

Claude McKay; Henry O. Flipper, the first Negro graduate of West Point; Dr. Ernest E. Just, the marine biologist.

The children entertained me. Charles, 15, lifted weights. Ruth Ann, 8, twirled a rolled window shade for a baton. Jonathan, who was 6, lifted weights too, and 8-month-old Ronald untied my shoelaces. Perhaps they were happy because they were together, because they were loved.

In a public school I met children who were not so lucky. Twelve-year-old Willie had just threatened to kill the principal. But she wasn't angry. She said: "He has no father, nobody to give him breakfast. Sometimes he gets food out of garbage cans. The average child accepts fate, but Willie is very bright. He sees TV, all the happy families in the commercials. He thinks nobody likes him, and he gets frantic."

For many a poor Negro woman—bent by work and responsibility and trouble—comfort lay in religion. How beautifully dressed they were, Sunday morning in Shiloh Baptist Church. How the singing filled the heart.

The pastor spoke of sin and redemption, of much to be thankful for. Little choruses chanted yes, yes. Emotion mounted. Ladies in nurses' caps fanned those overcome by their feelings. God will not leave you, said the pastor, God will speak to you. . . .

I sensed someone behind me quietly crying.

Spanish Harlem: Struggle Against Odds

Thanks to my friend Jan Voors from Belgium, who knows New York as few native New Yorkers do, I was also invited into a home in Spanish Harlem, where every block is a fortress and outsiders are rarely welcome. "But you'll find Puerto Ricans exceedingly courteous," Jan said.

The head of the family was 18-year-old Juan. His mother served coffee and disappeared. Women don't talk to strangers. The little children had been sent out of the room, but they kept peeking.

This family was getting ahead. The oldest girl was valedictorian of her parochial high school class and would go to college. Juan, formerly prominent in a street gang, worked in a camera store. But it hadn't been easy.

In blocks like this, where so many felt cowed and exploited by the world outside—here the heroes were those who were tough, who took no nonsense from anyone, who made money by any means, even if it meant selling narcotics. Heroin made some happy, some of the time; but then came a thousand worms crawling in one's stomach, a thousand arrows sticking one's skin.

Was it surprising that people turned to the *botánicas*, the shops with miraculous powders and candles? There one could also find a *bruja*, a witch, who could summon up the spirits of the air or perhaps the even more powerful spirits of the water, to make others do one's will. This kind of magic existed in the West Indies before the Spaniards came. It thrives in New York today.

Few Jobs Left for the Unskilled

That newcomers from the countryside suffer in the city is nothing new. Photographs in the Museum of the City of New York, on Fifth Avenue, tell the truths of 70 years ago: Juan's block was a mess of shanties then. Hardly fit for pigs, the newspapers called them. But they were full of squatters straight from the farms of Ireland. The threat then wasn't heroin, it was tuberculosis.

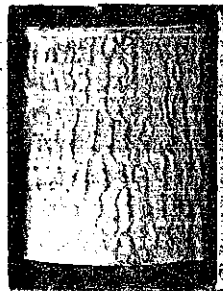
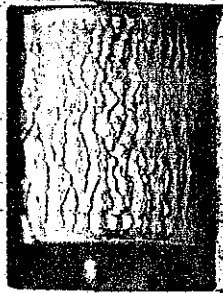
At least there had been plenty of work for cheap immigrant labor. That's what had brought New York its greatness. Descendants of the shanty people were affluent and influential citizens today.

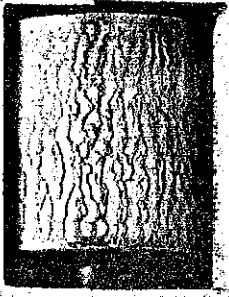
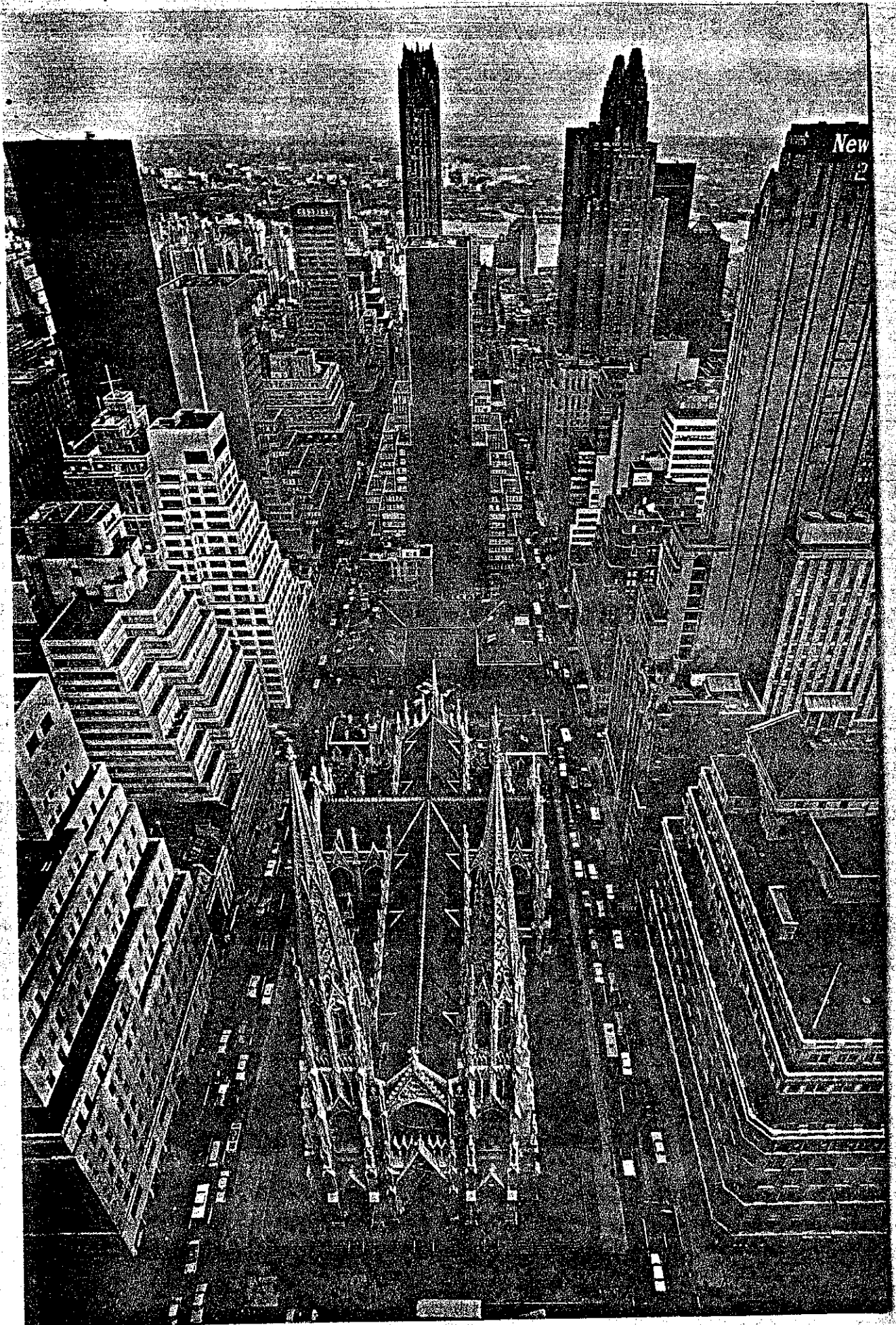
Wasn't there still plenty of work for everybody? I would see for myself. I'd be a dishwasher.

I visited employment agencies, big hotels, restaurant chains. No luck. Then I walked from one restaurant to another. A friendly policeman sent me to a cafeteria, but they didn't need me.

"We carry the world's finest *kopchunkas*," said a sign on the old lower East Side. That was Russian, meaning dried whitefish. Schapiro's Kosher Wines now faced a pig glowing in neon—the sign of a *carnicería*, a Puerto Rican meat store—and the men waiting at the barber's joked in Spanish and played guitars. No job on Rivington Street.

Twin spires of St. Patrick's Cathedral rise 330 feet above Fifth Avenue, yet seem lost amid the structures surrounding the block-long Gothic-style church. Before its bronze doors, Francis Cardinal Spellman applauded 100,000 of New York's sons and daughters of Erin as they marched up the avenue during the St. Patrick's Day parade last March. St. Patrick is patron saint of the Archdiocese of New York.





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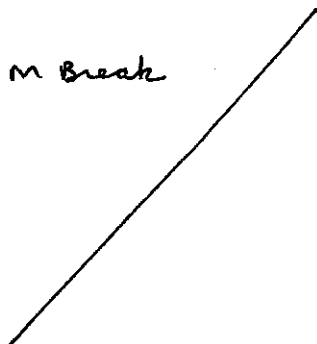
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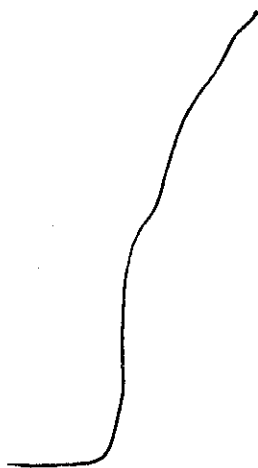
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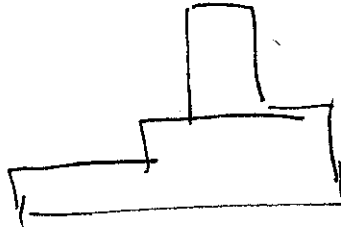
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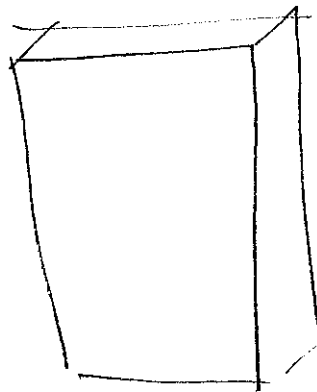


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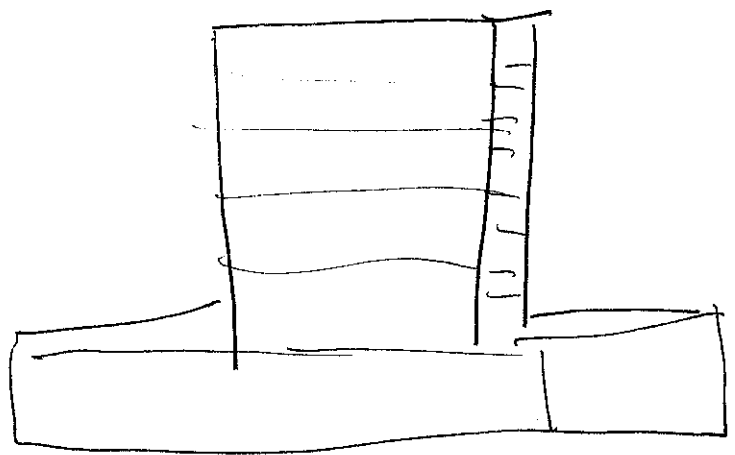
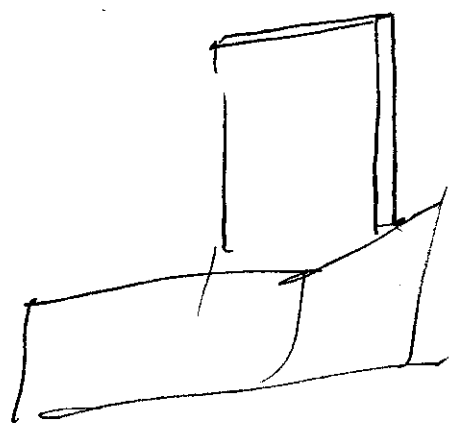
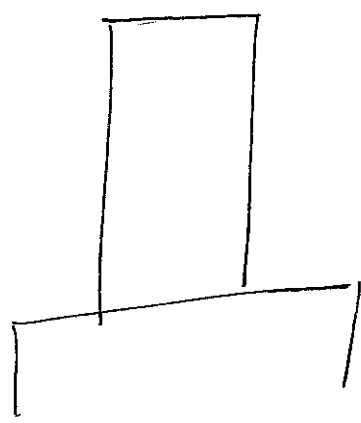
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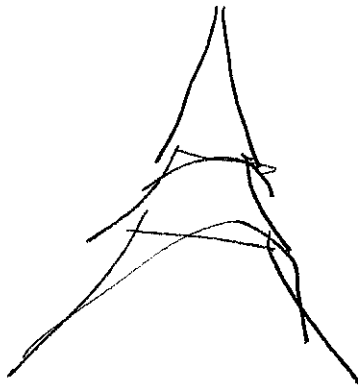
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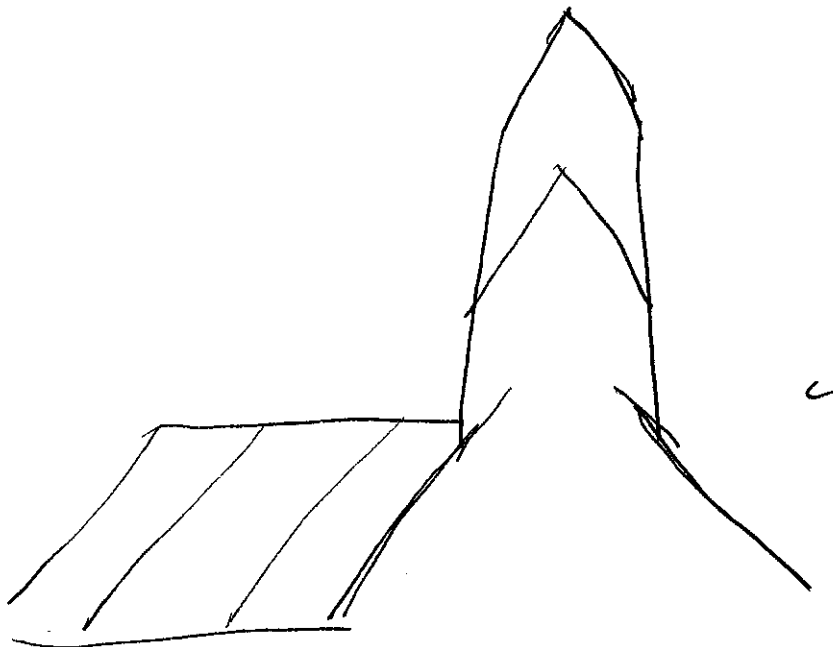
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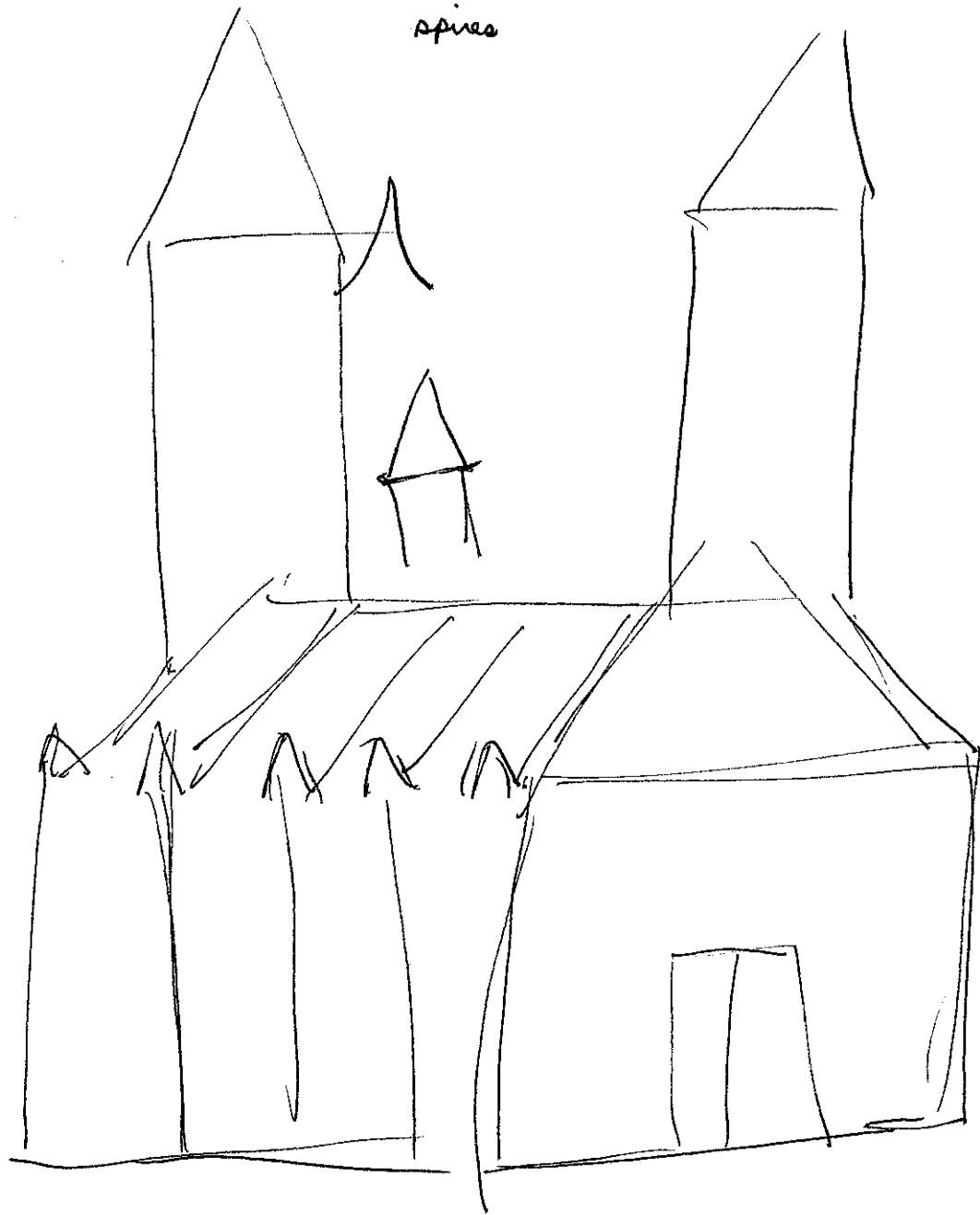
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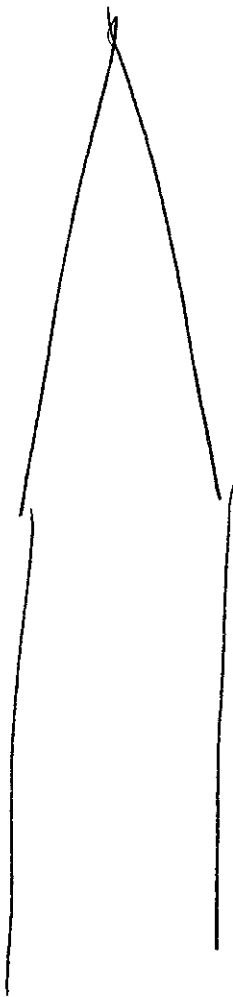
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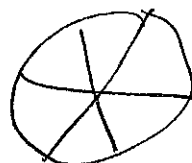
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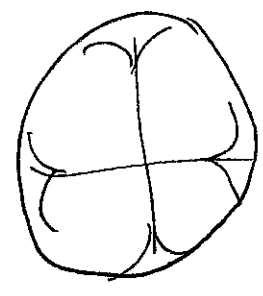
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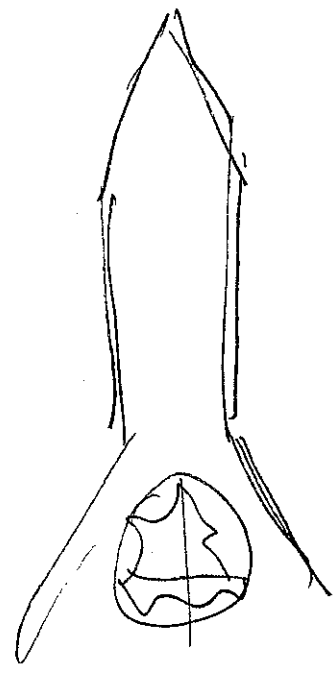
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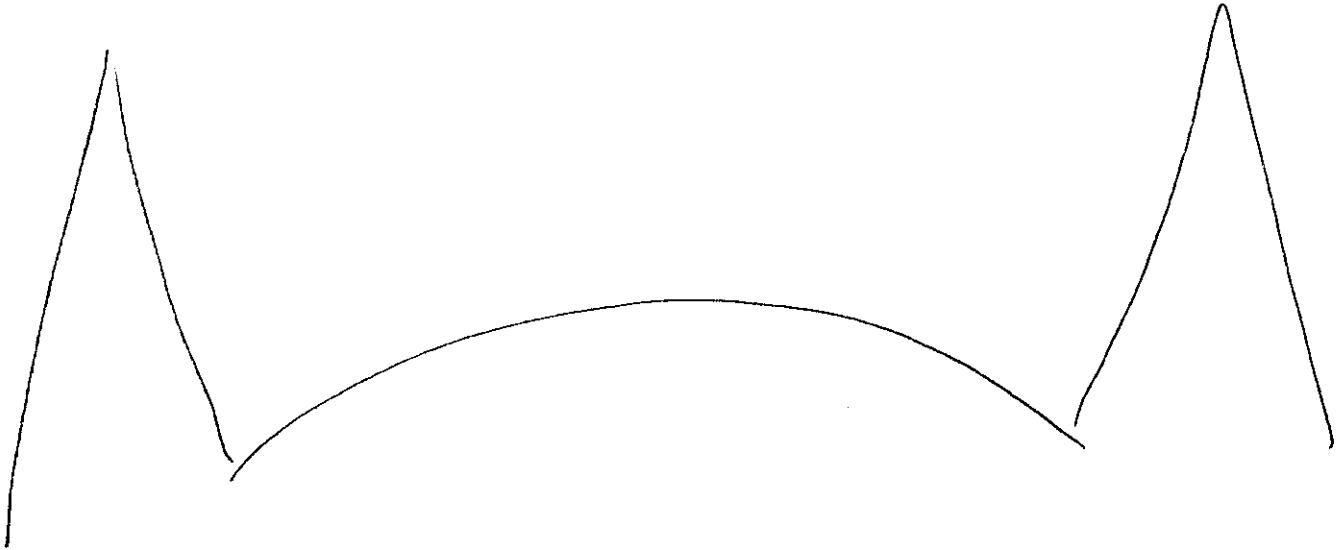
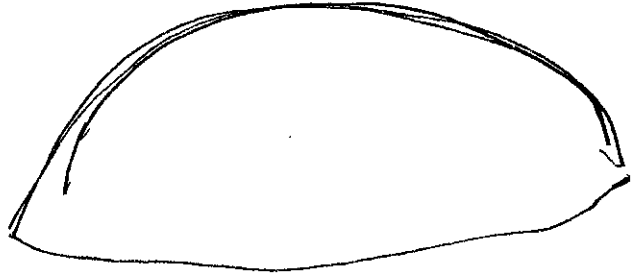
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