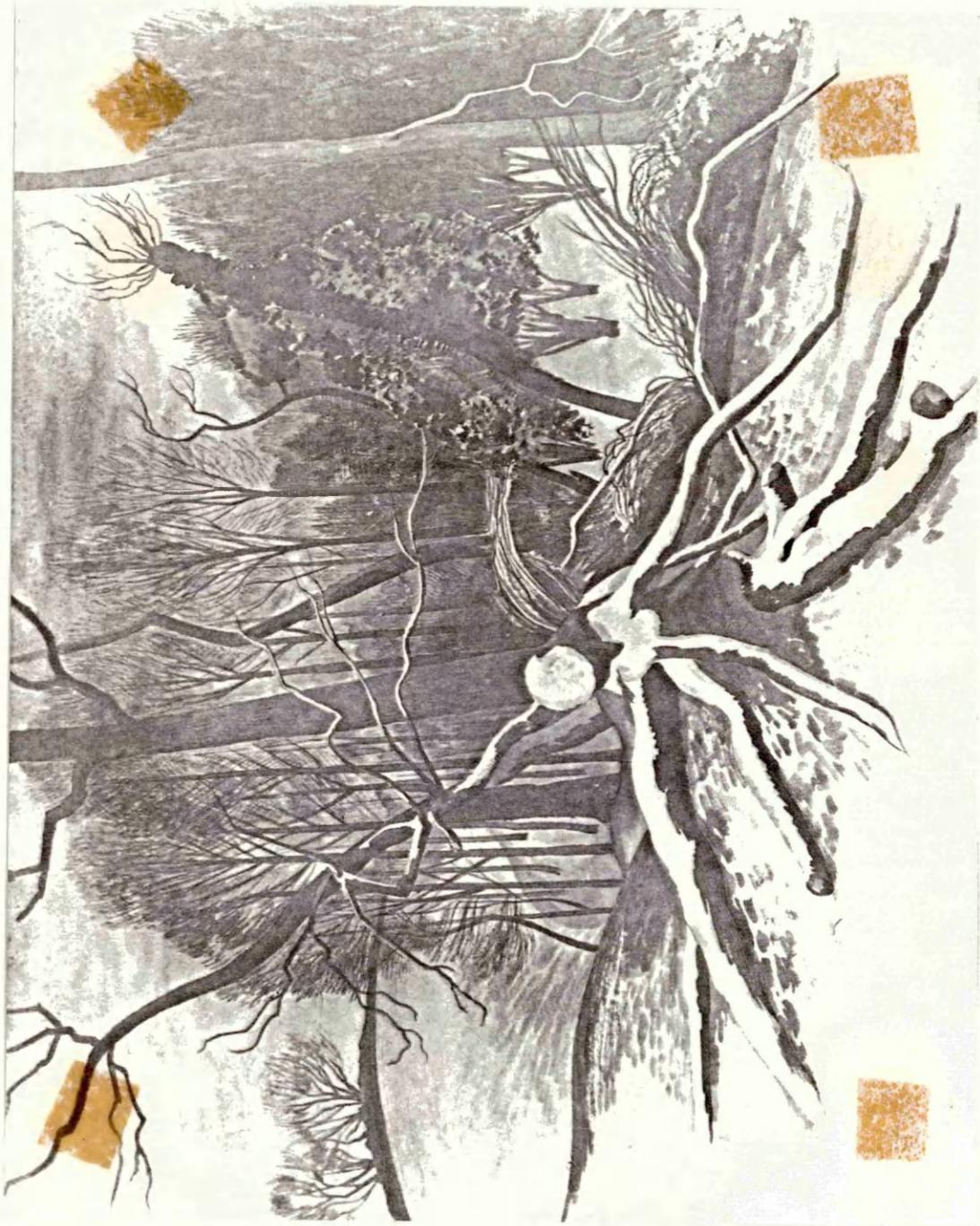




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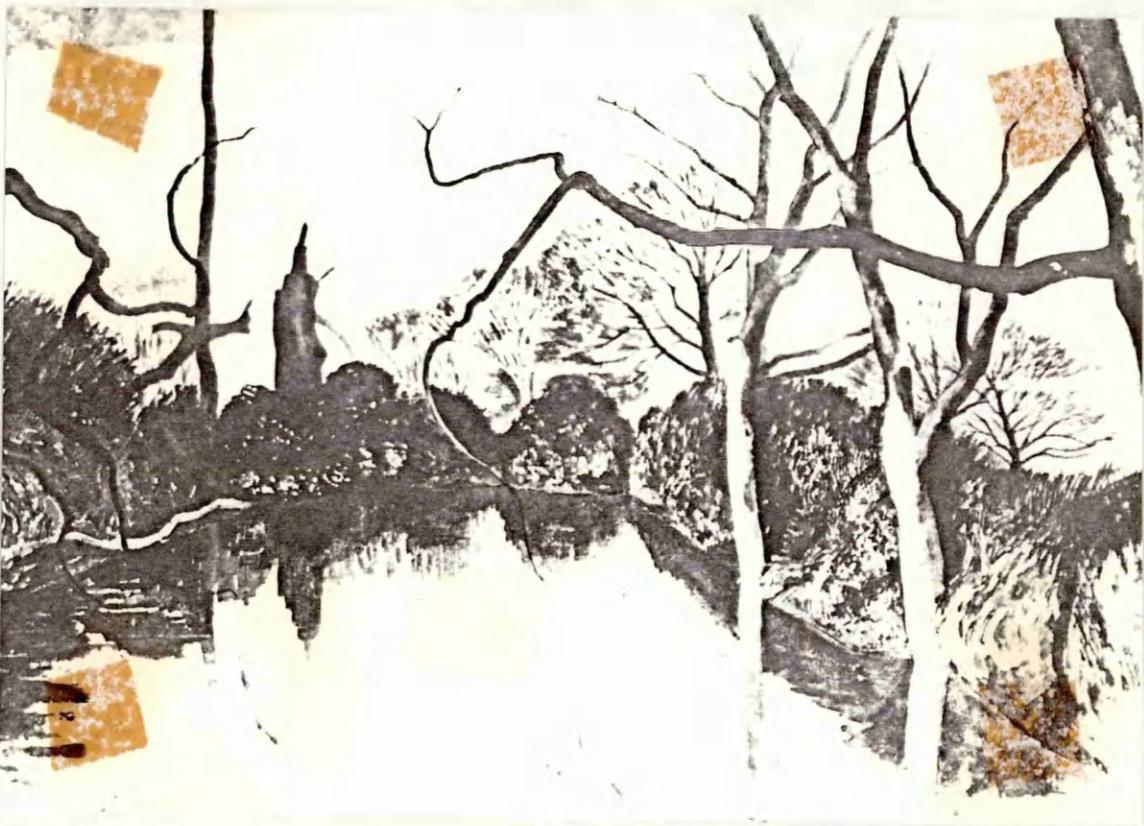


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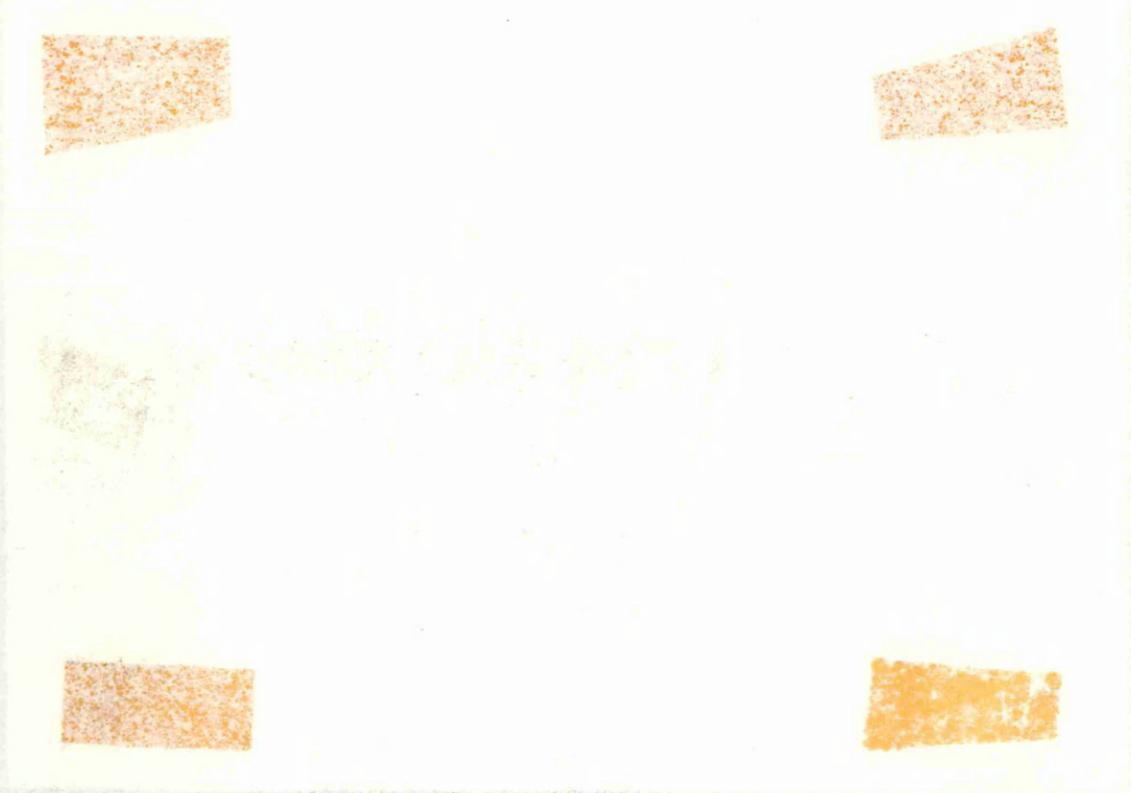




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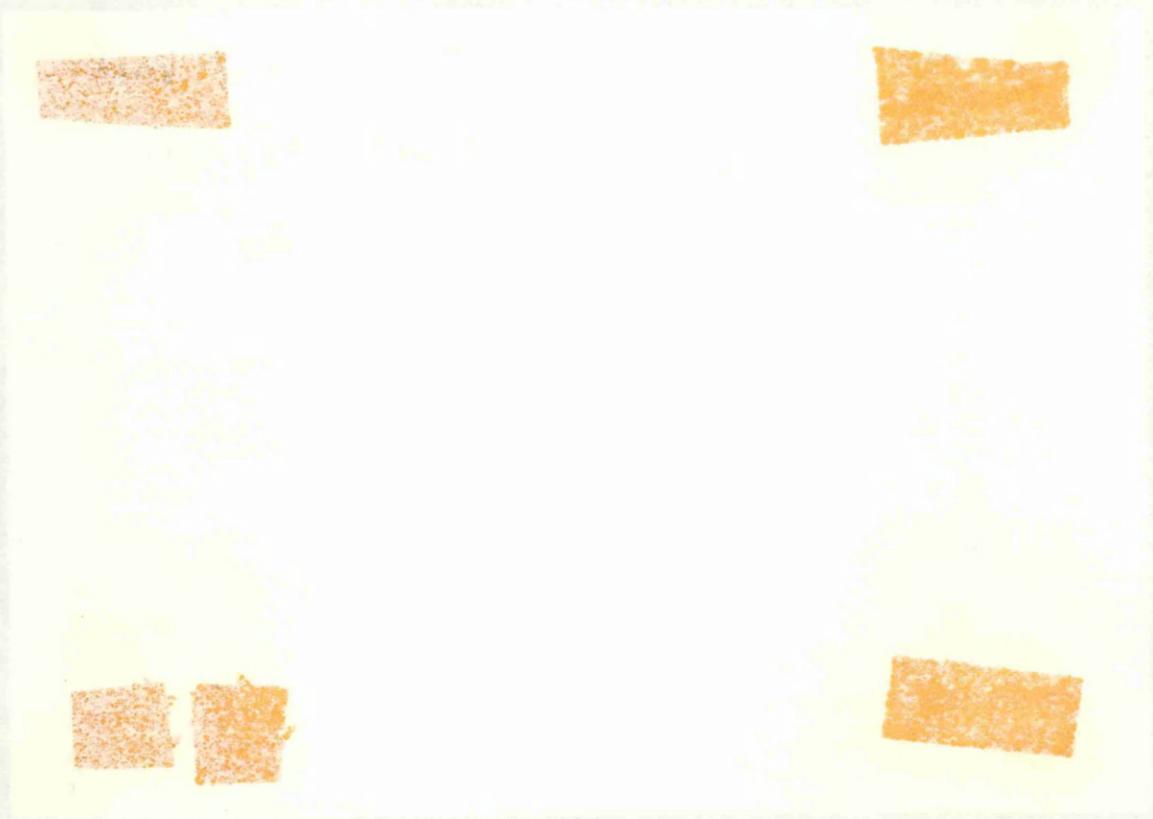




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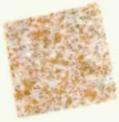




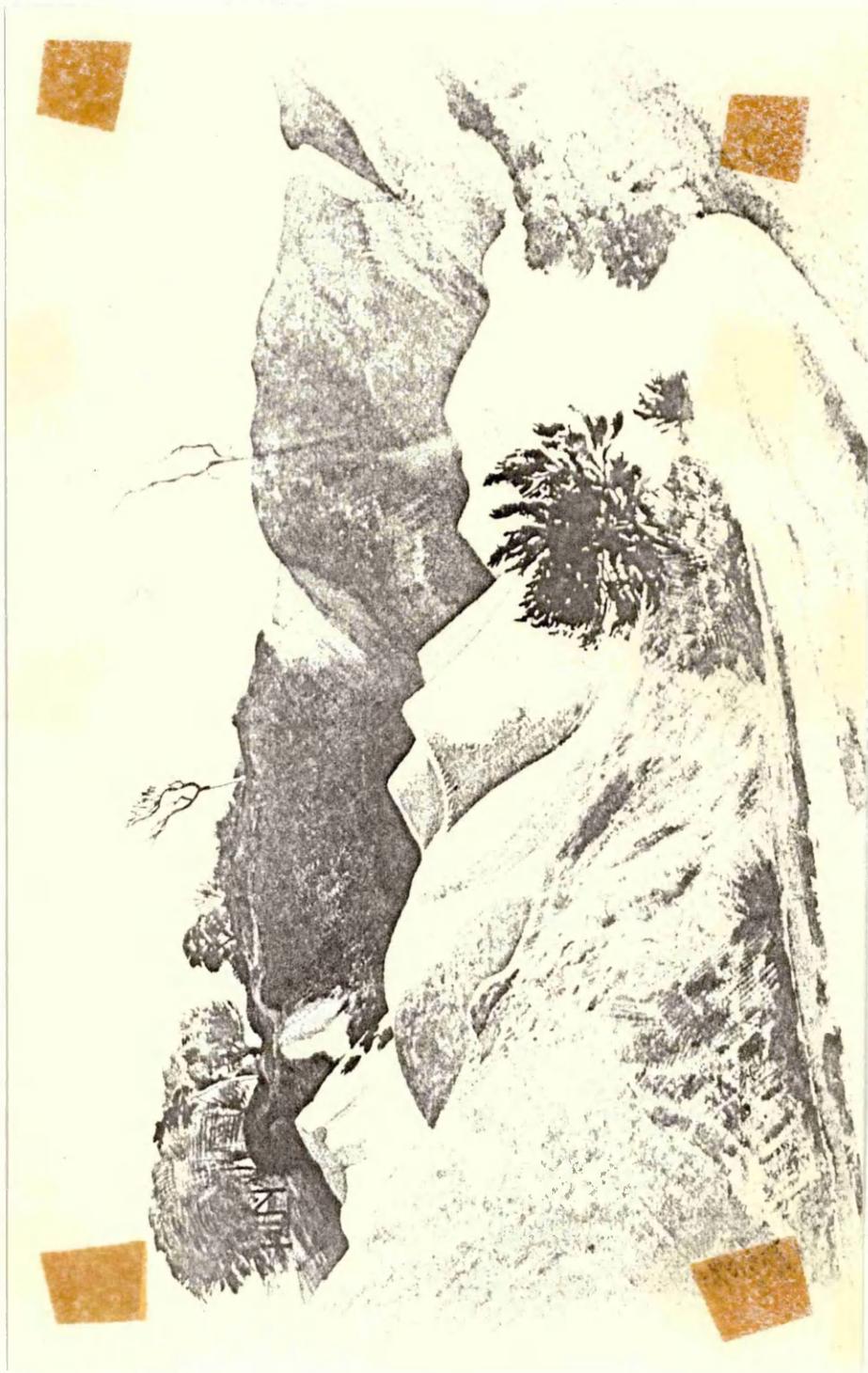


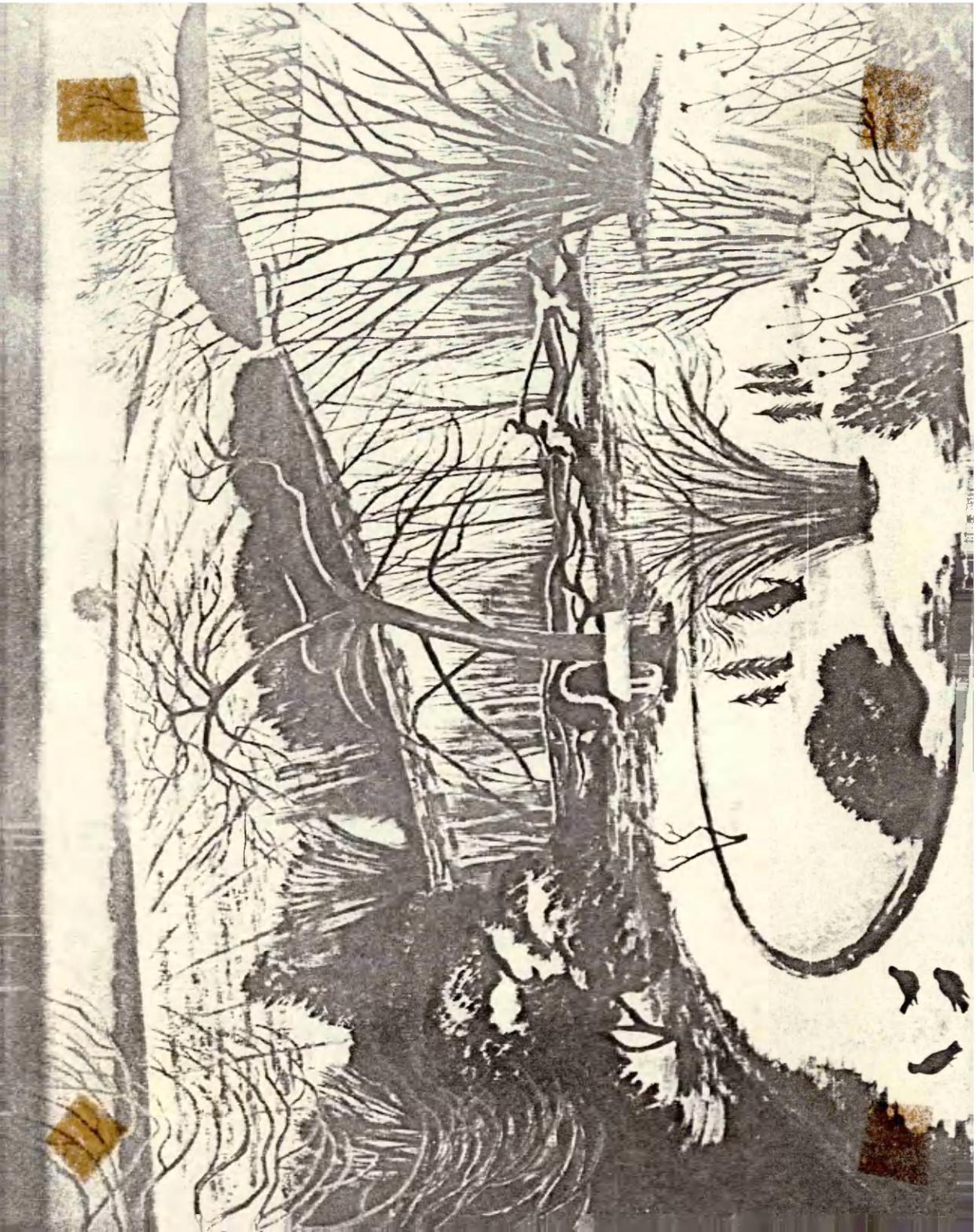
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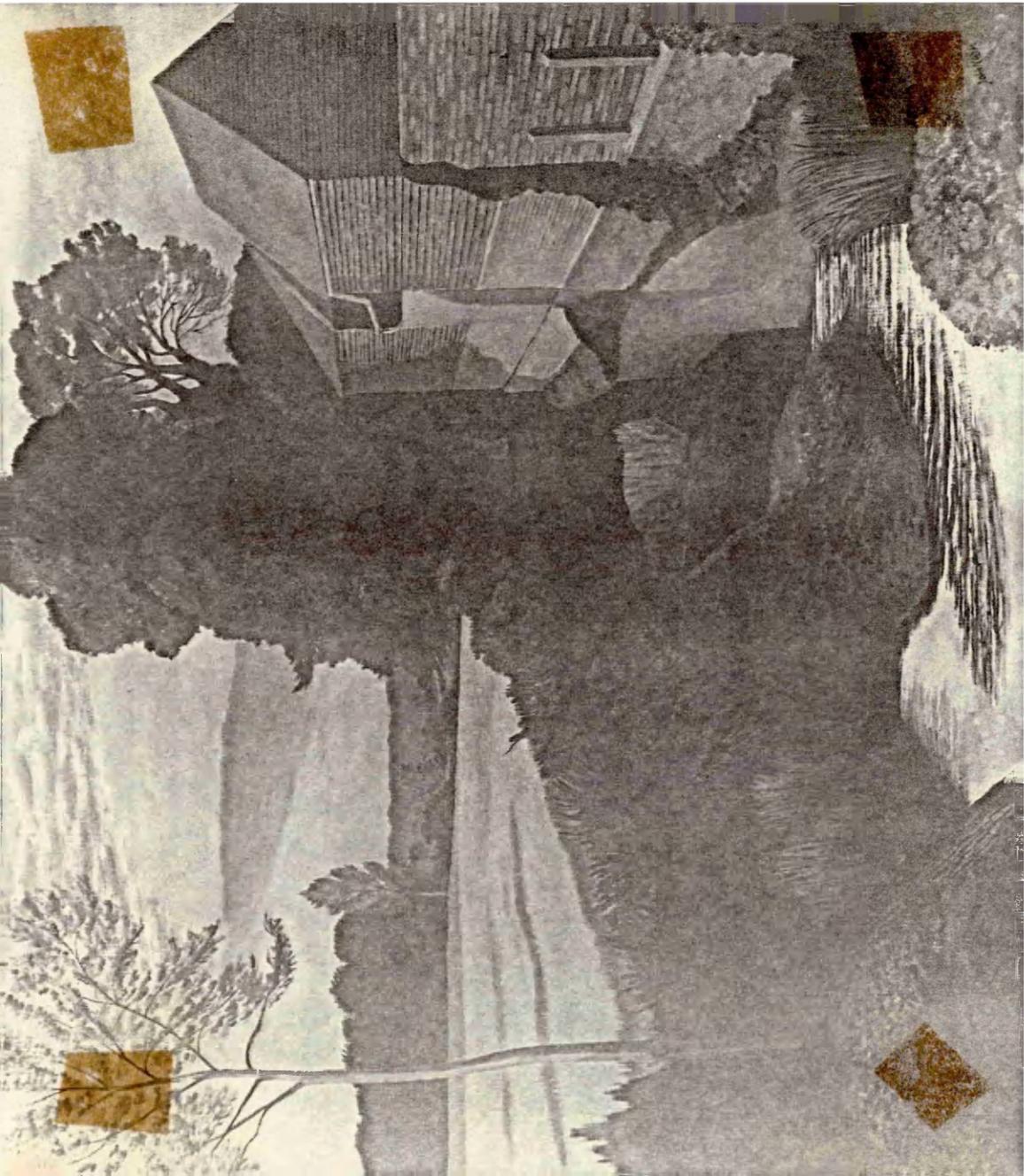
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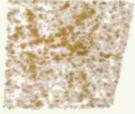


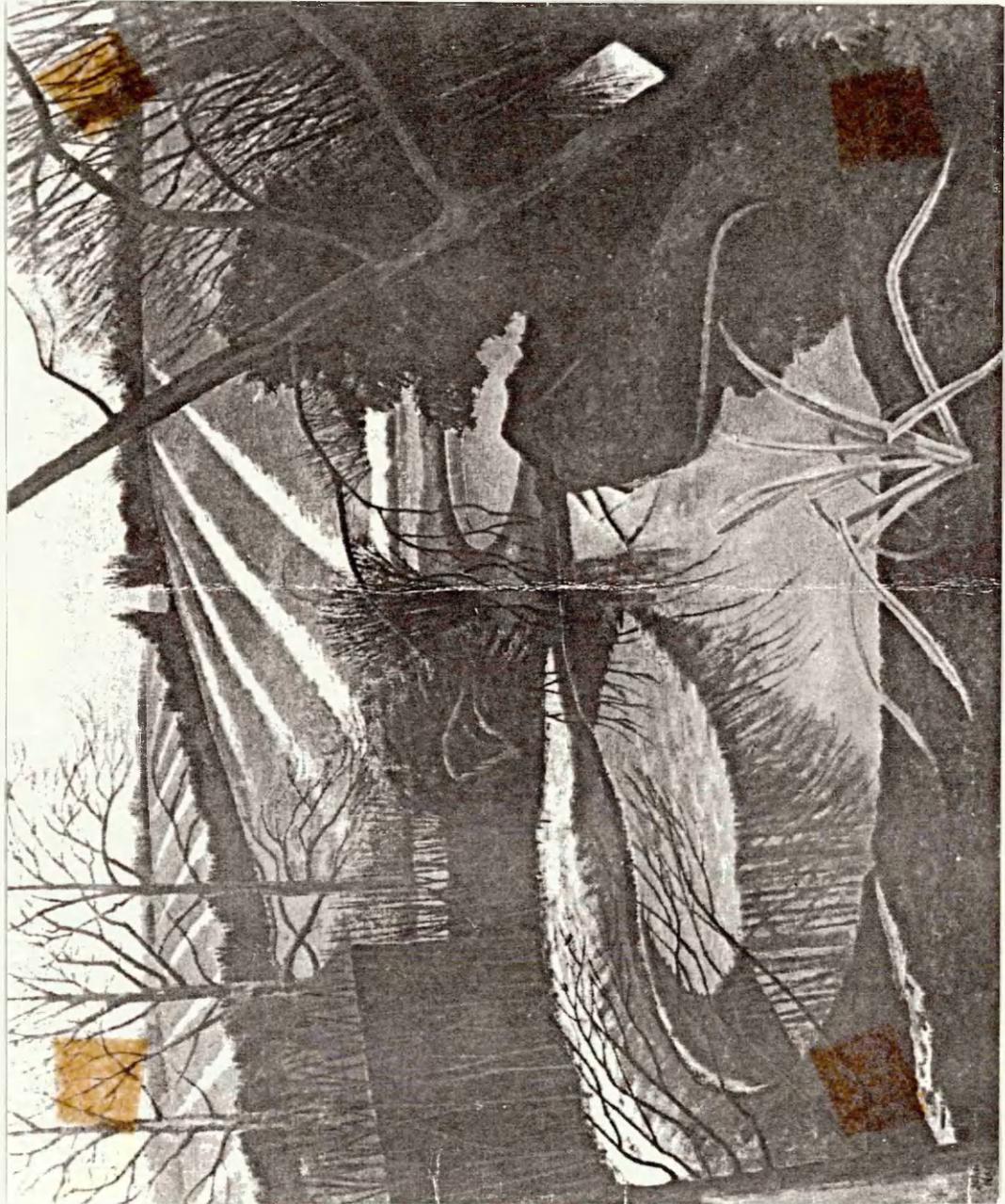
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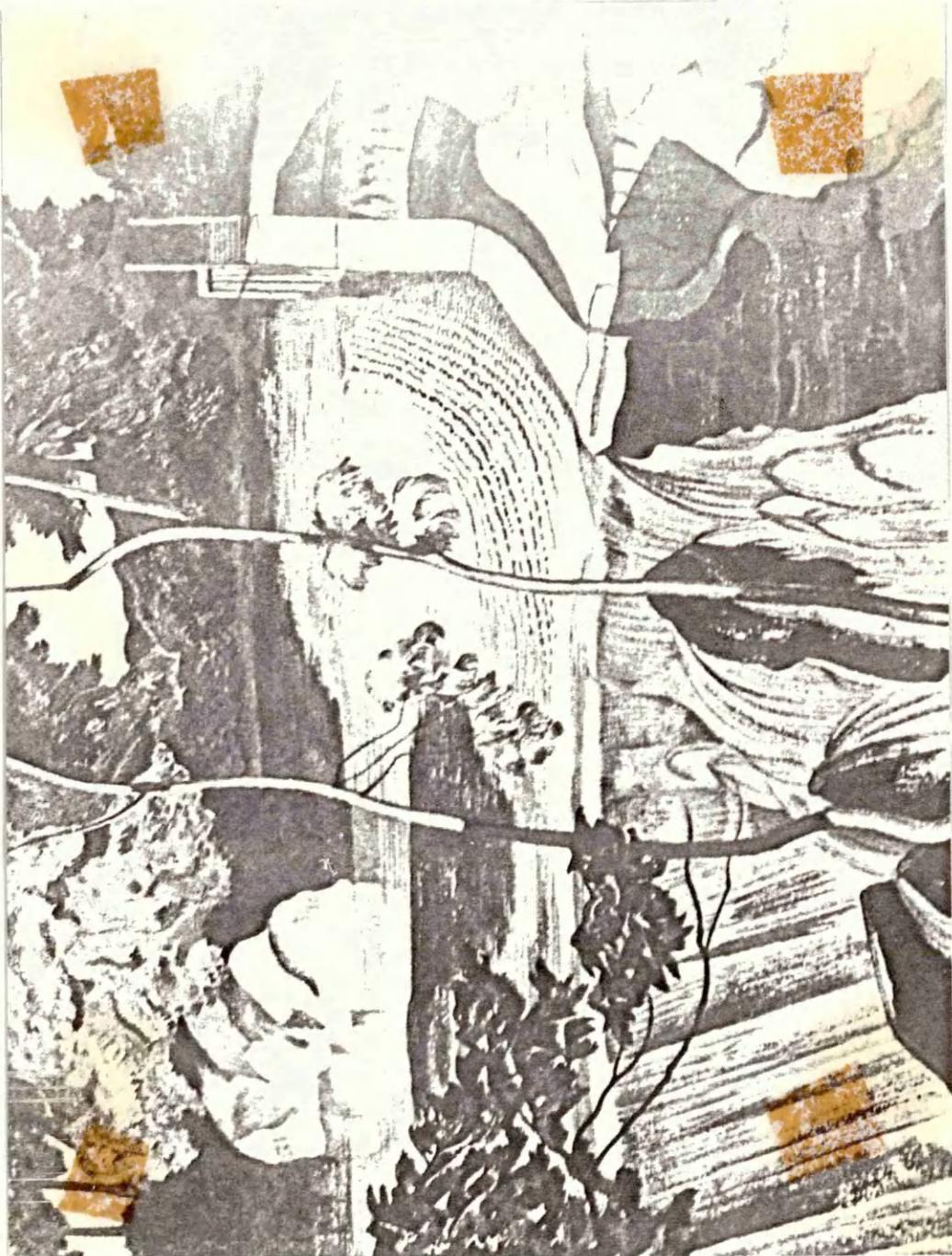




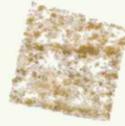


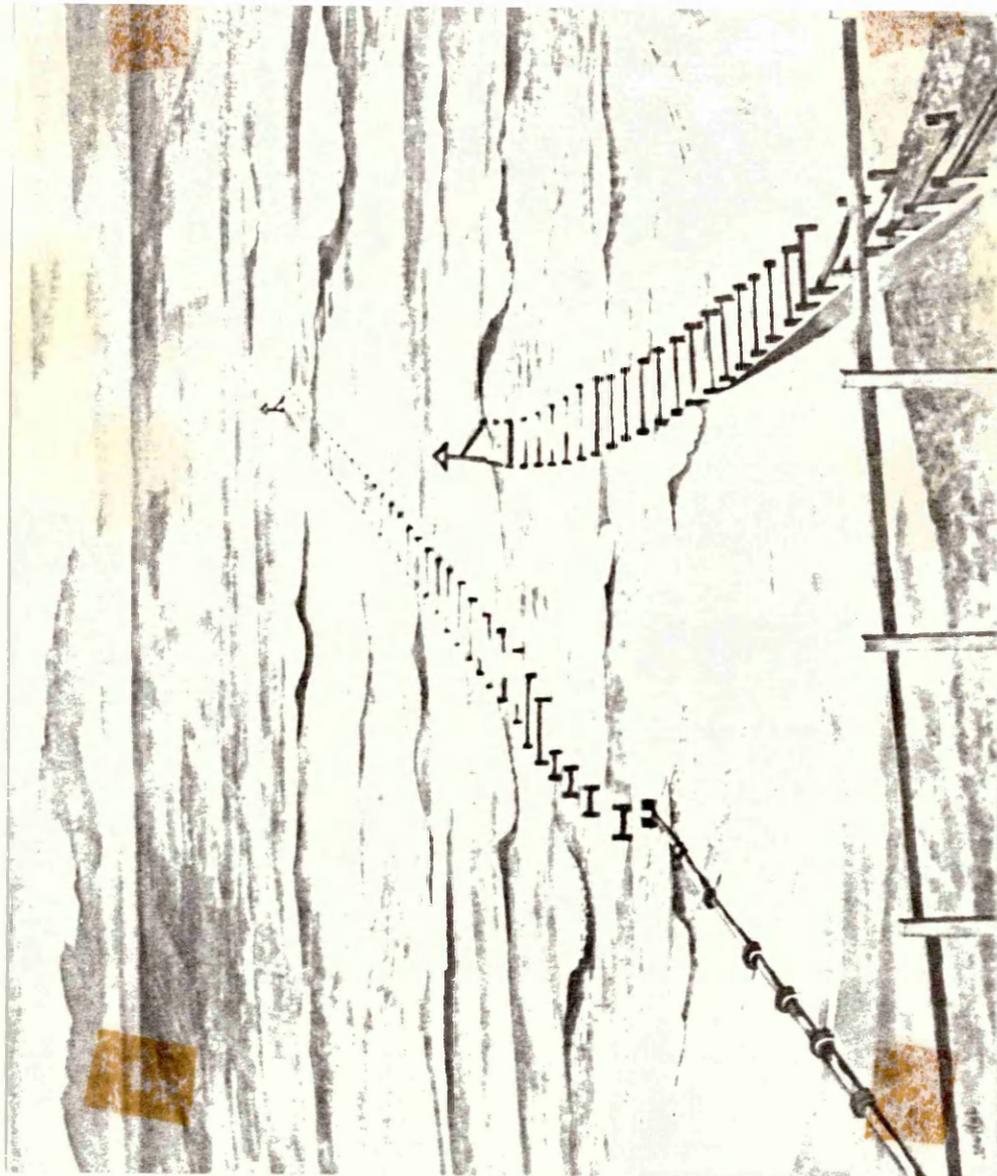


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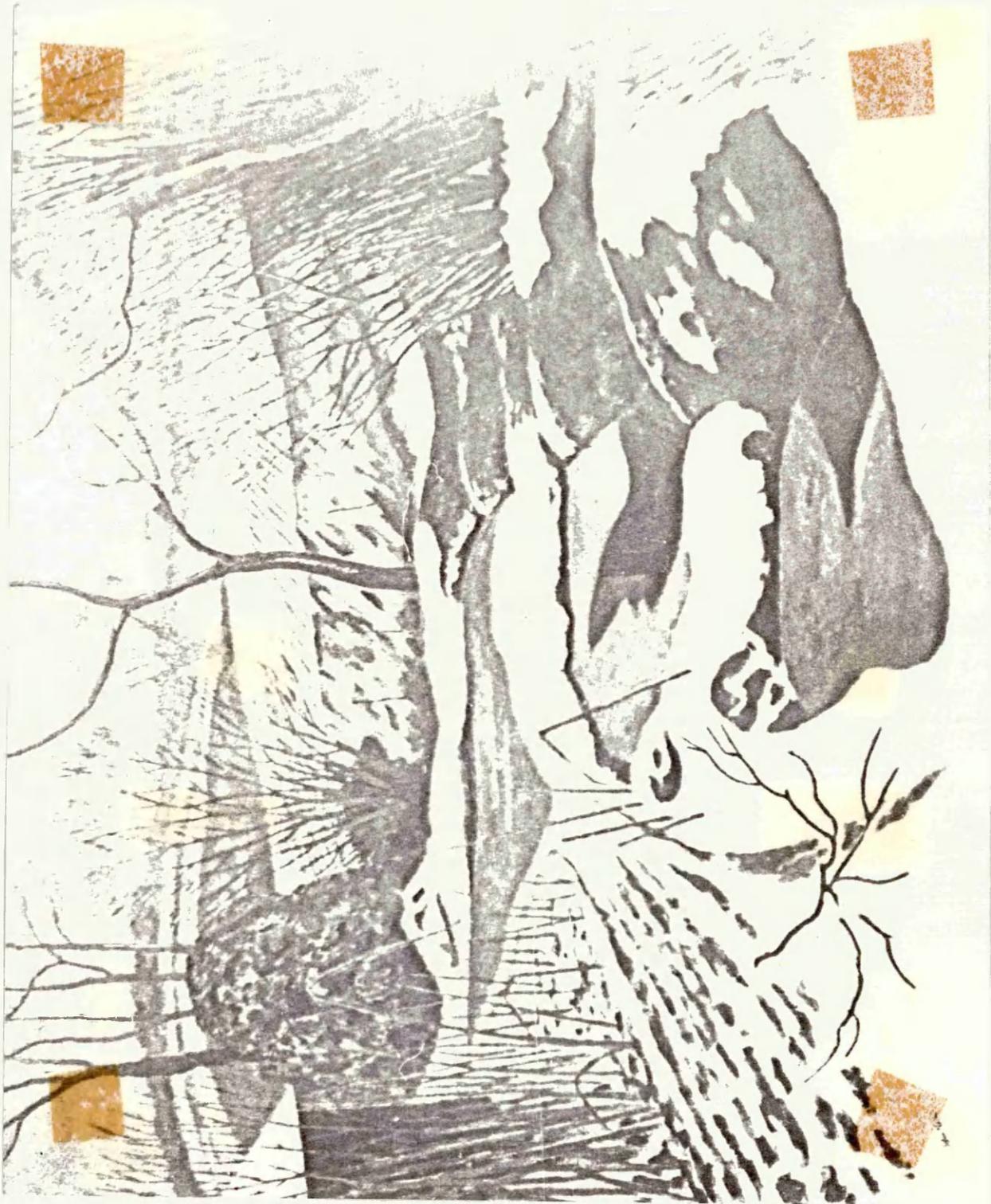


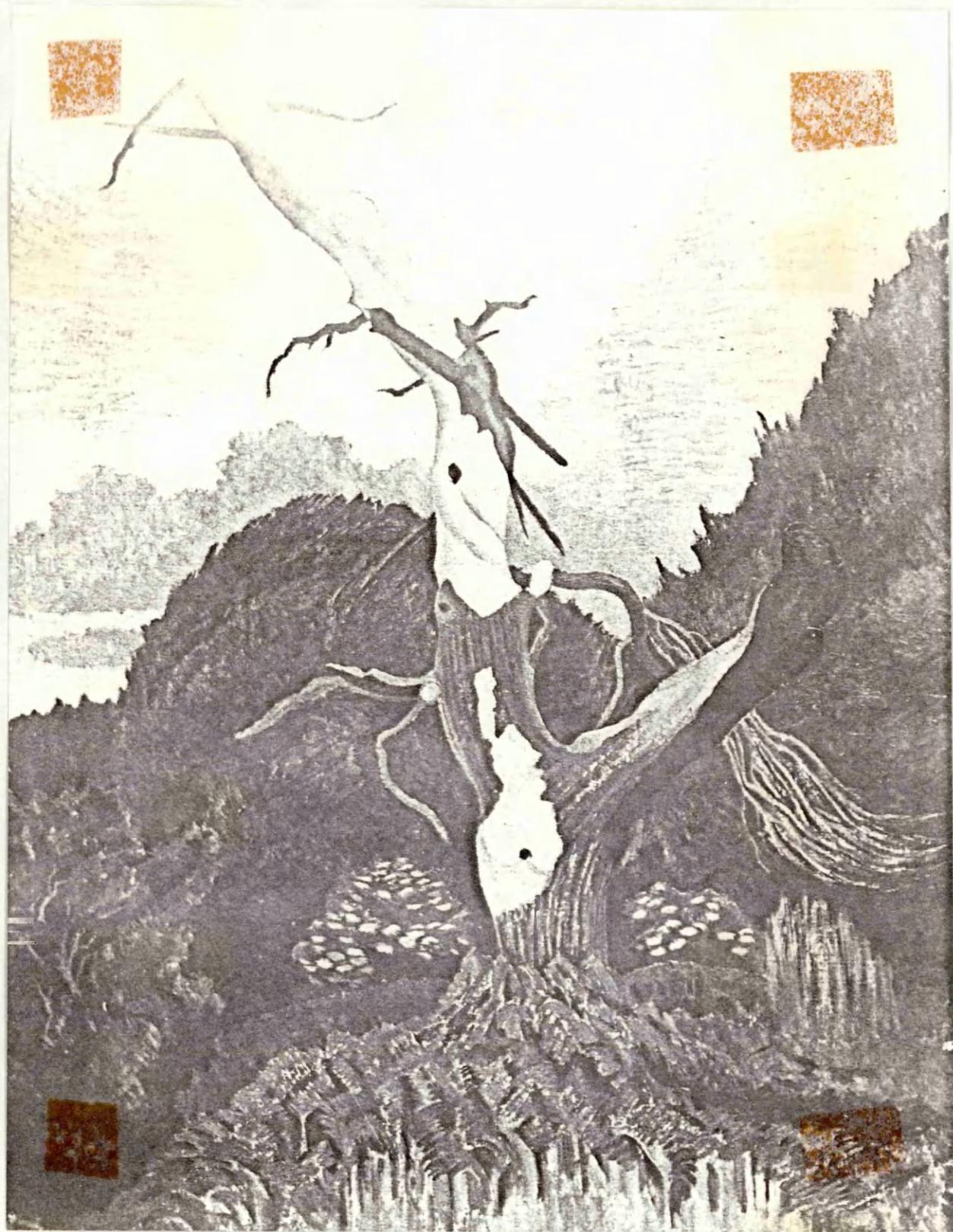


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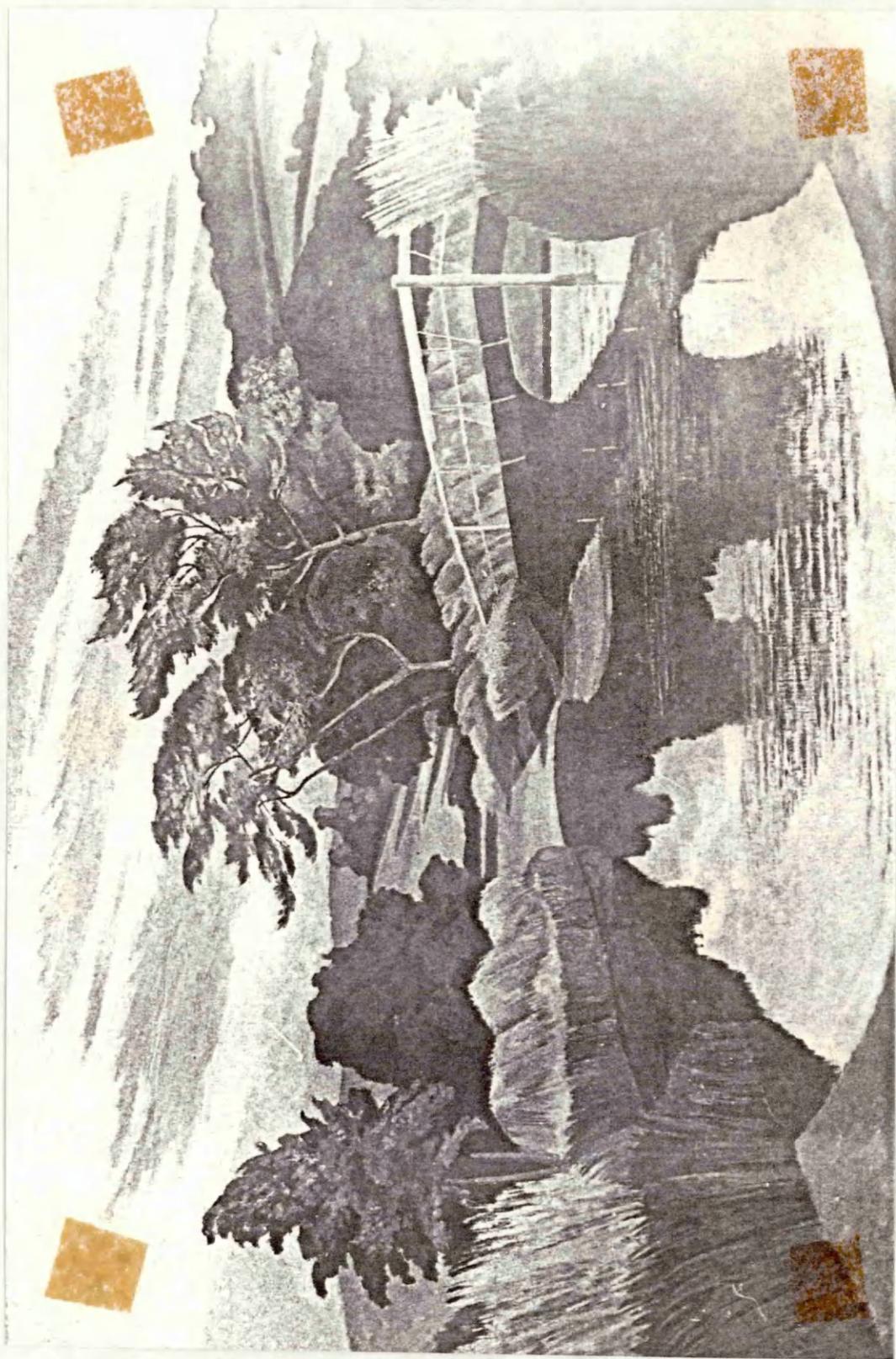


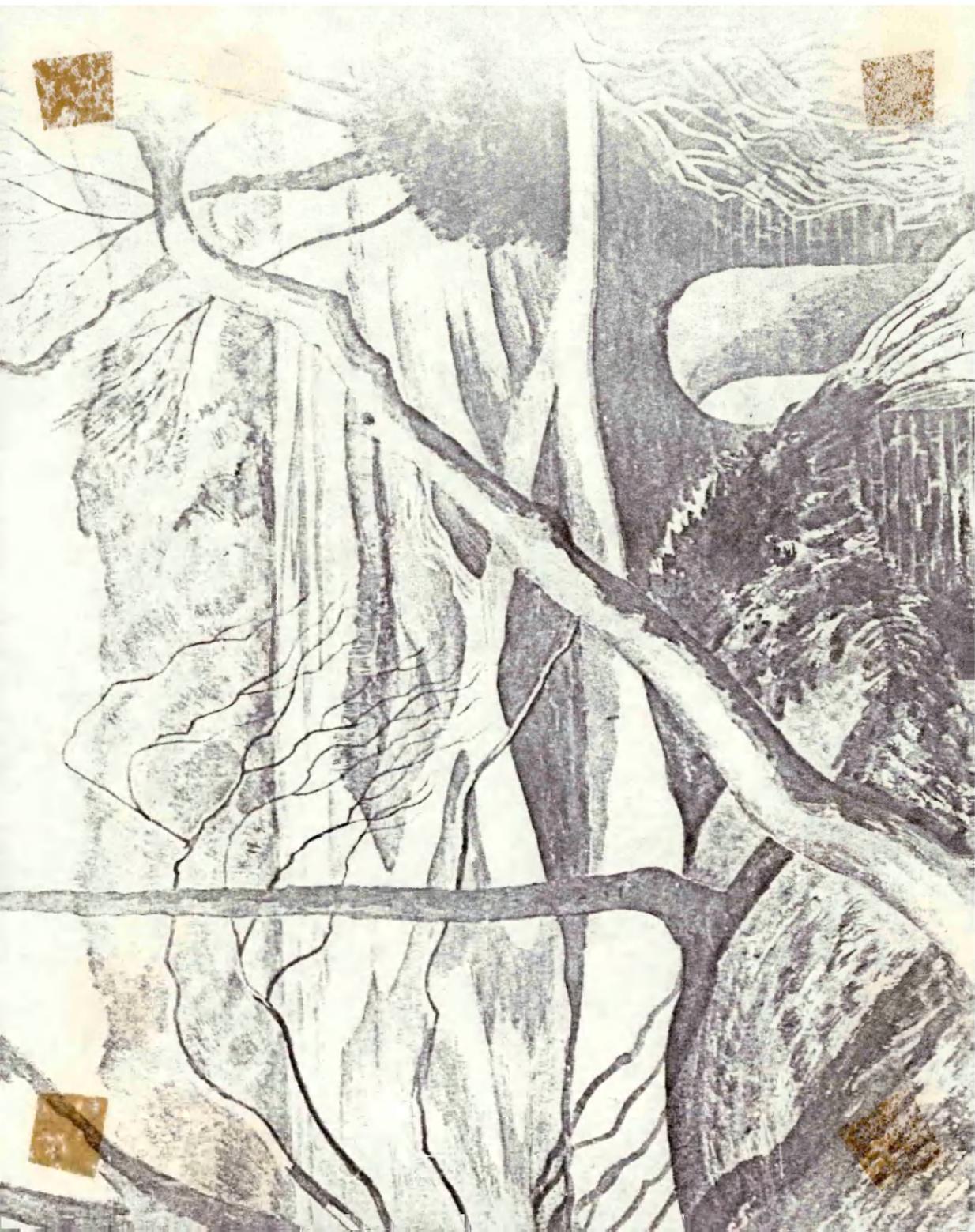
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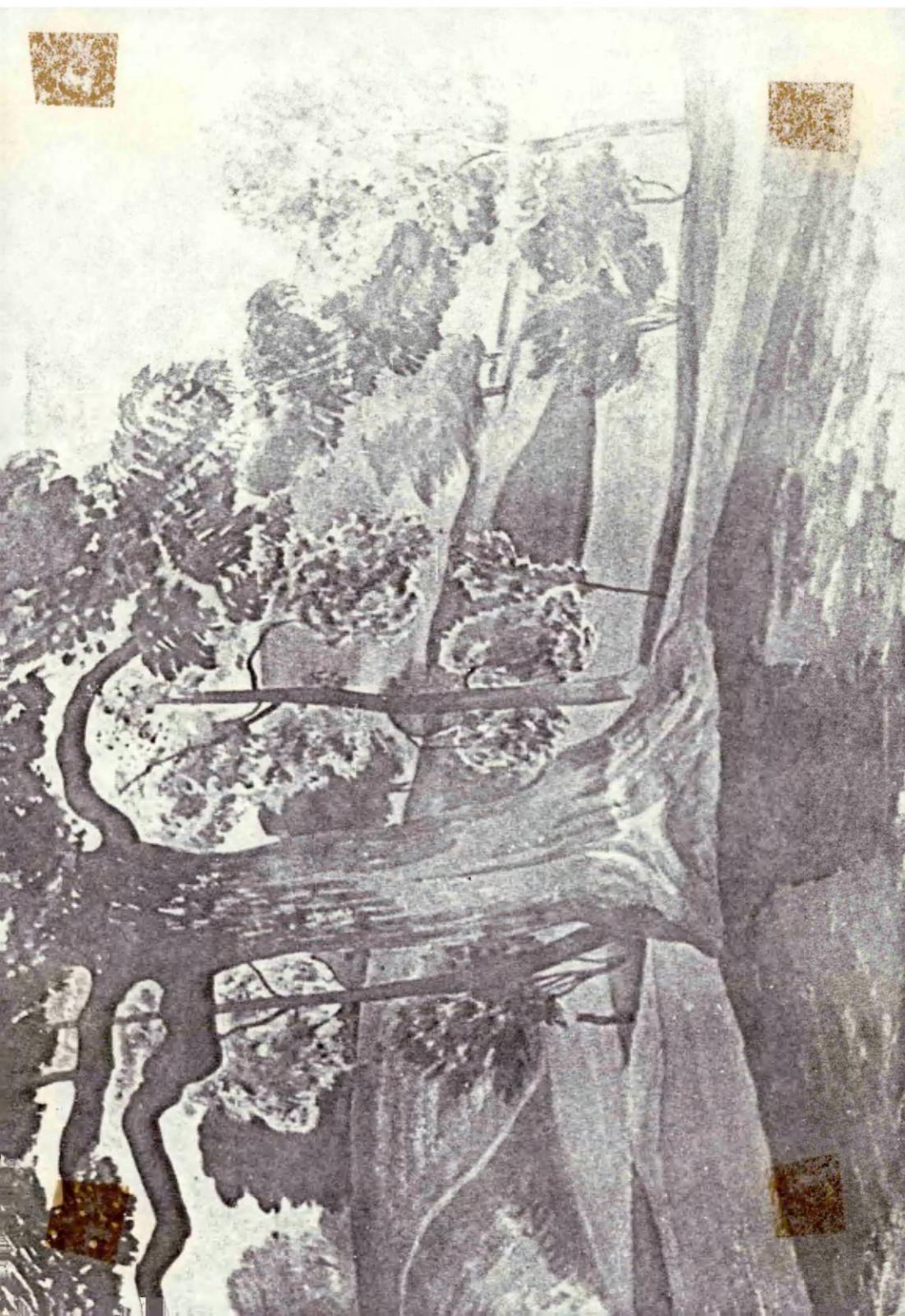


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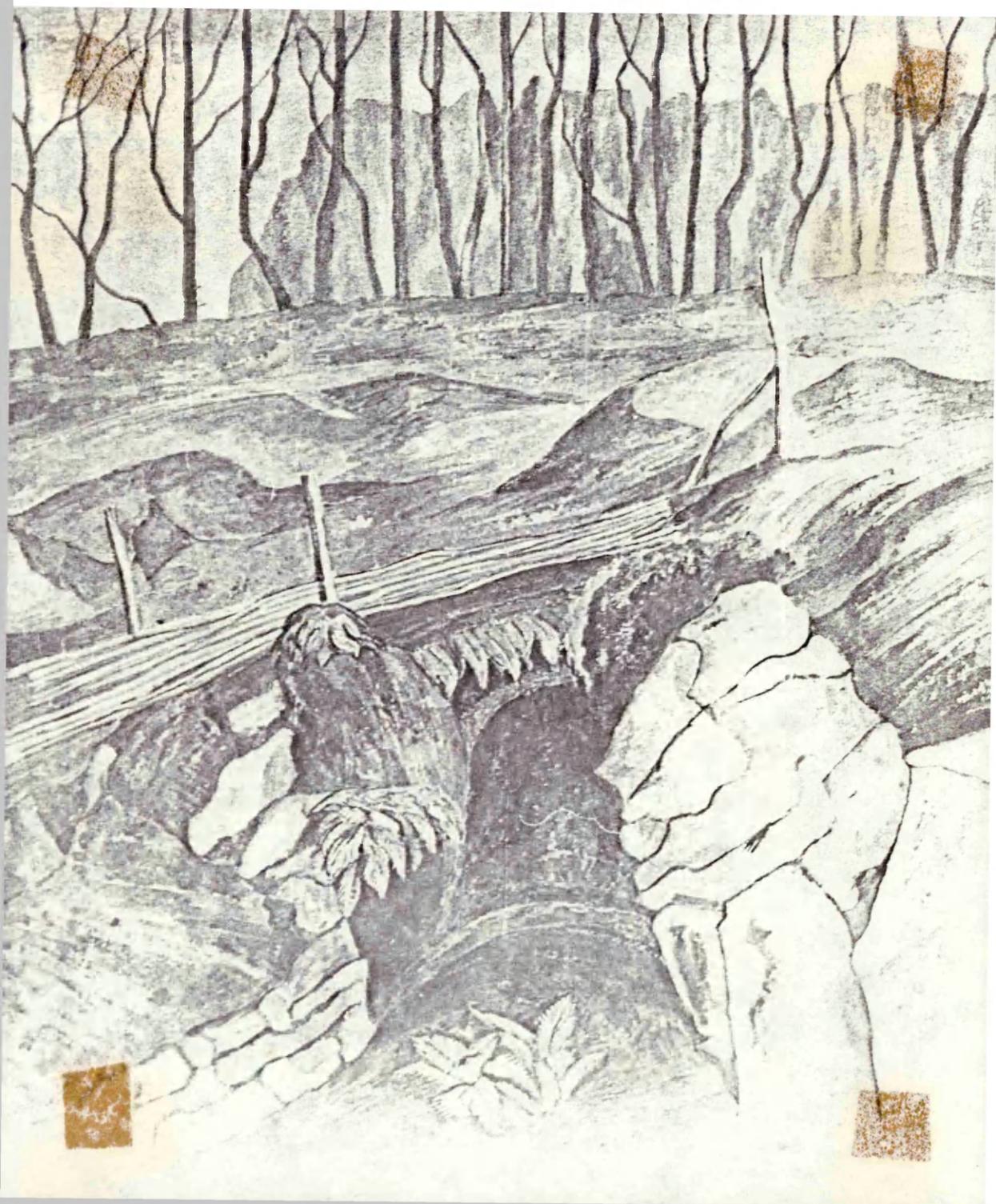


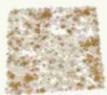














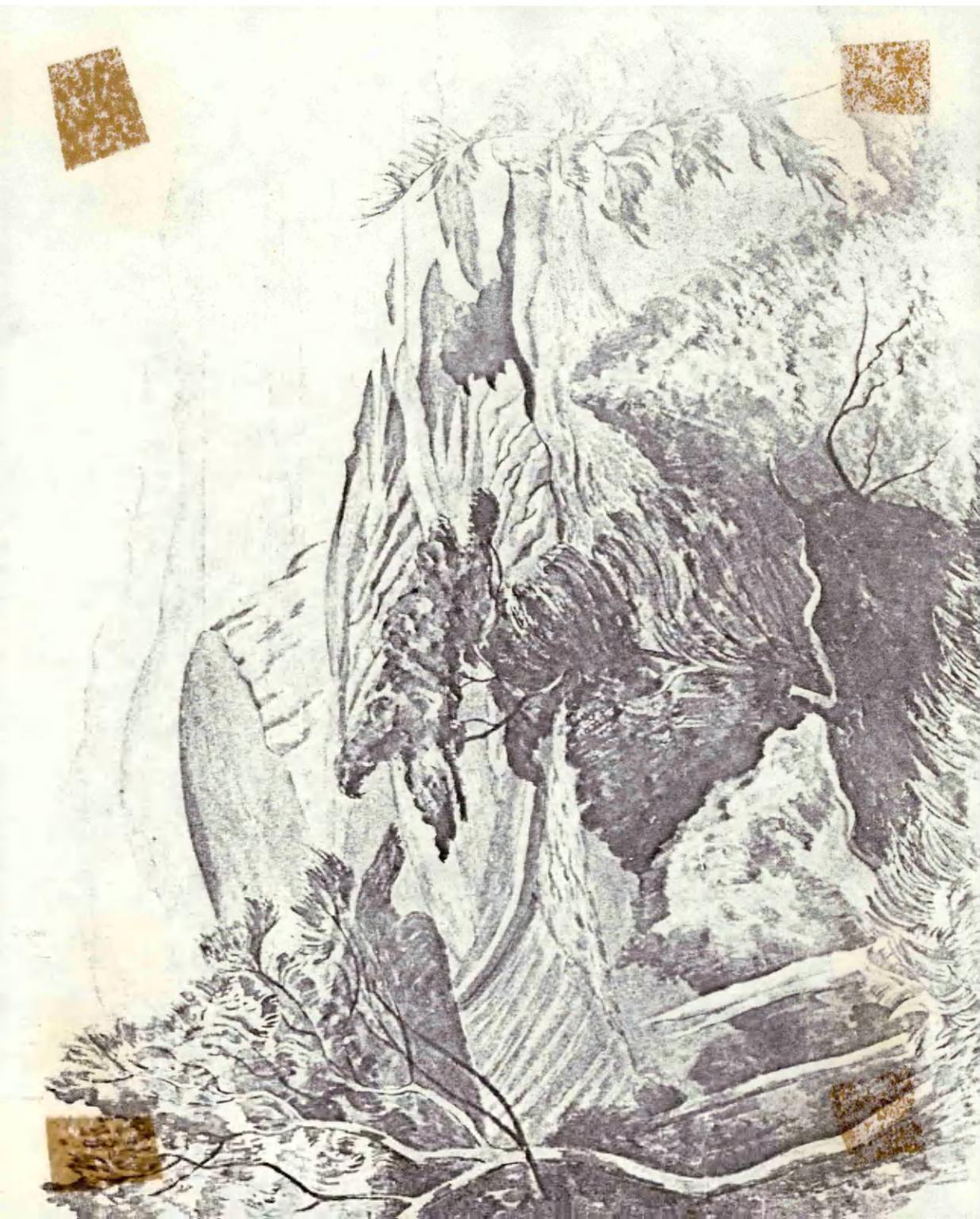


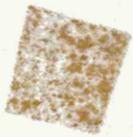
















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