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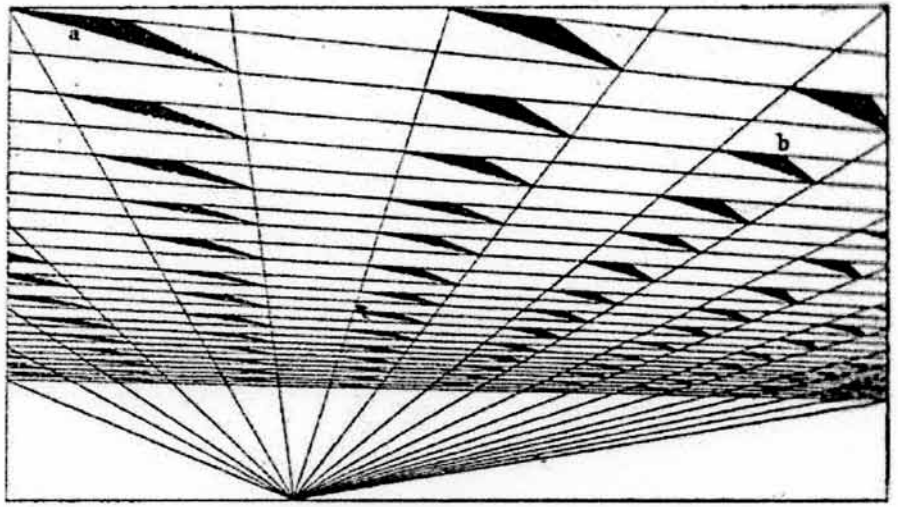
diego marcon cloud studies

DIEGO MARCON
CLOUD STUDIES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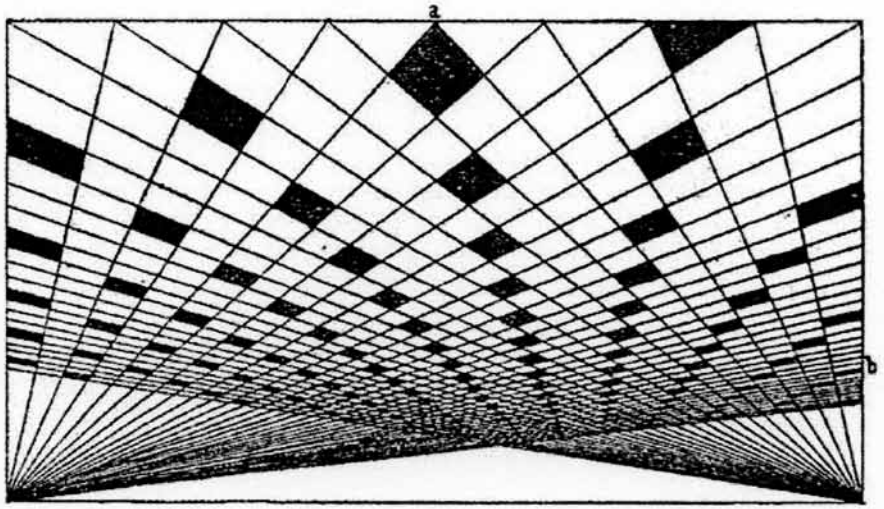
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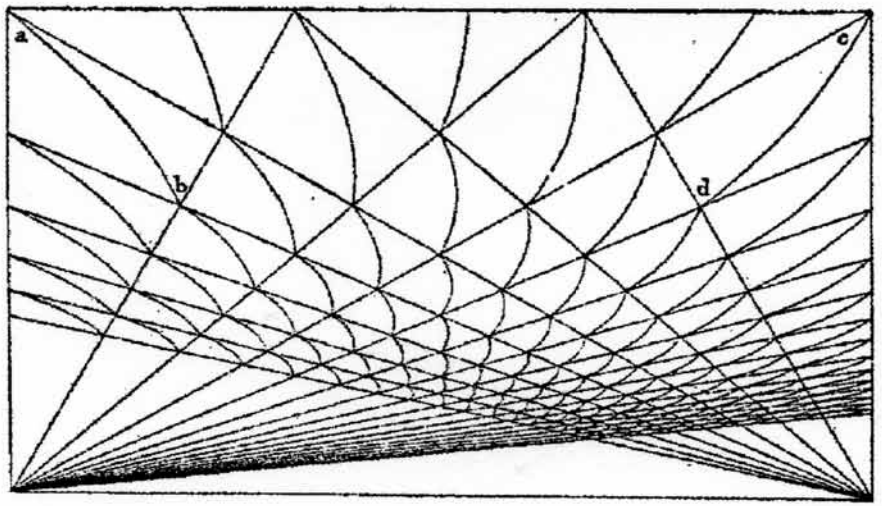
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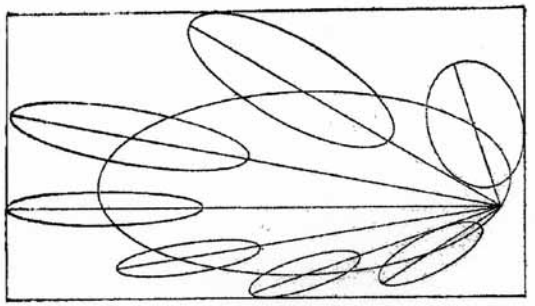

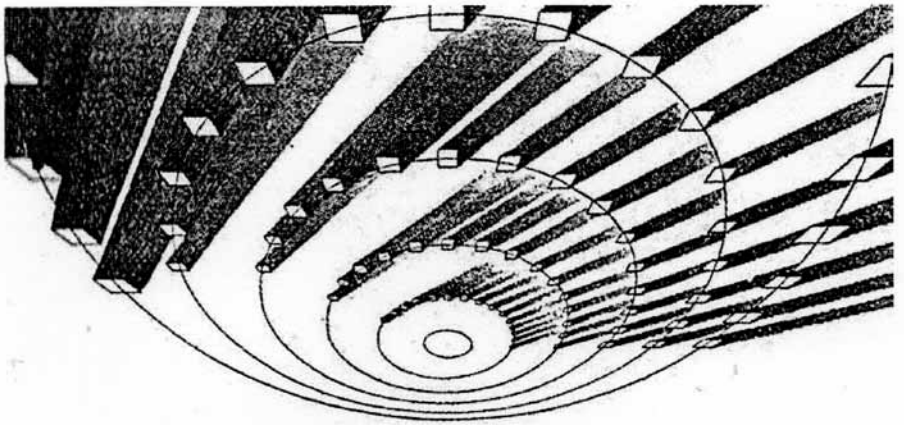

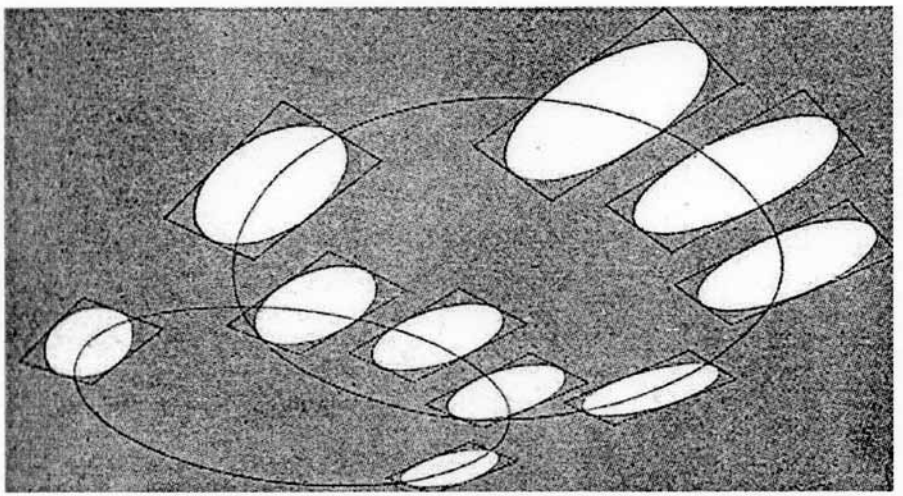

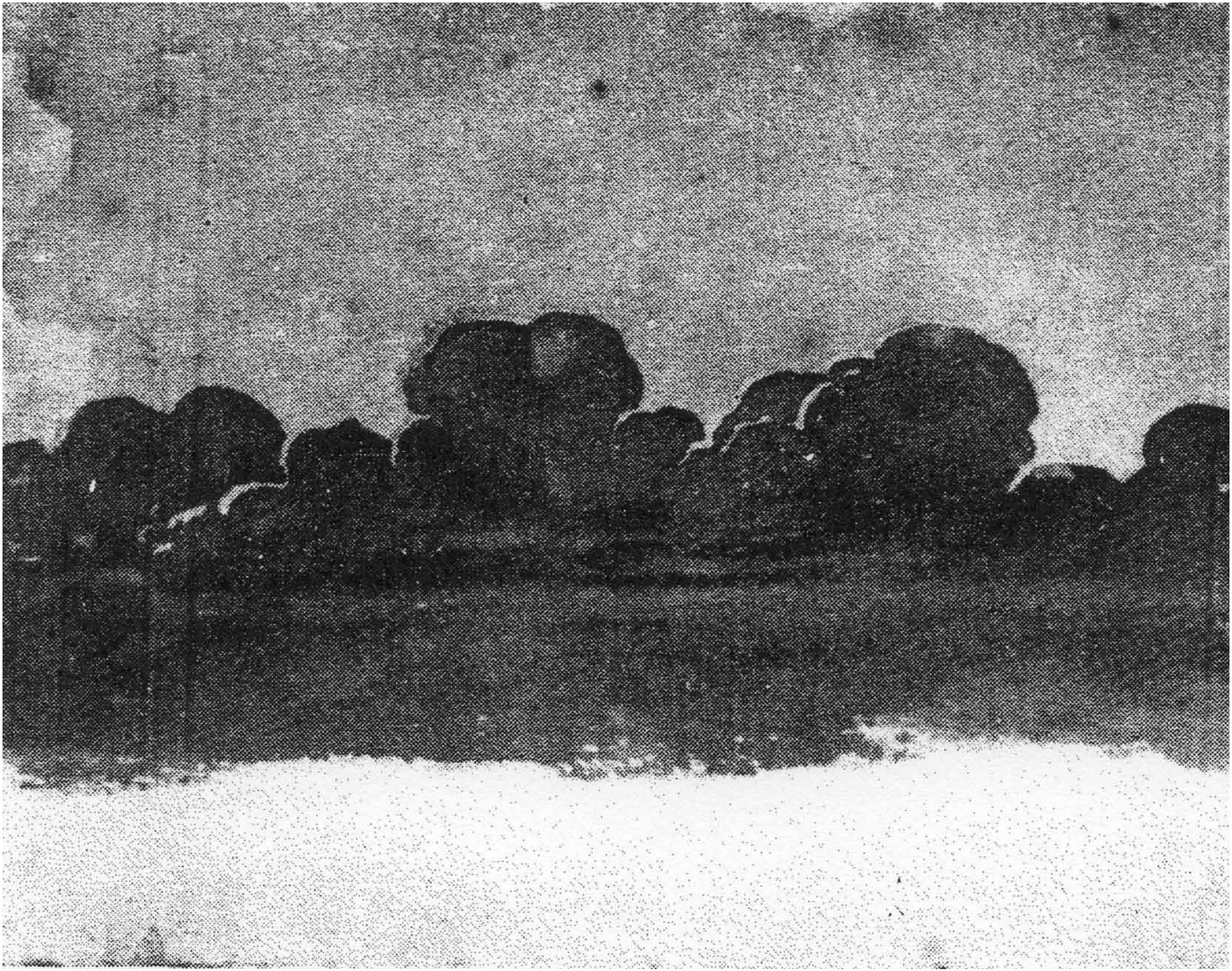

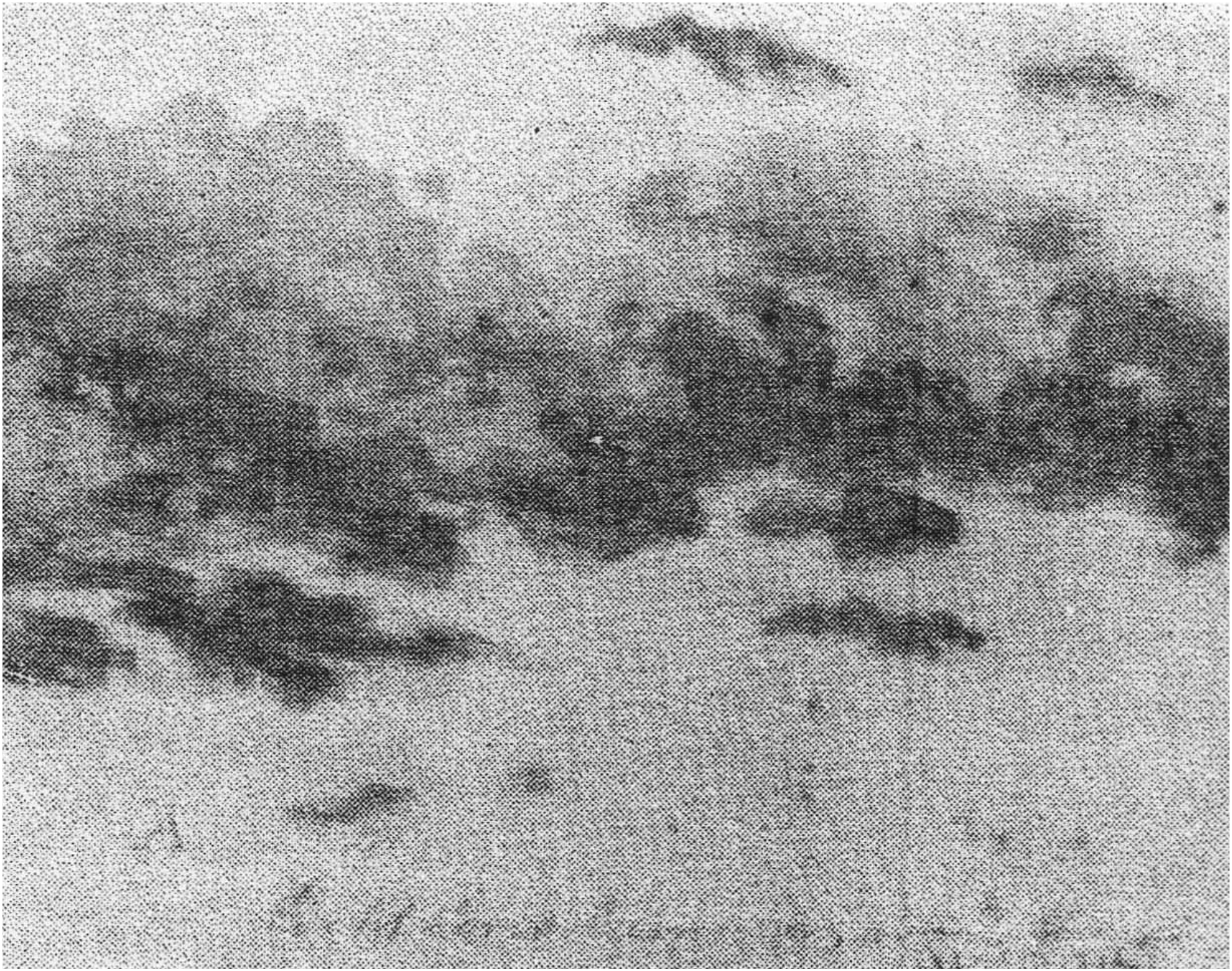

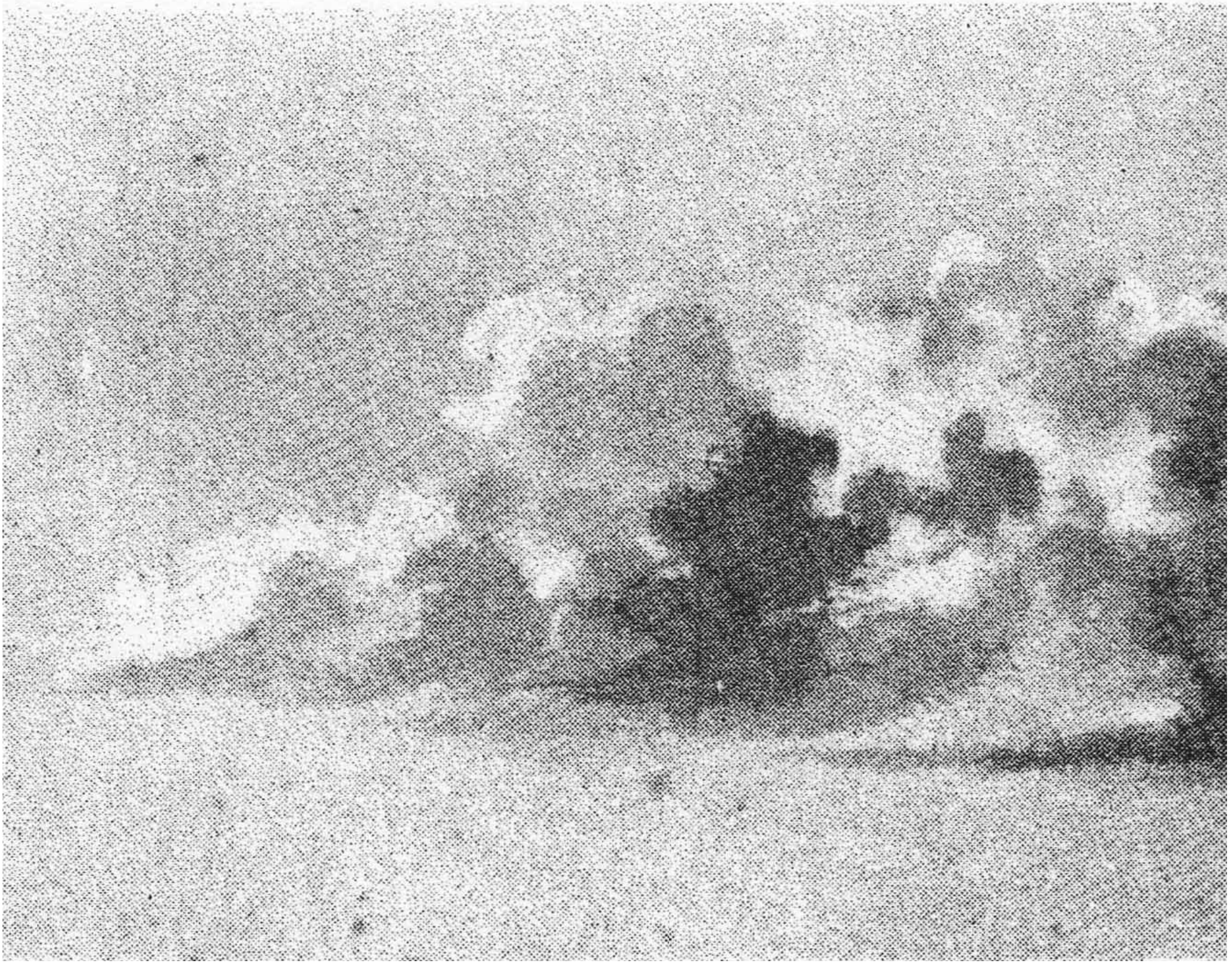

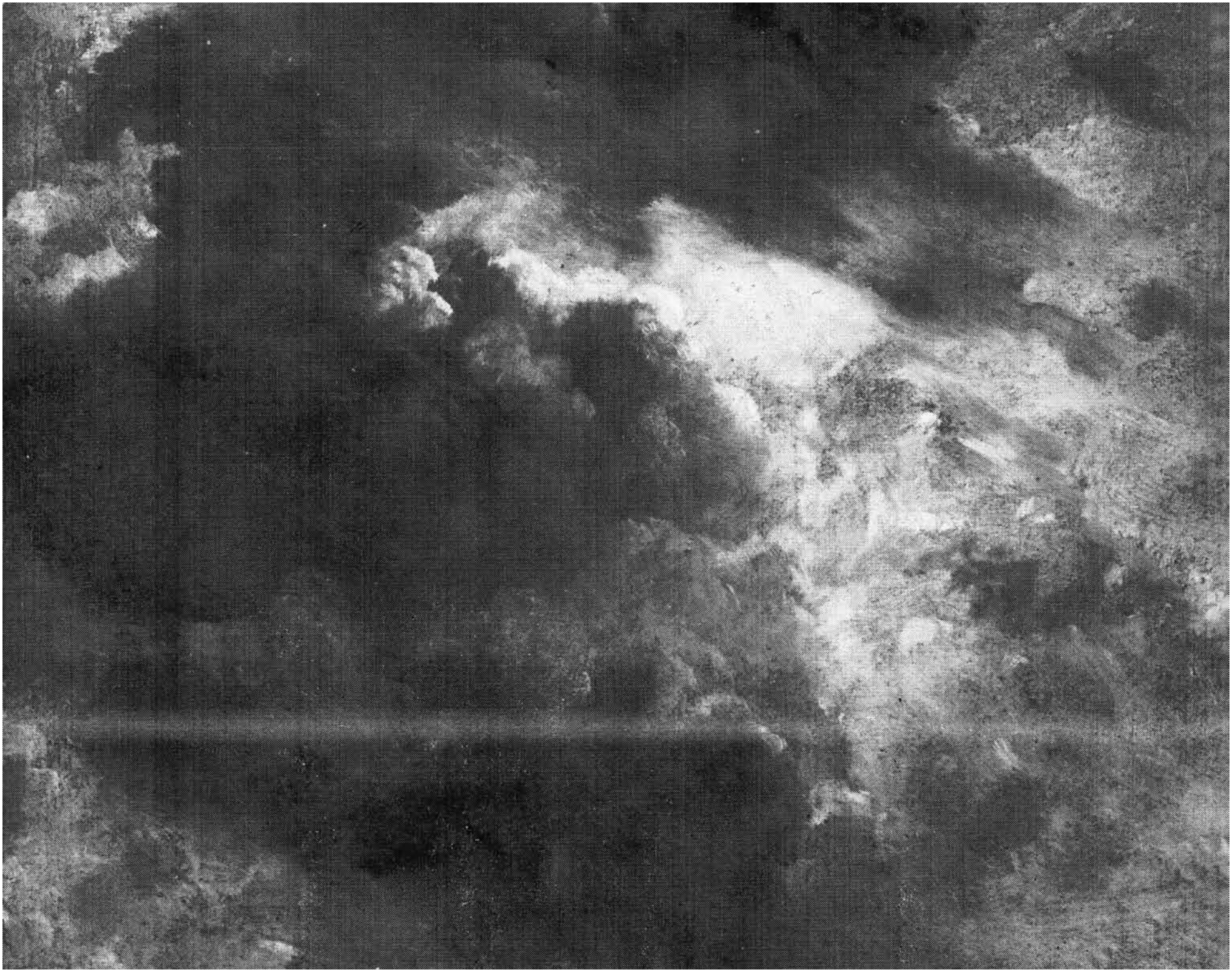

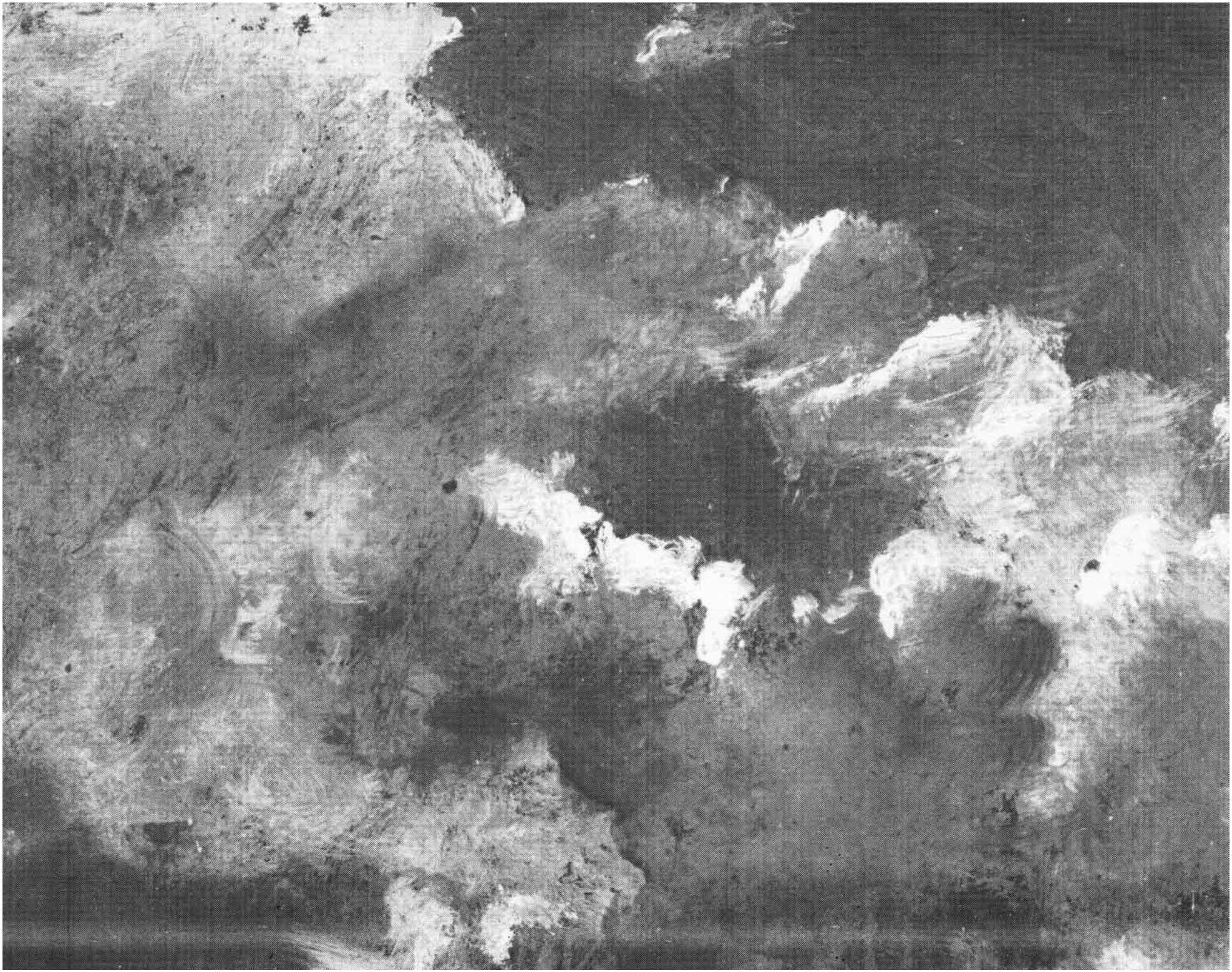

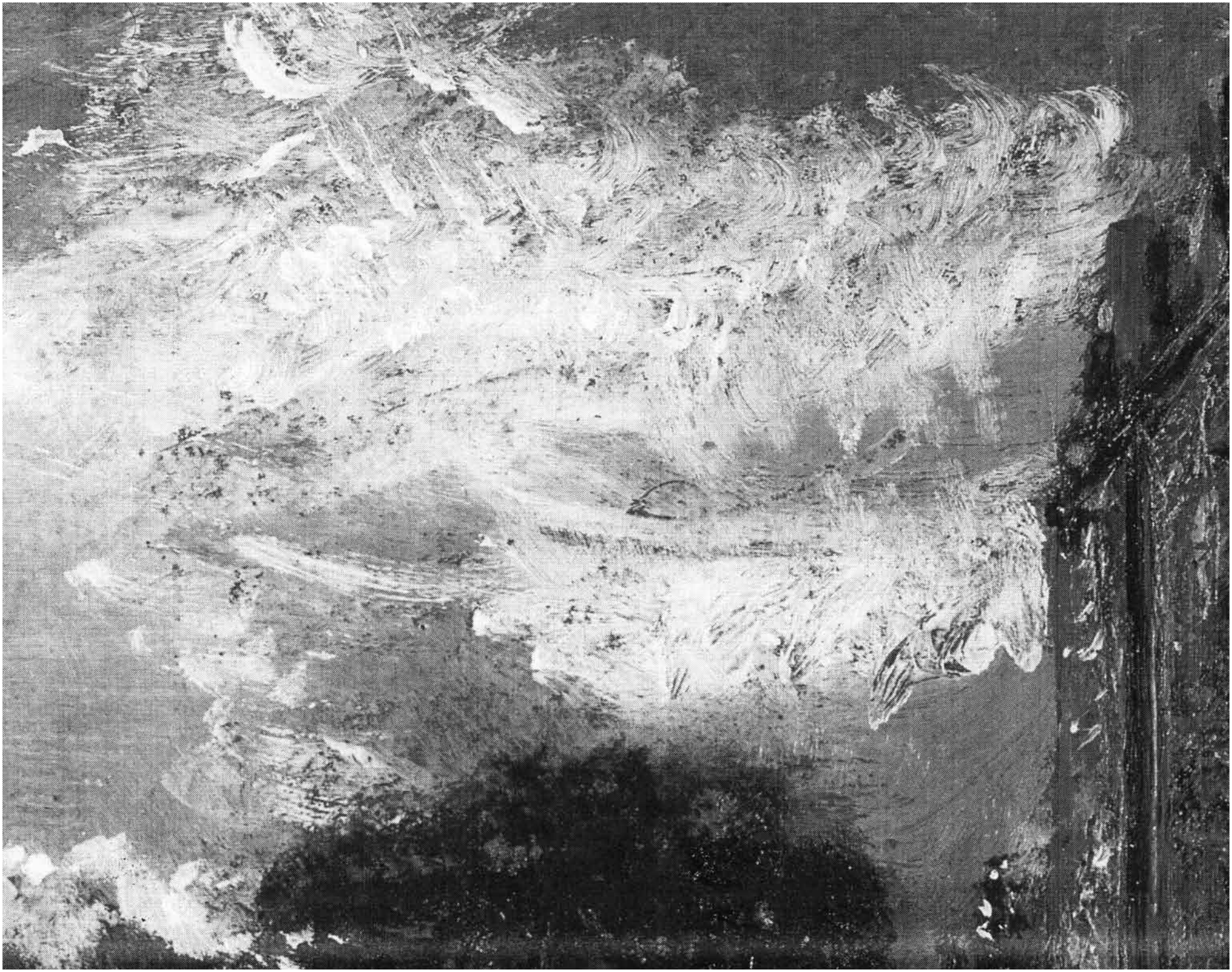

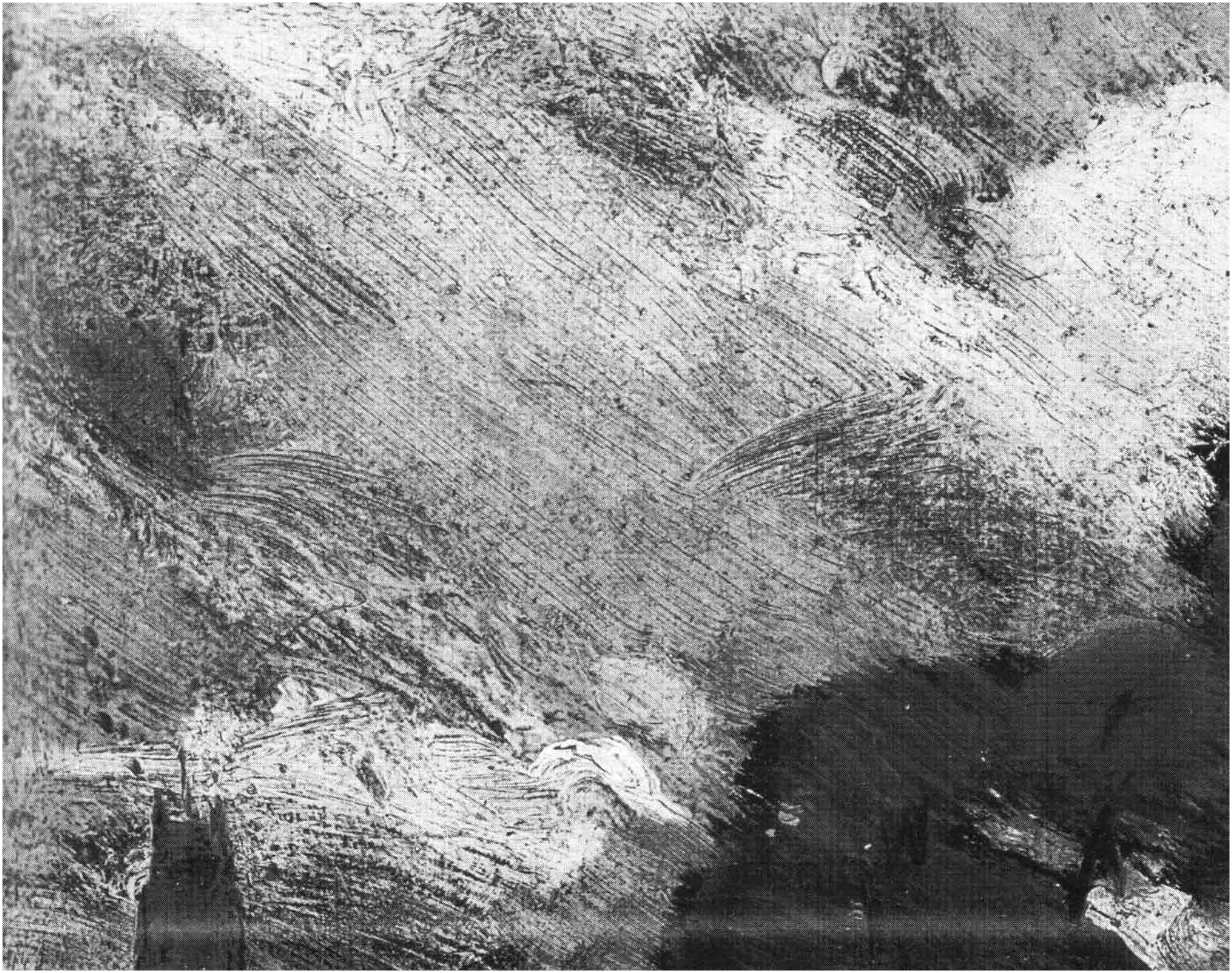

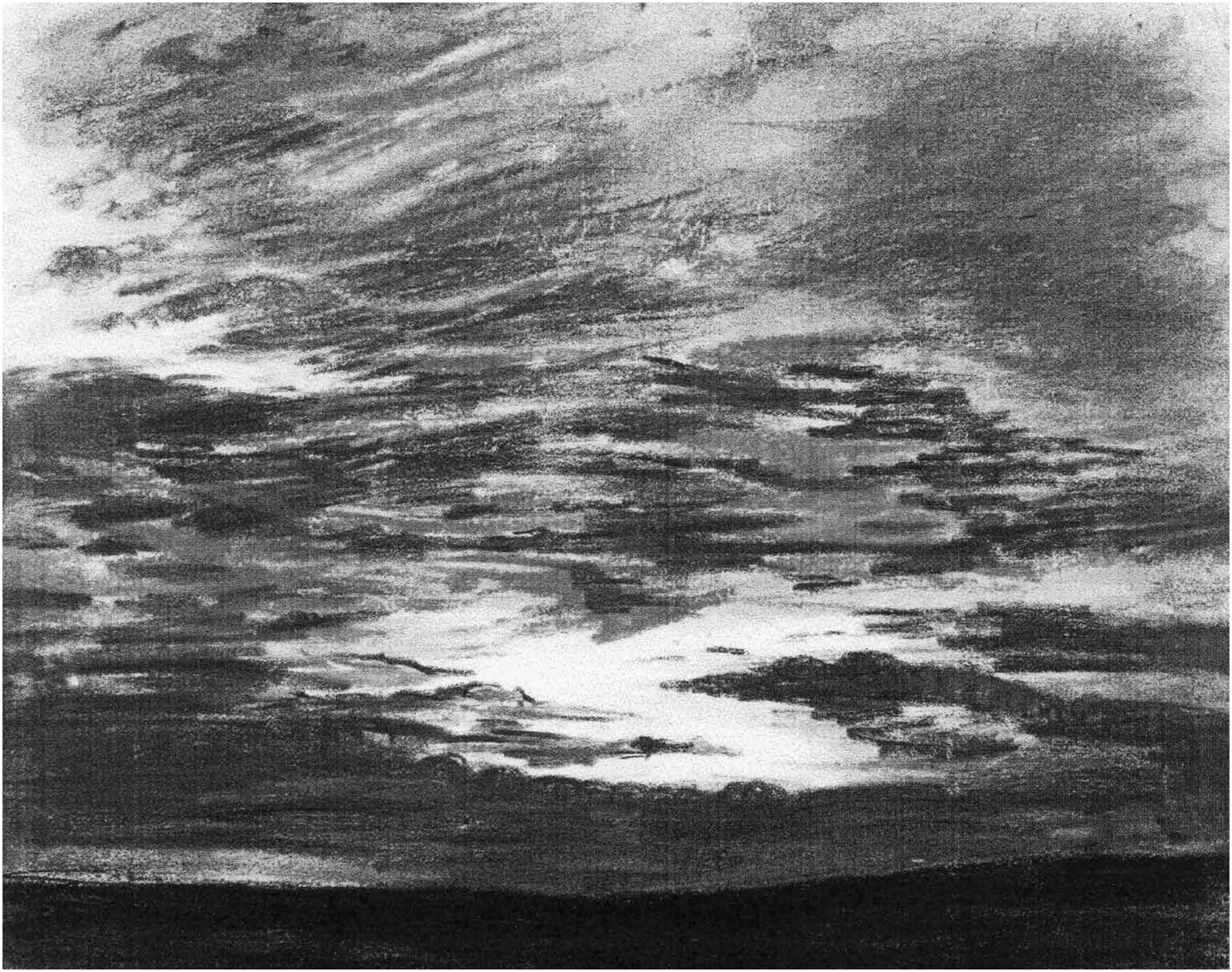

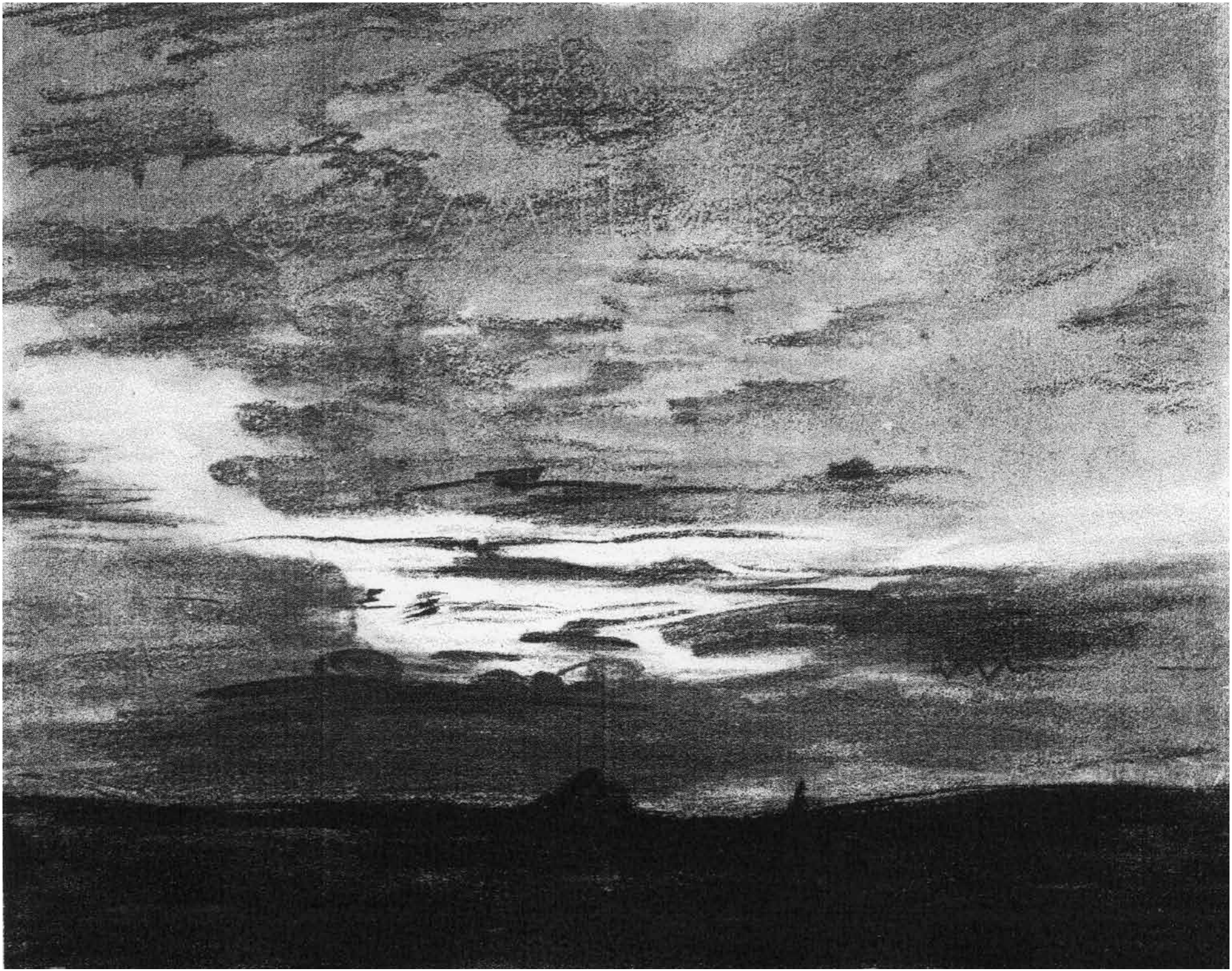

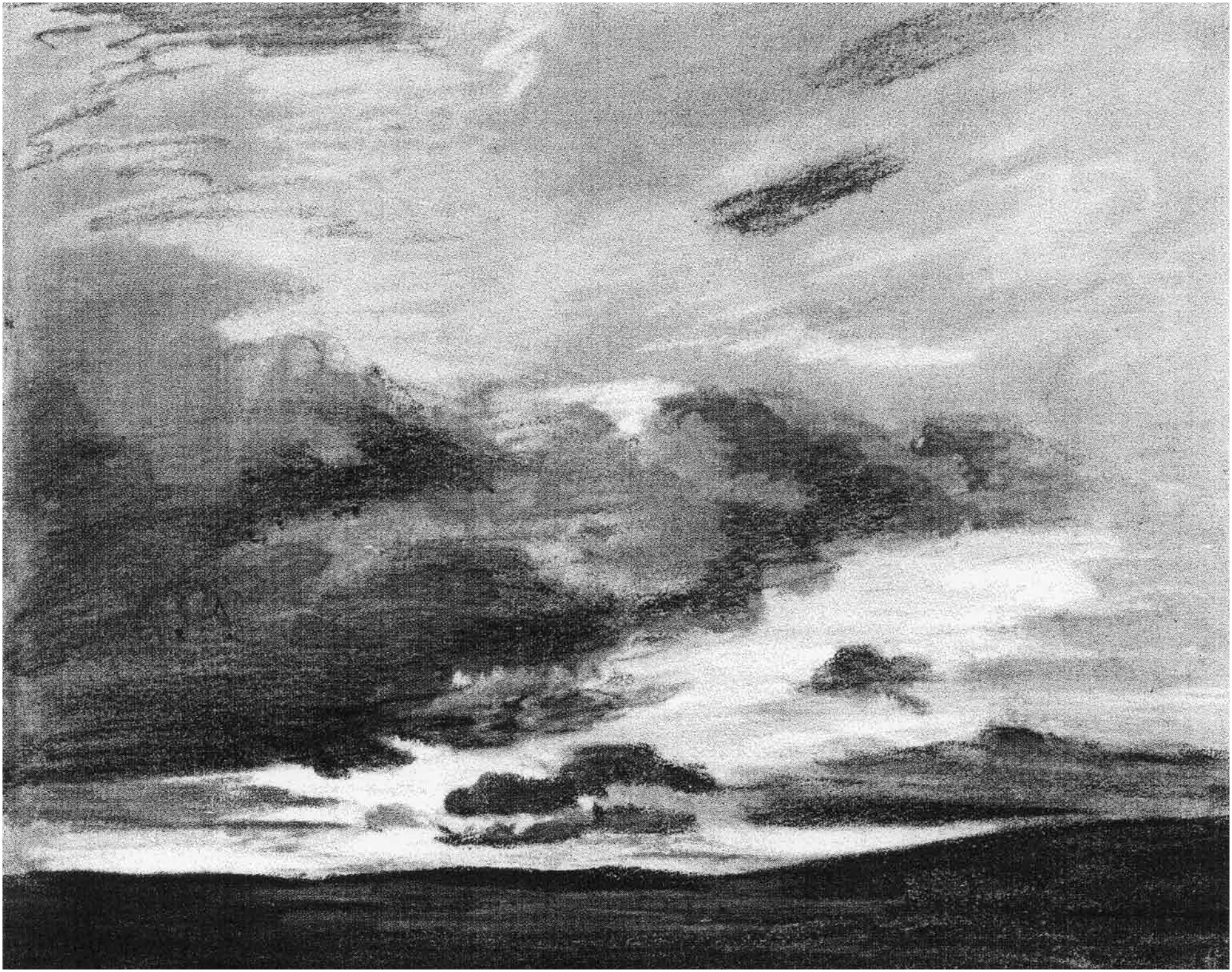

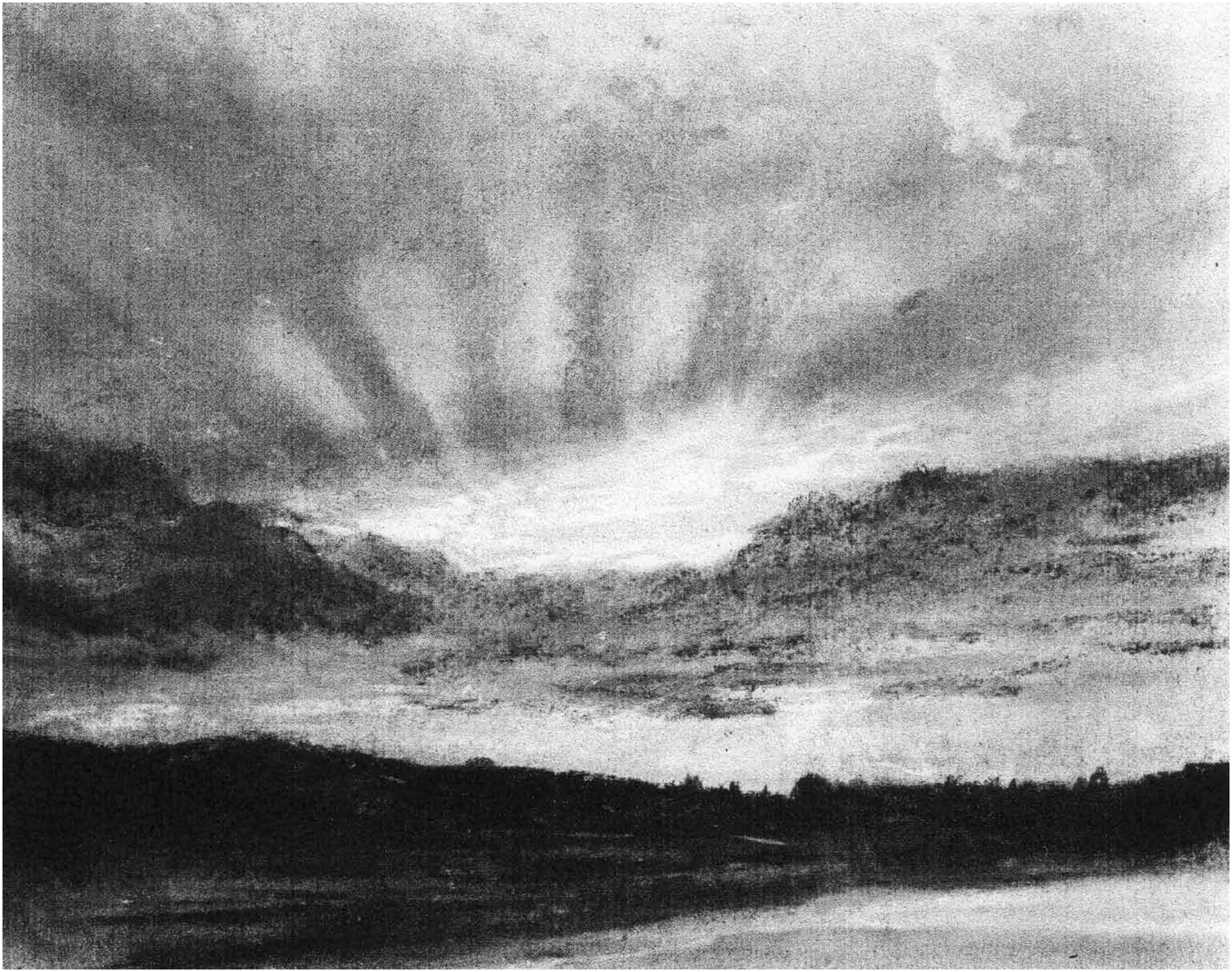

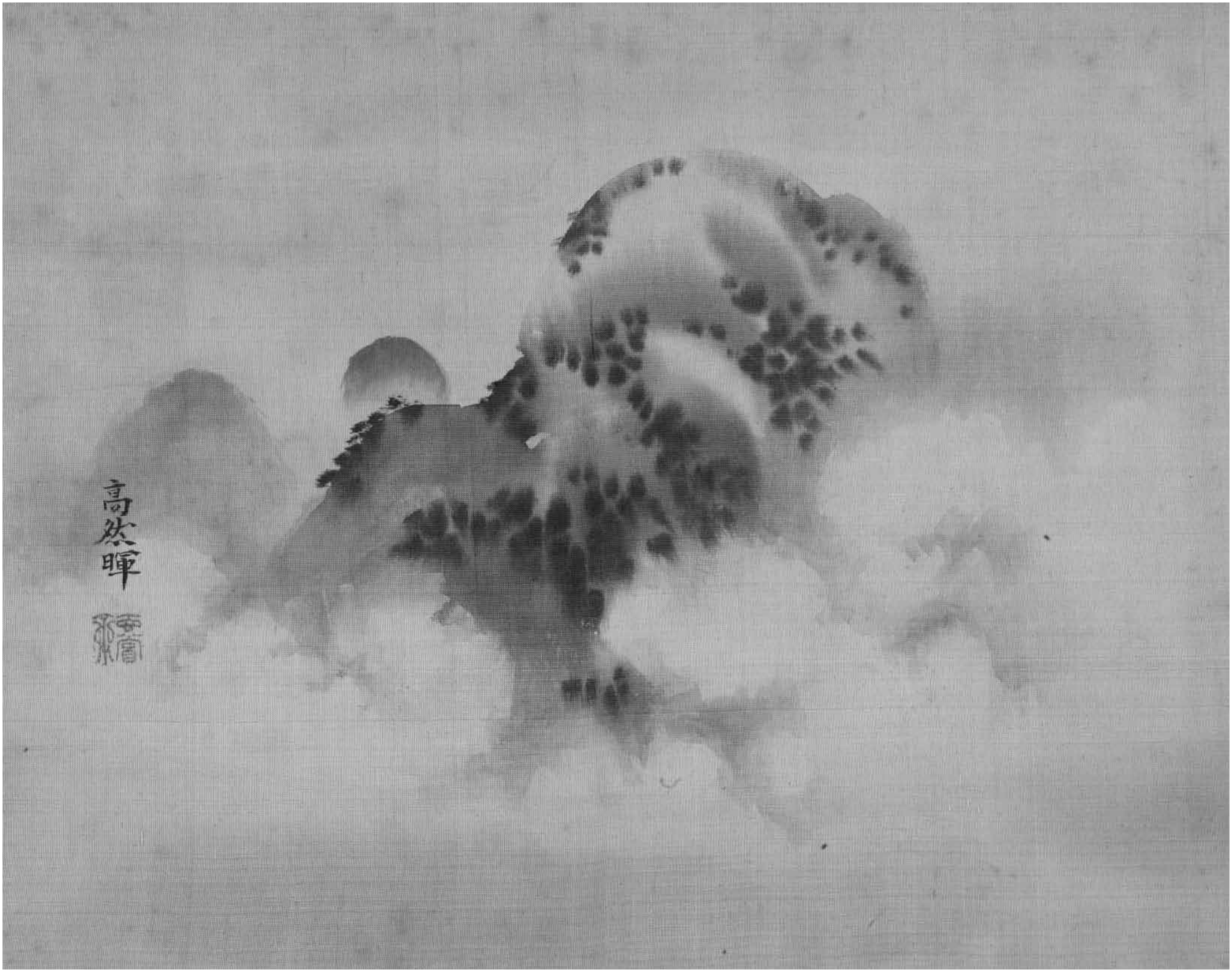
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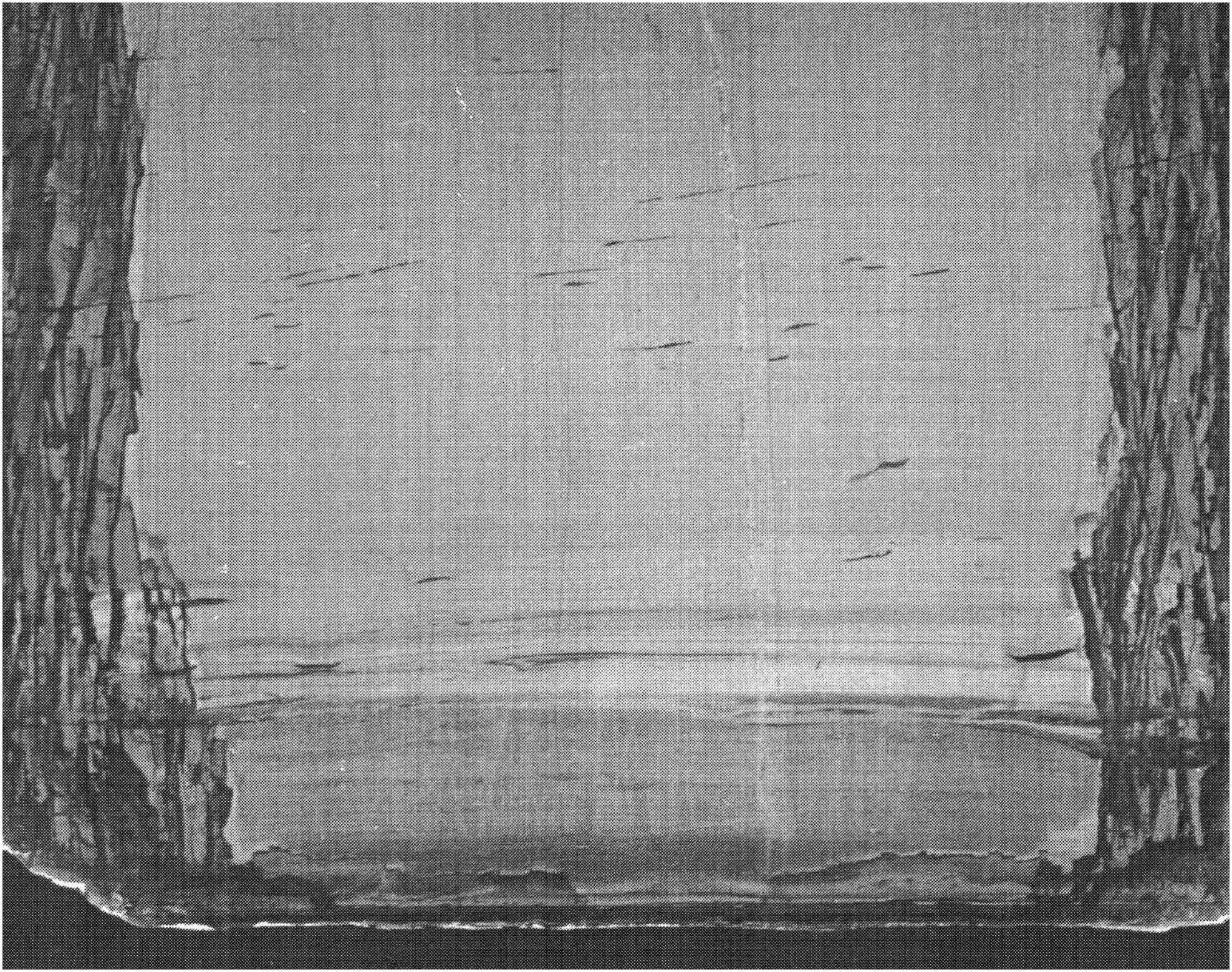

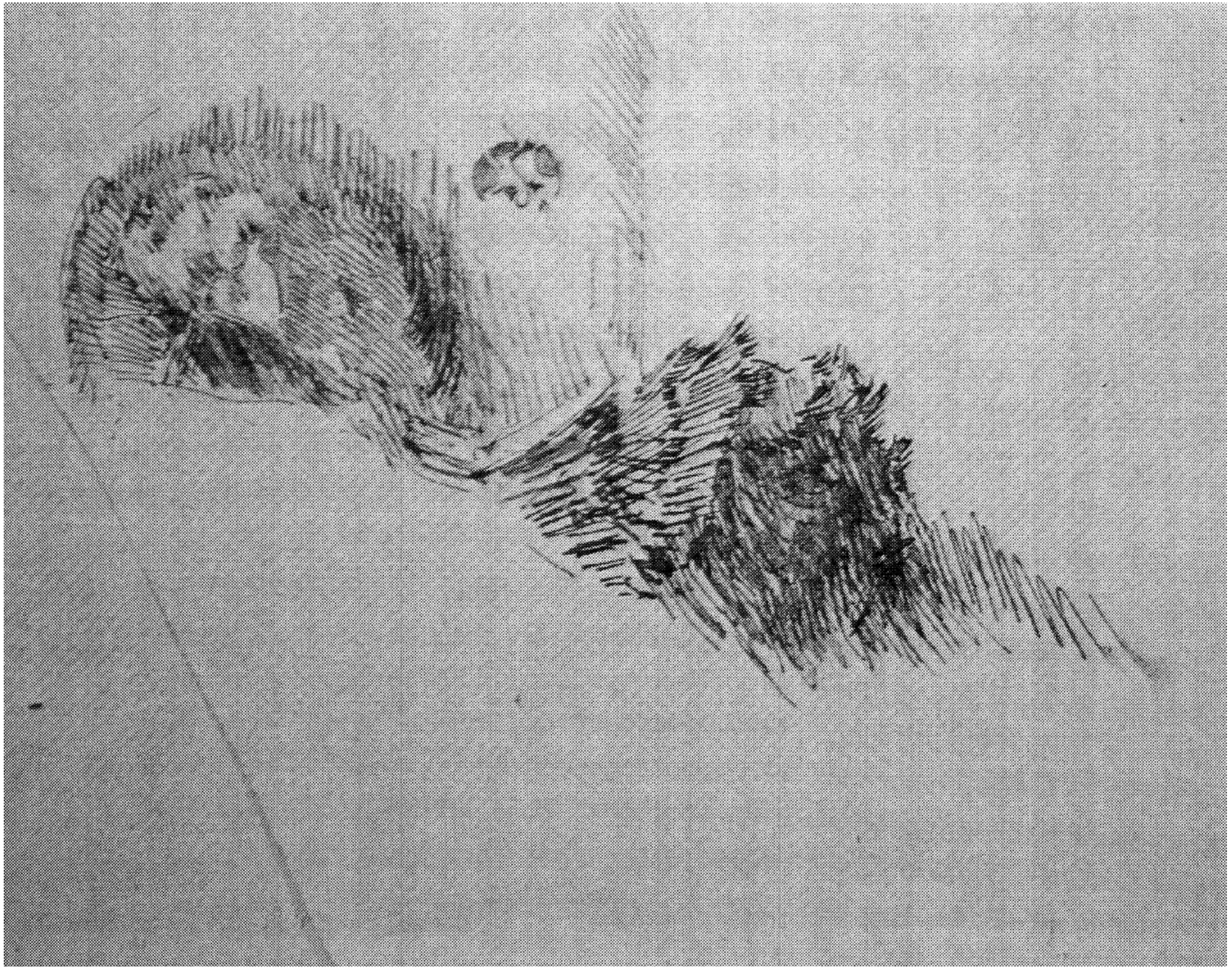

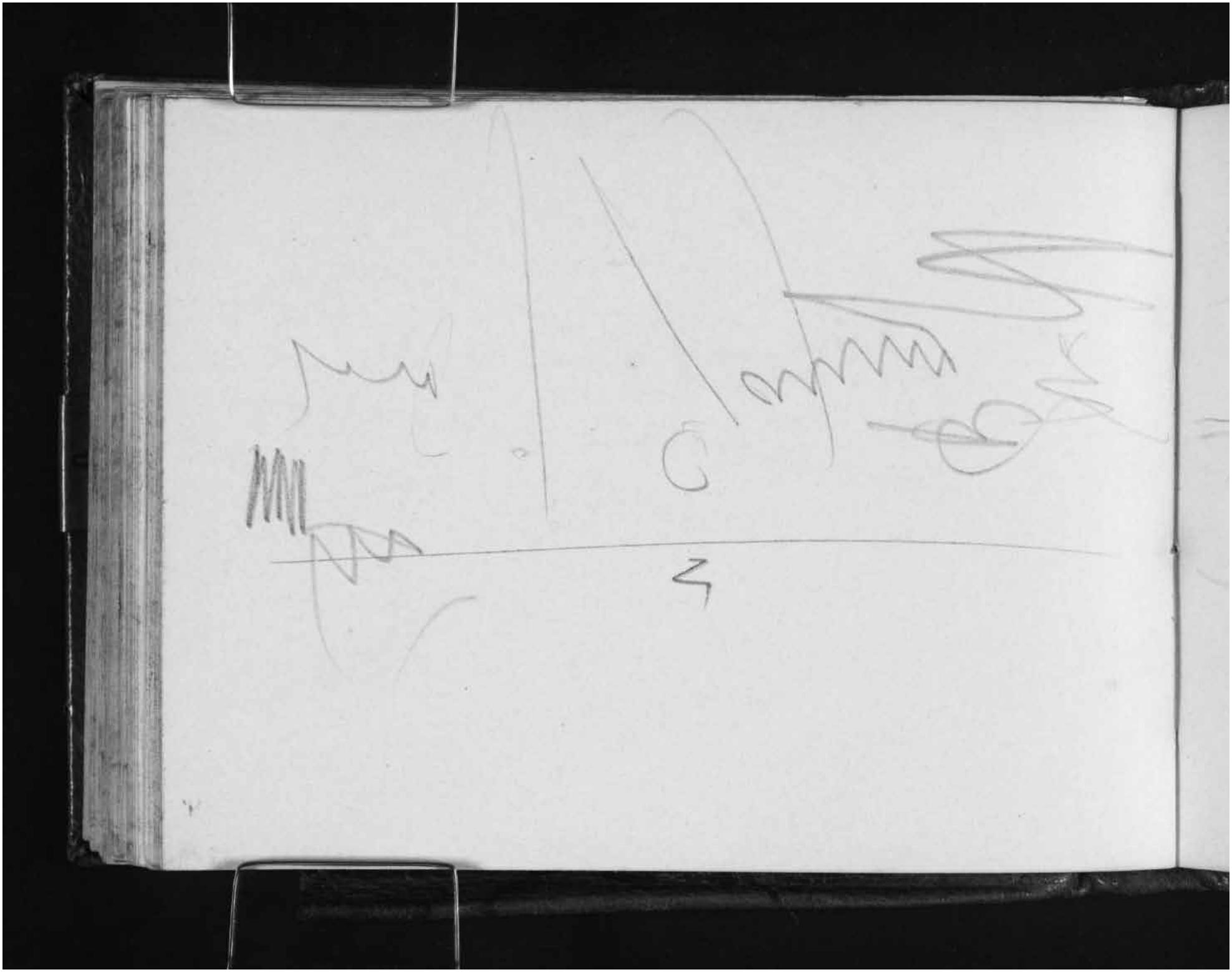

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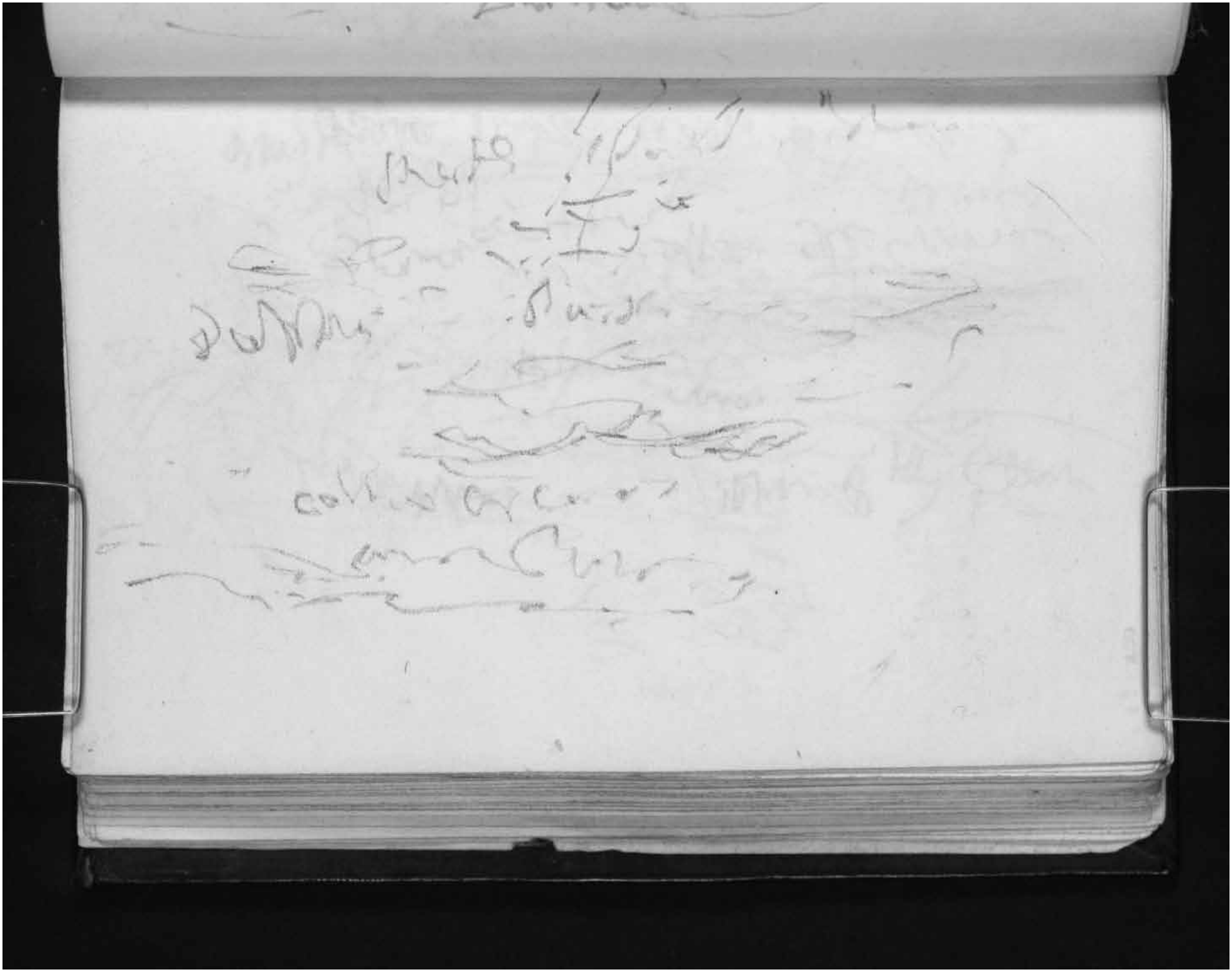

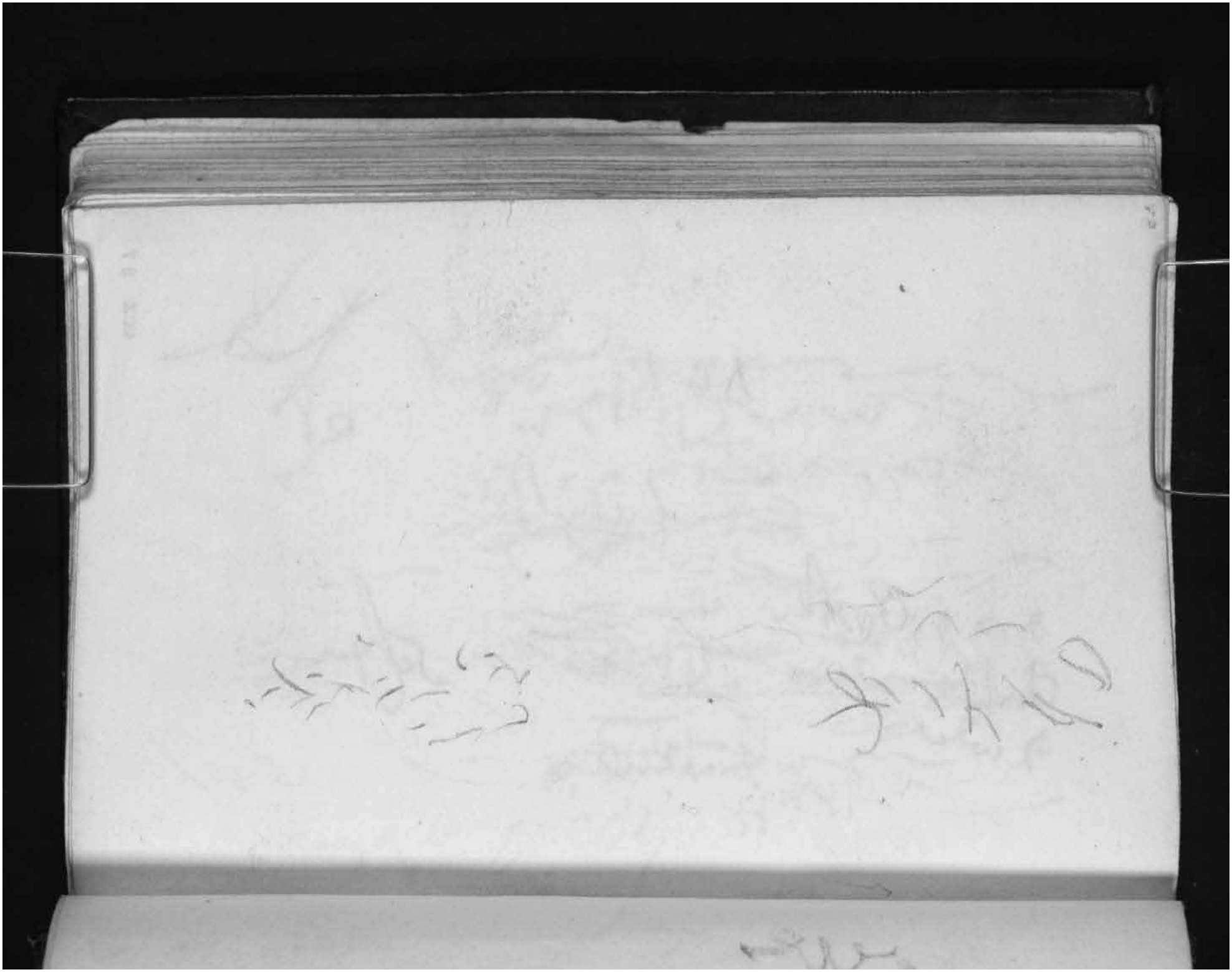

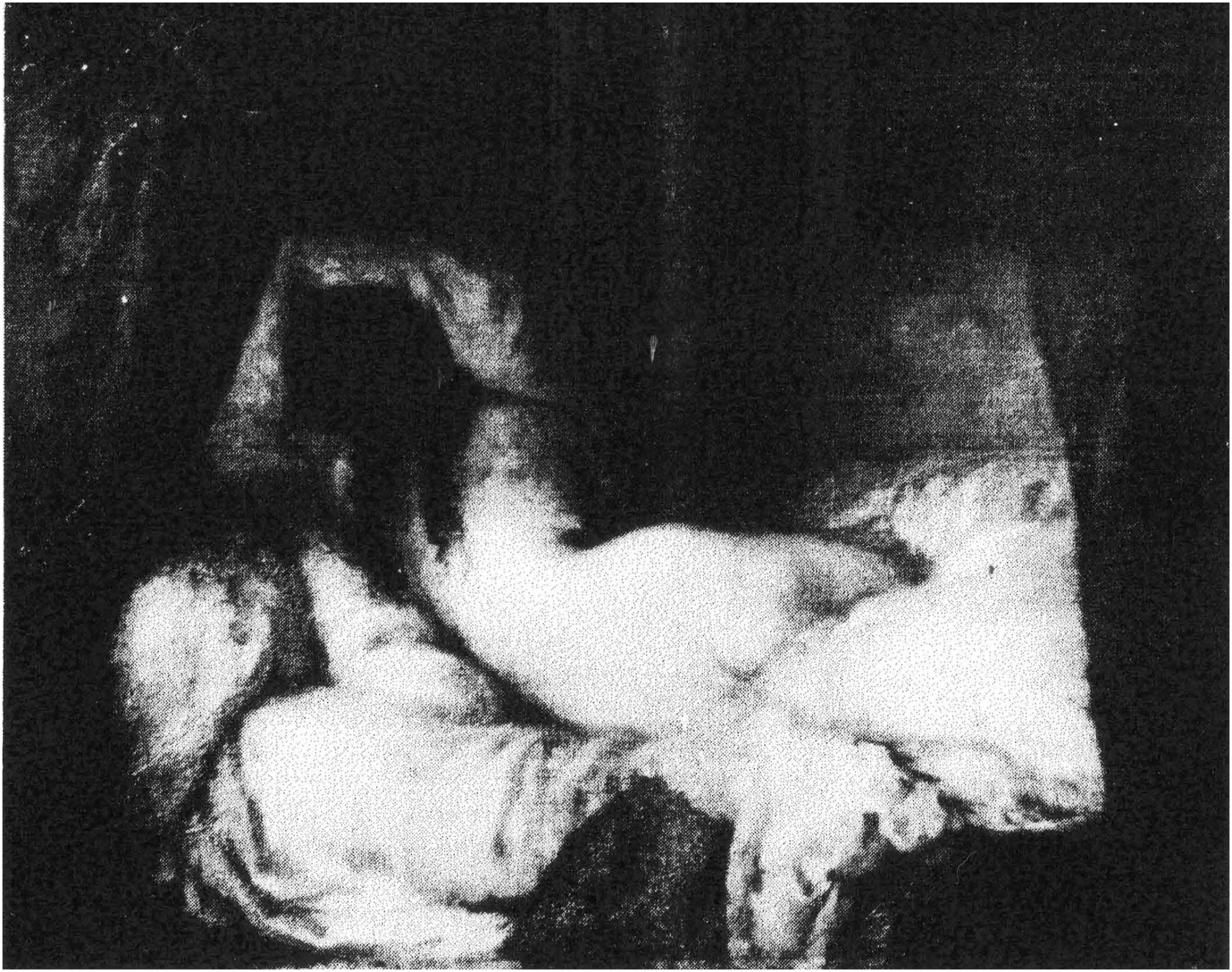

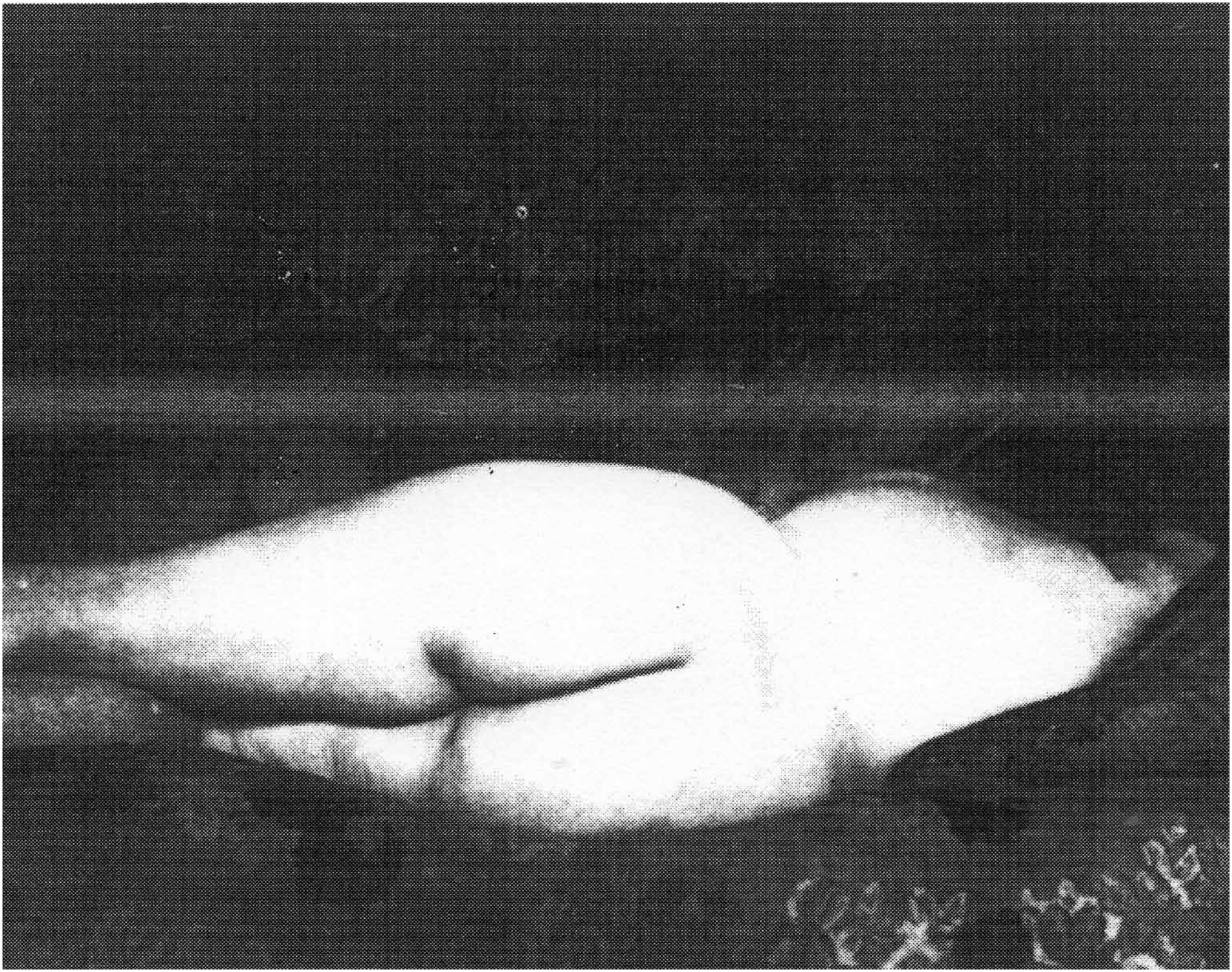

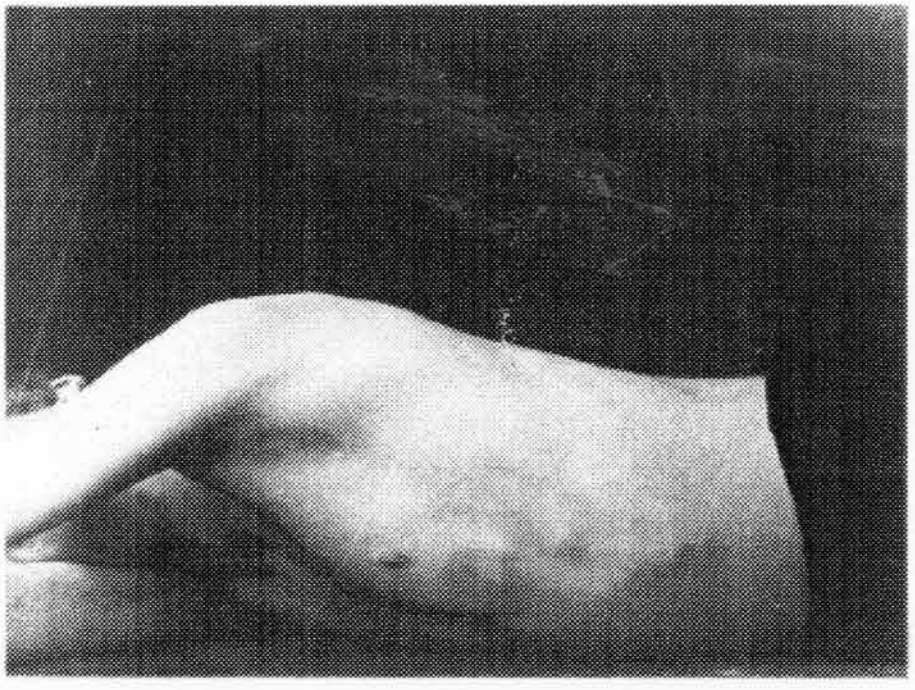

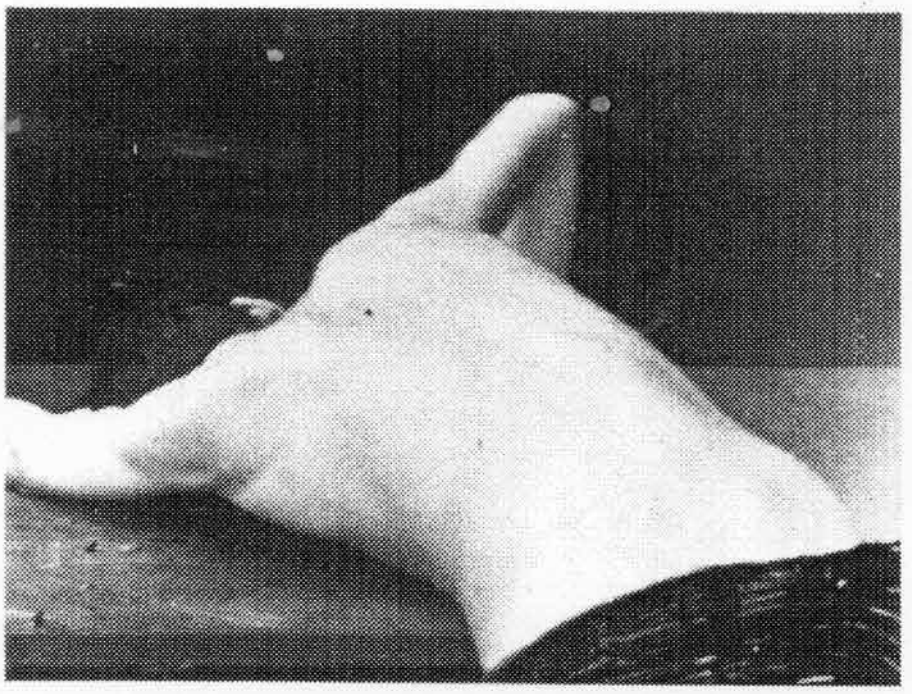

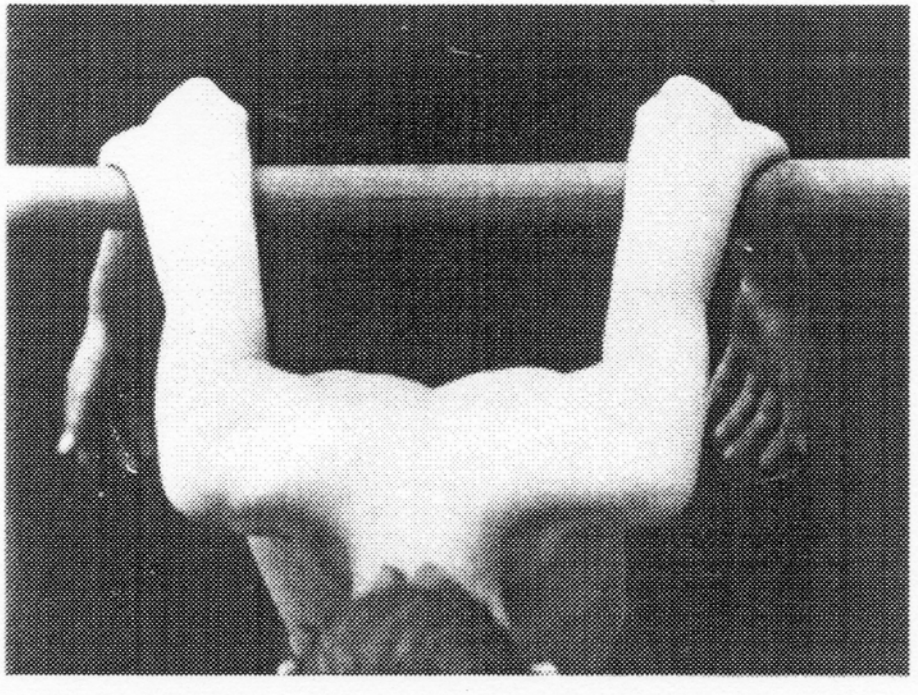

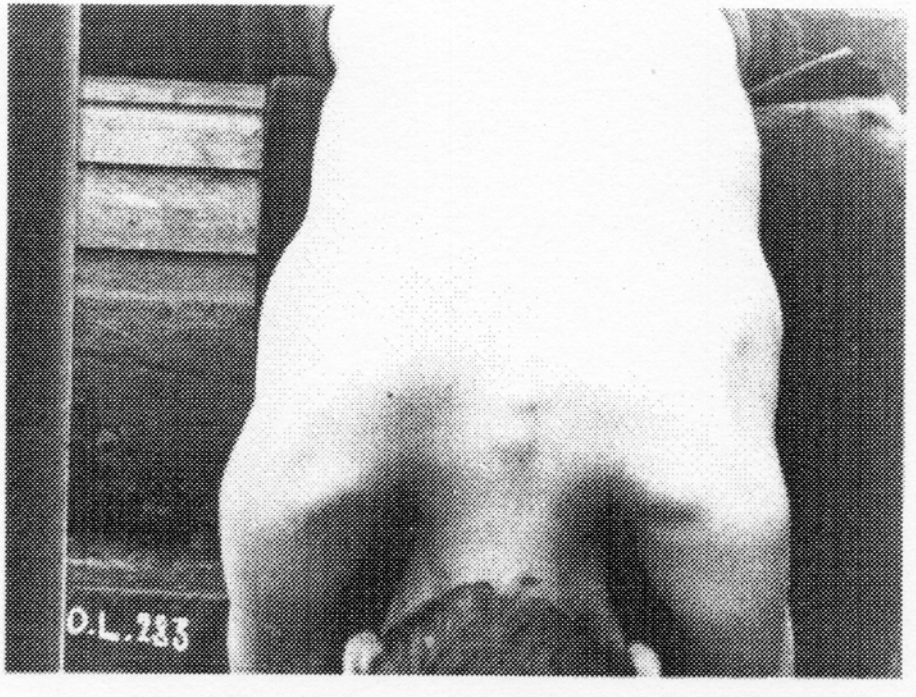
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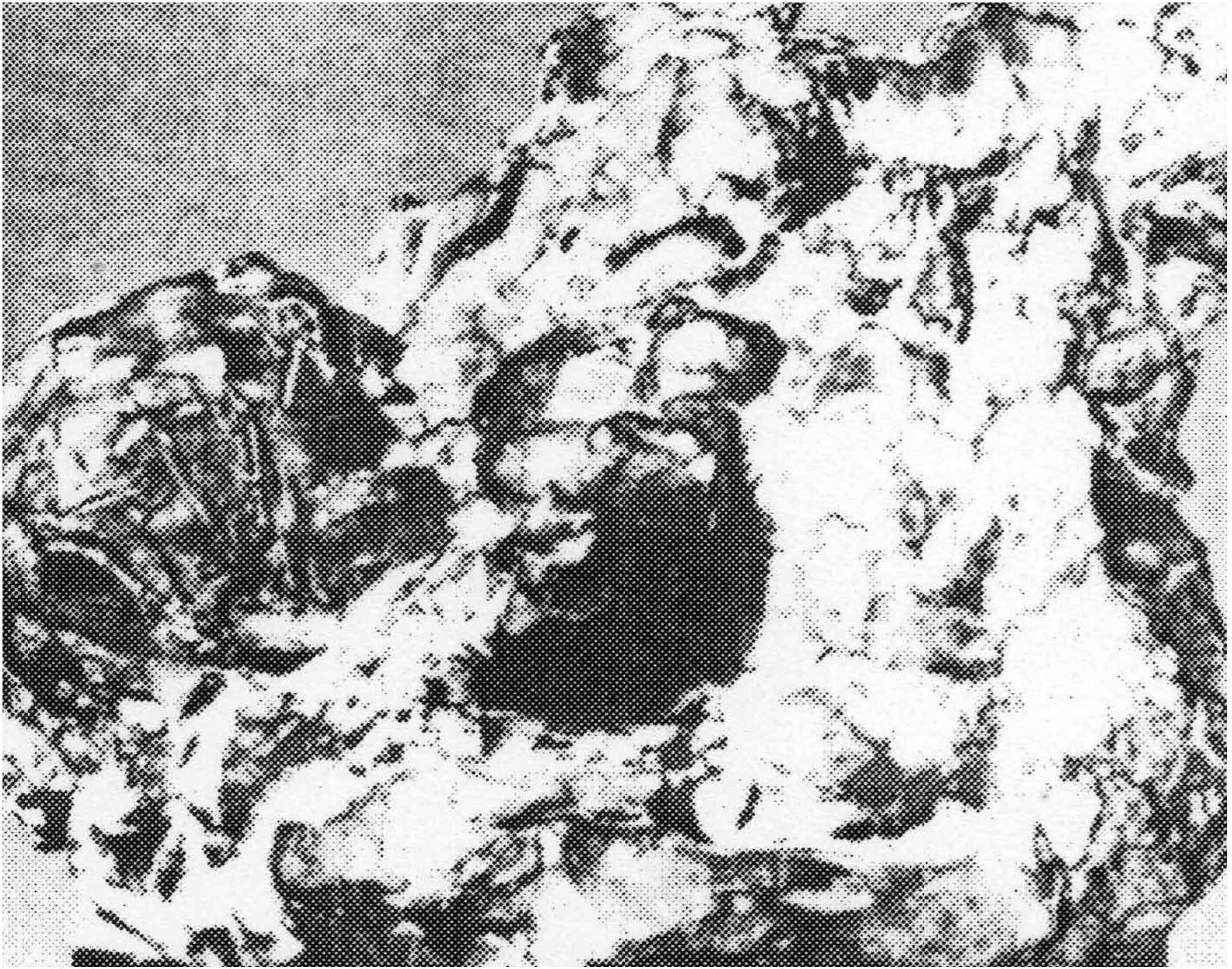

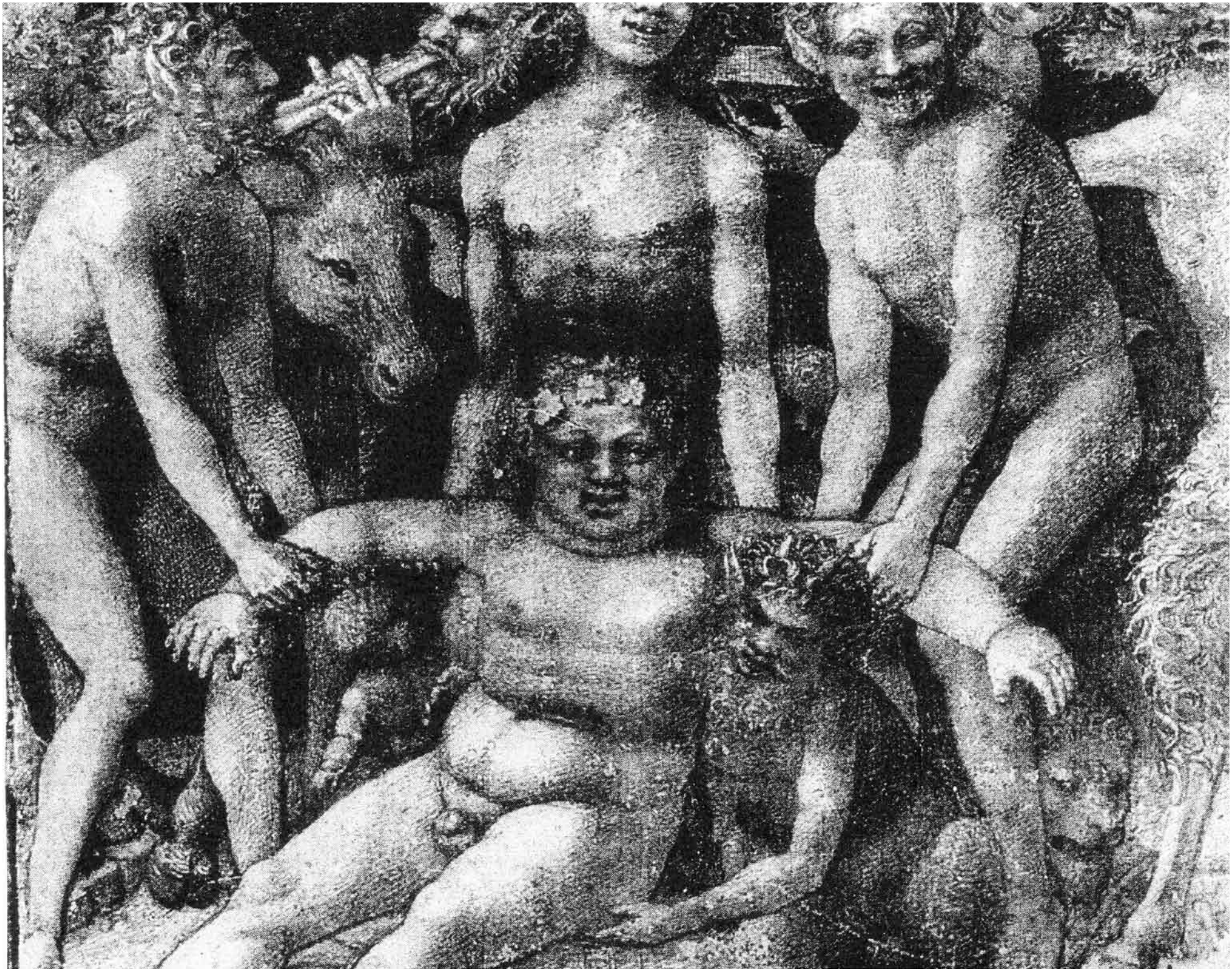

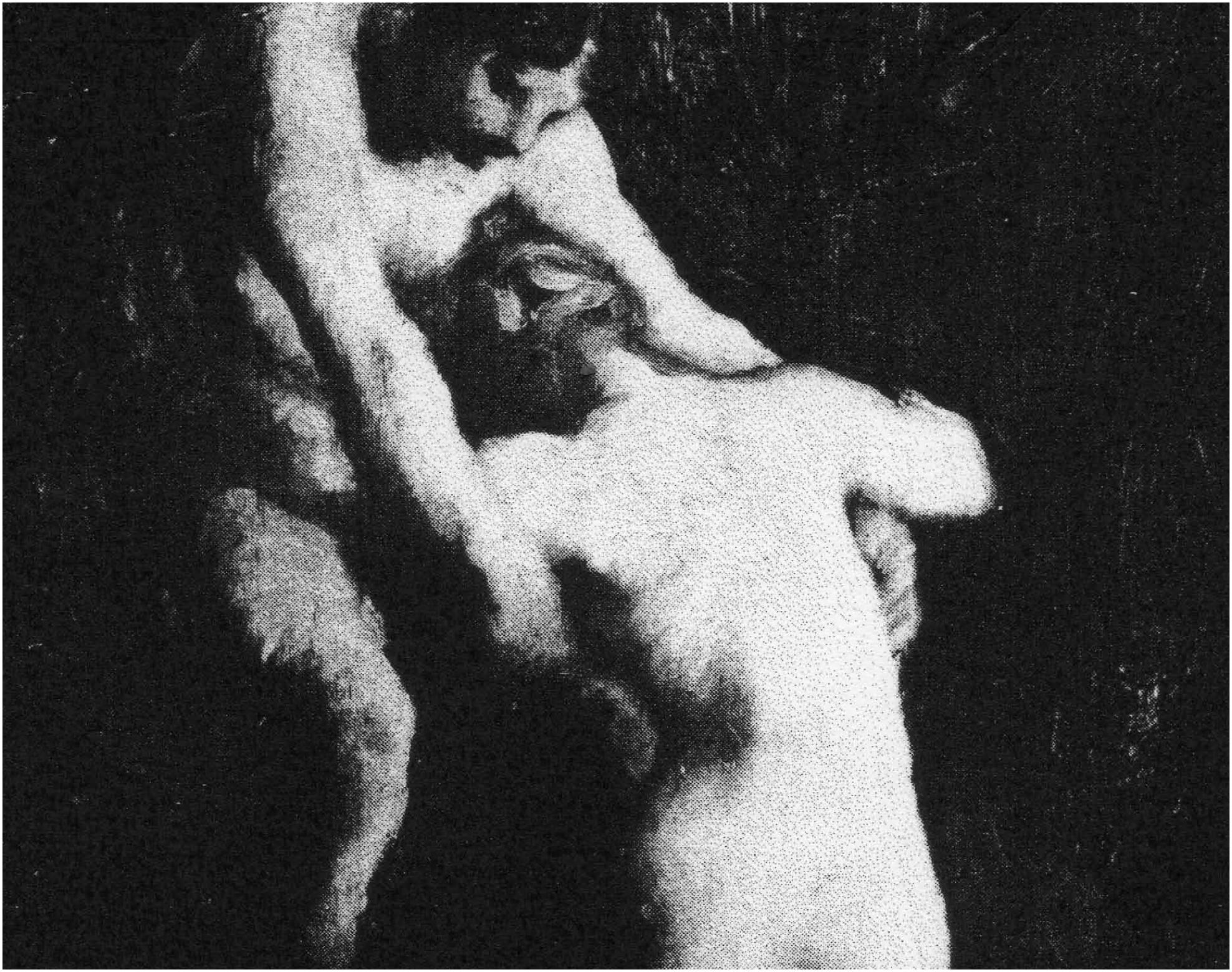

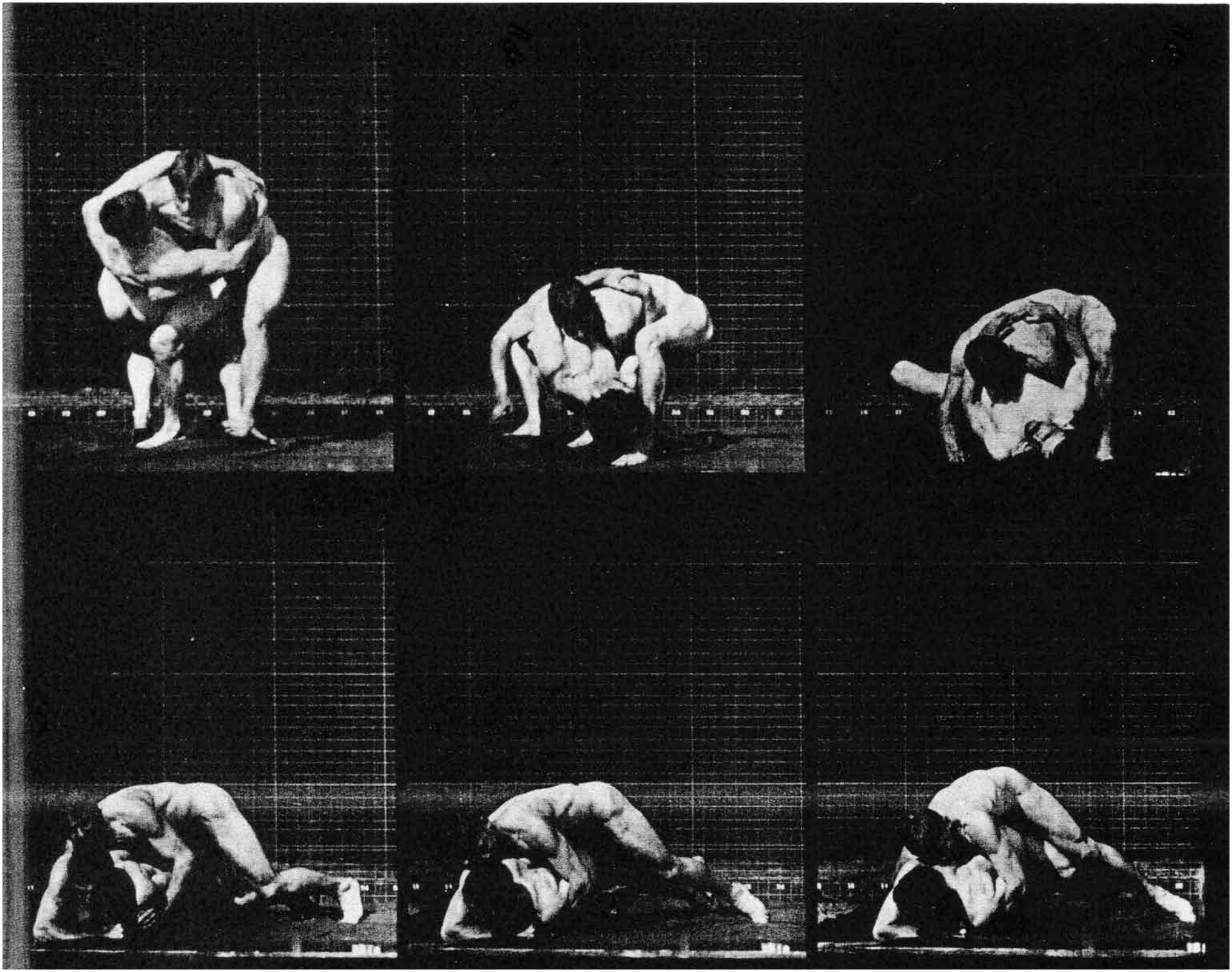

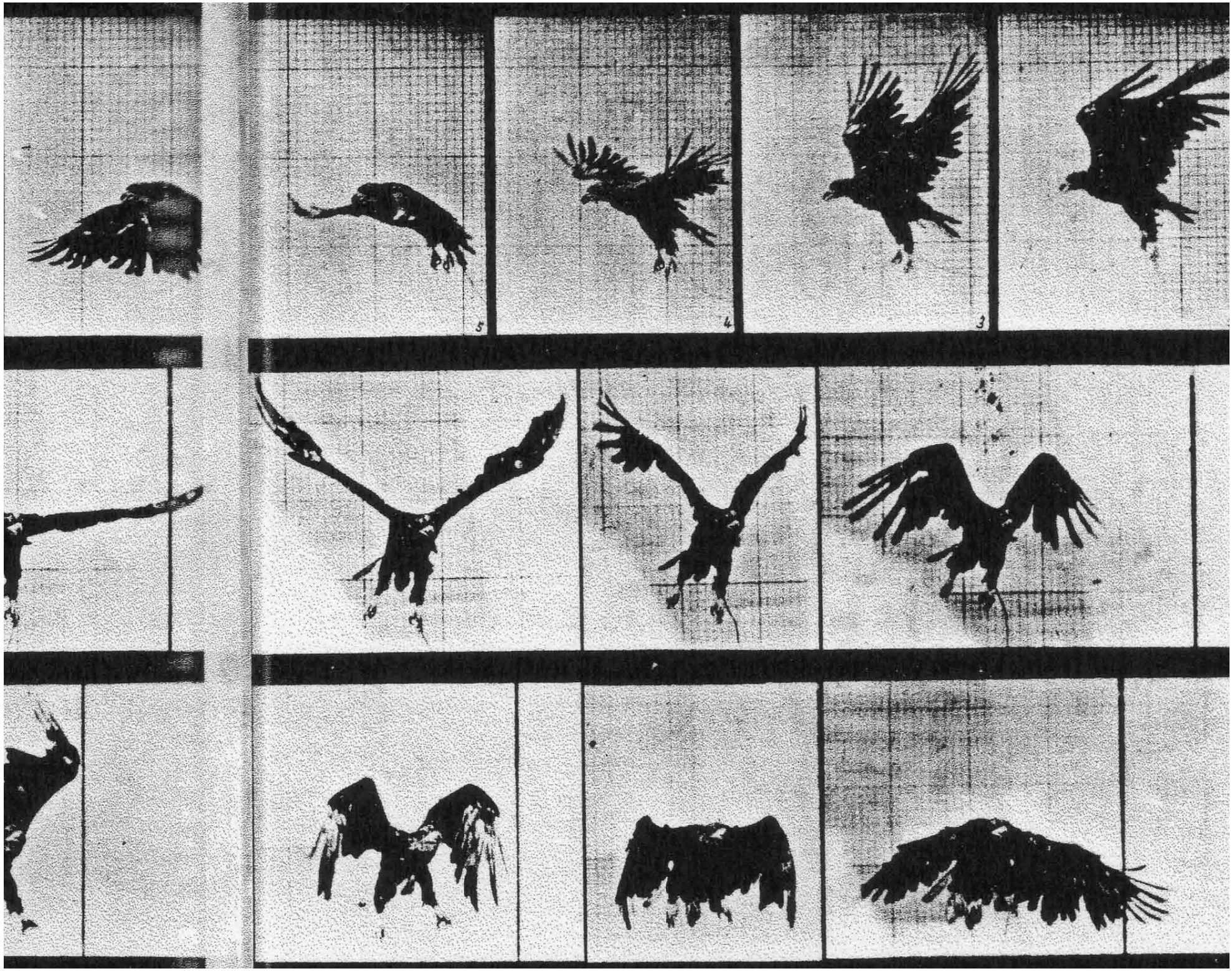
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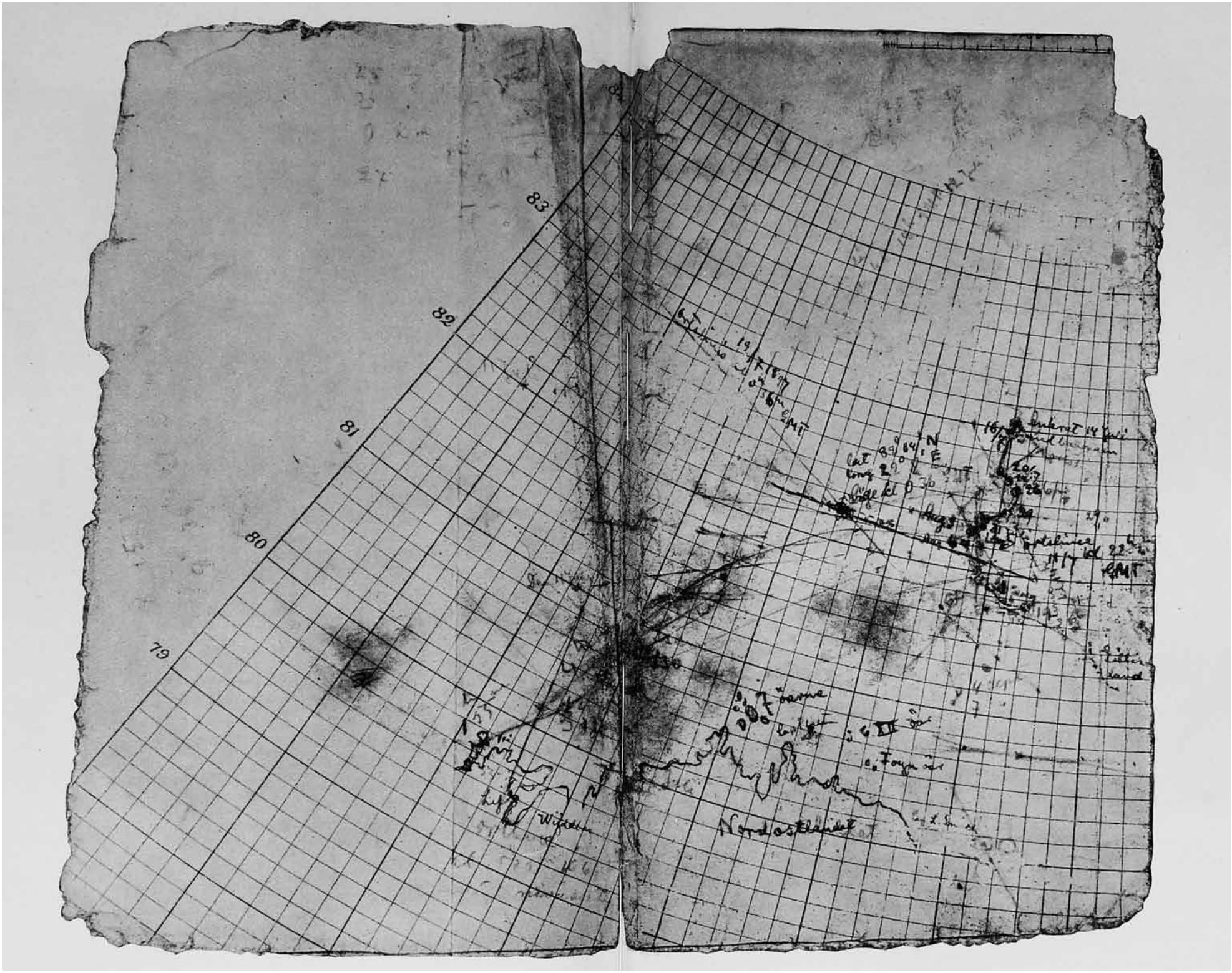
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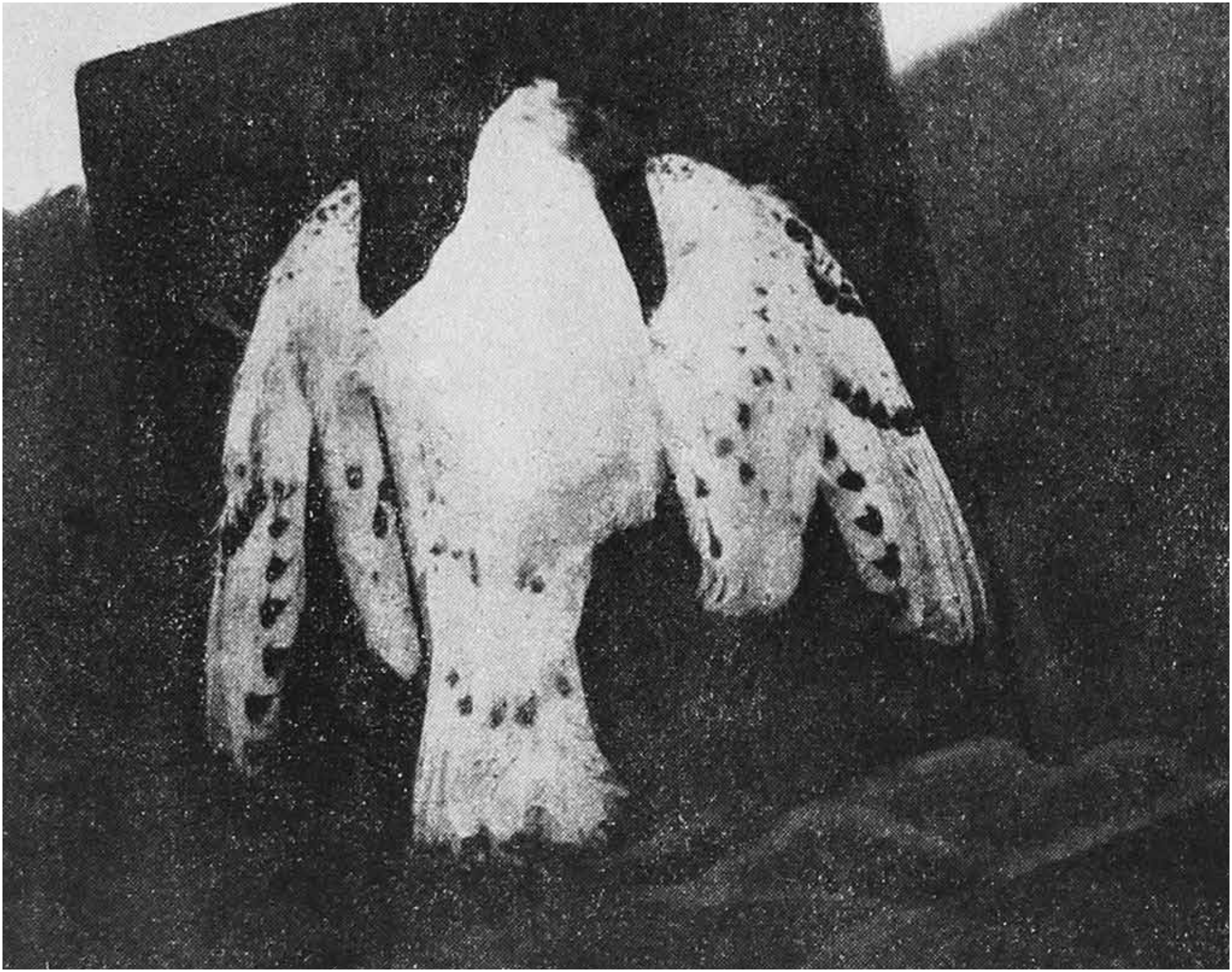

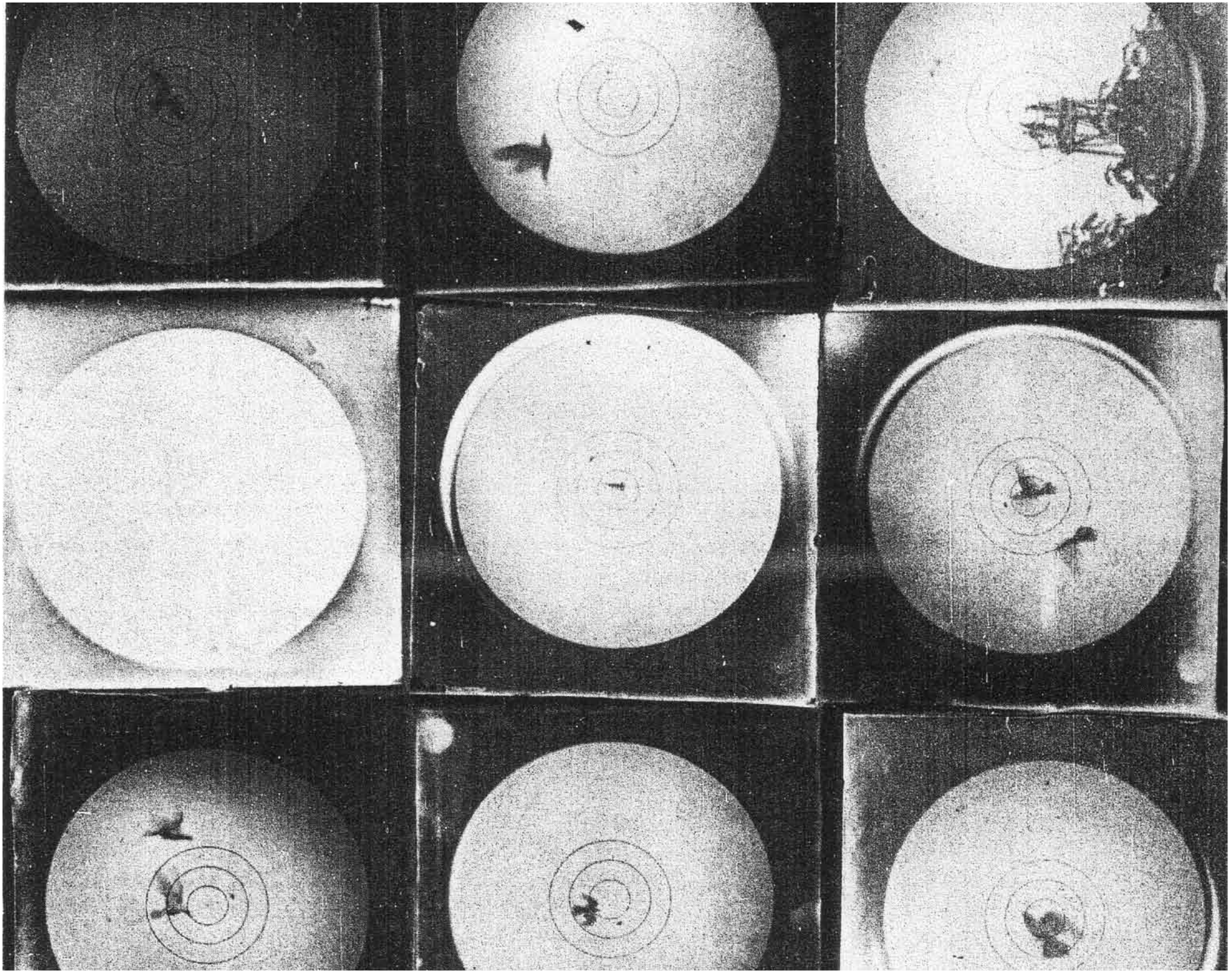

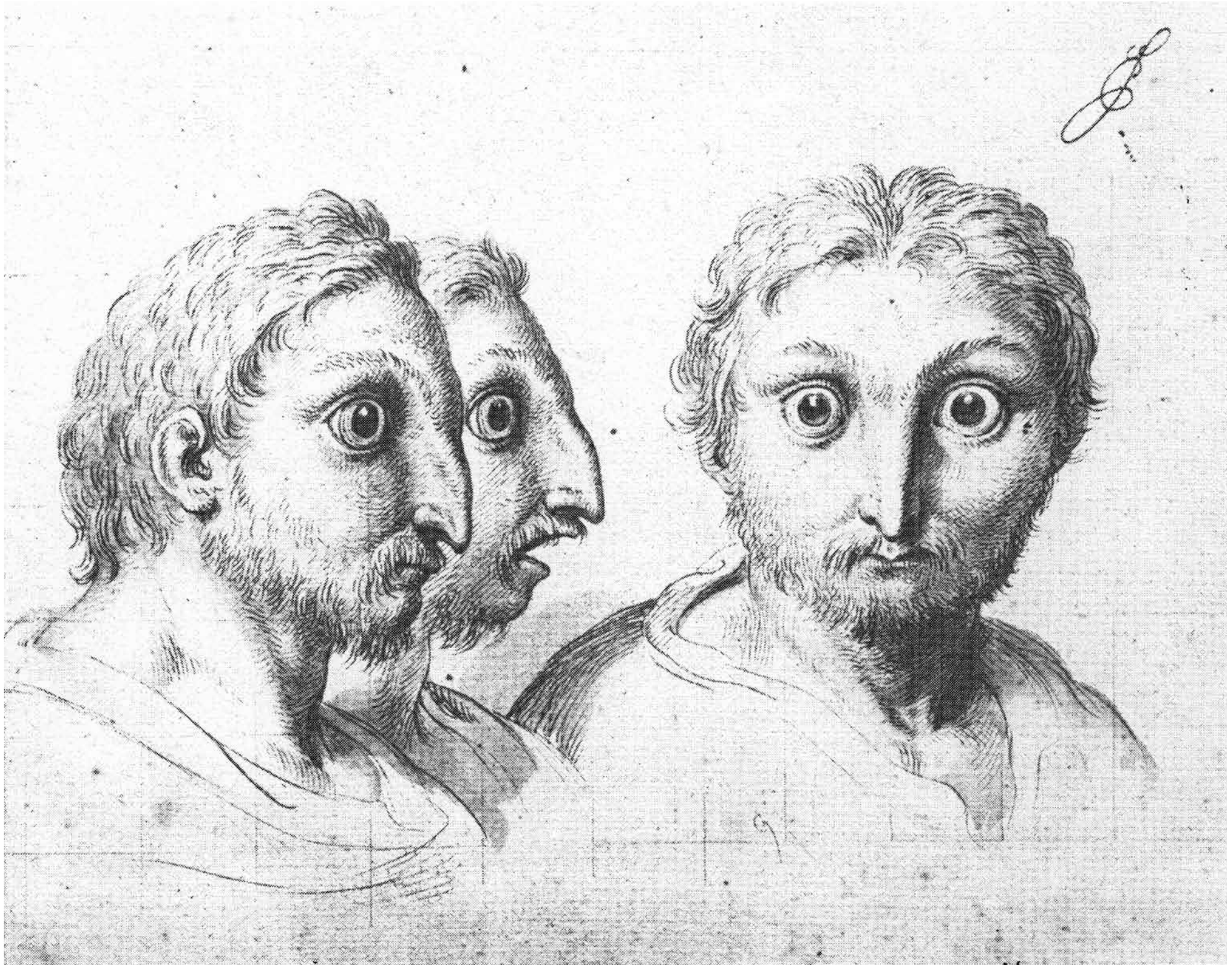

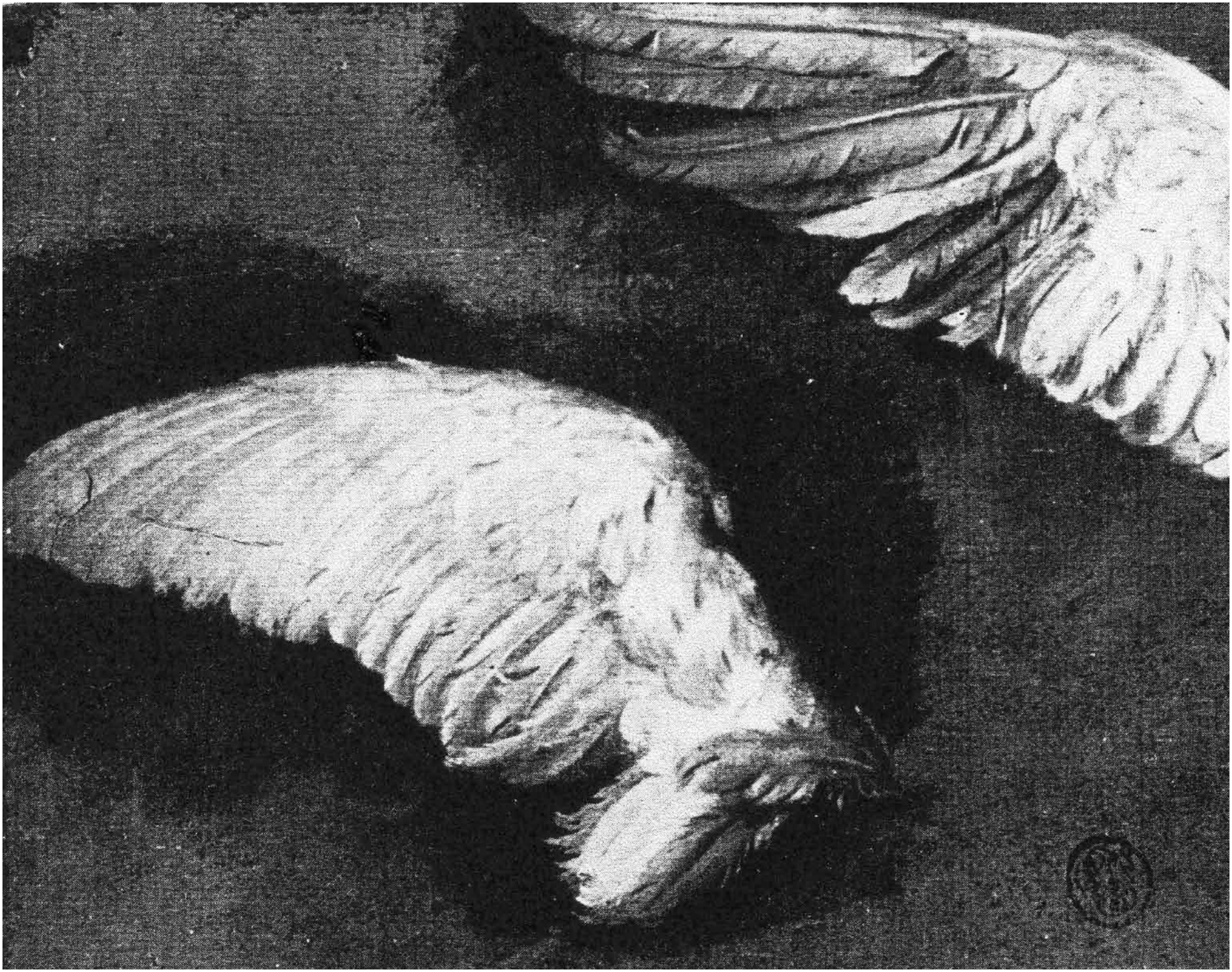

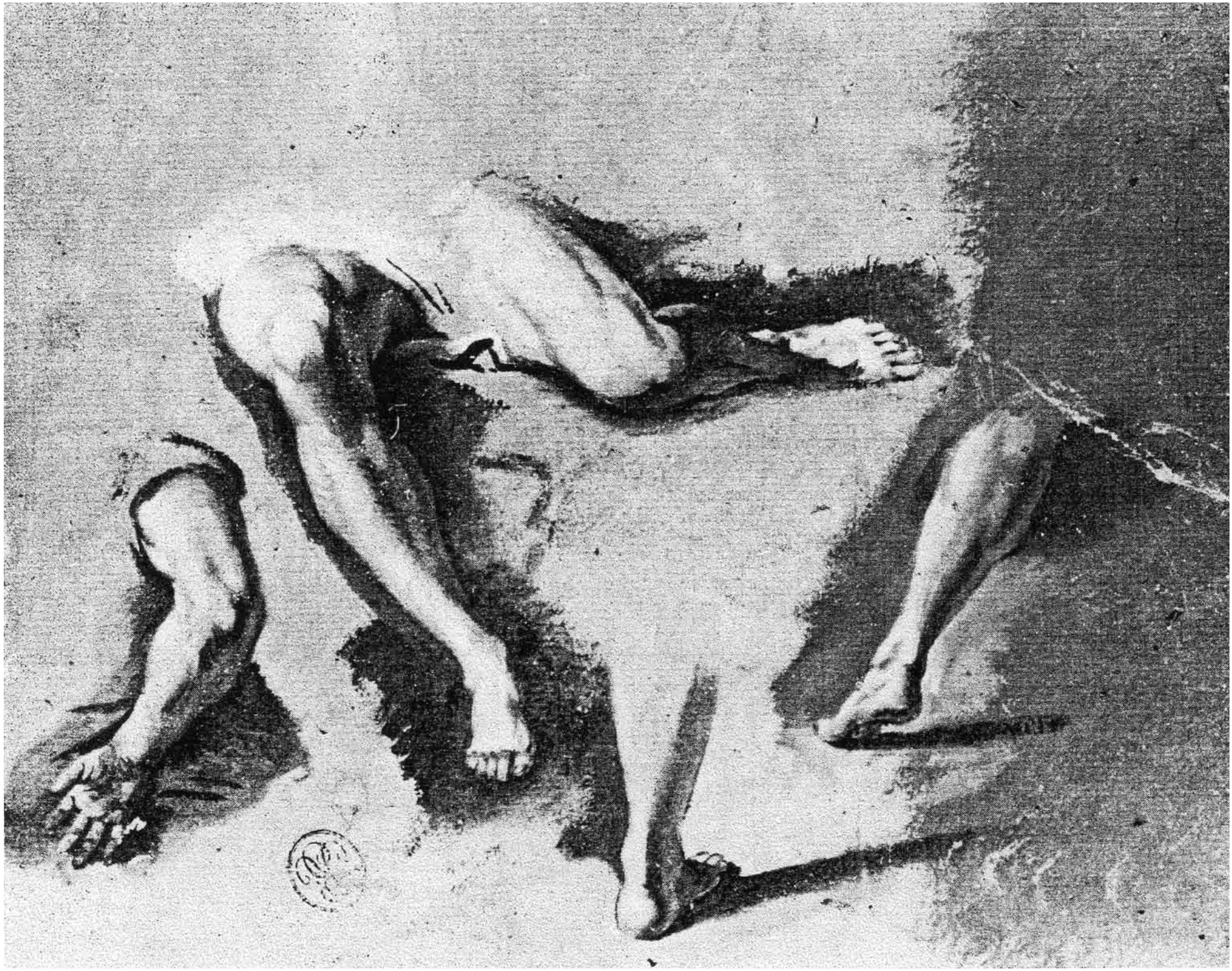

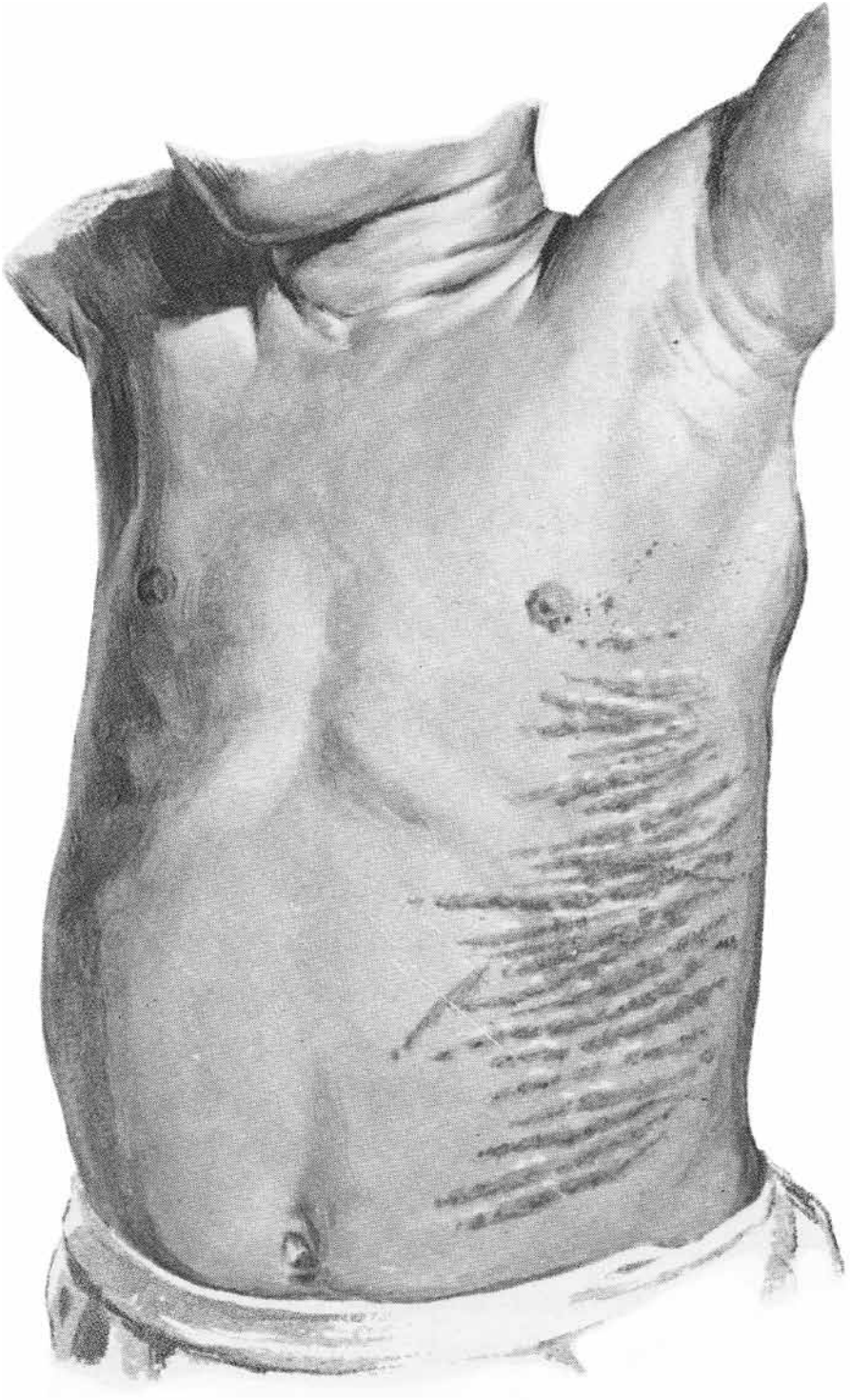

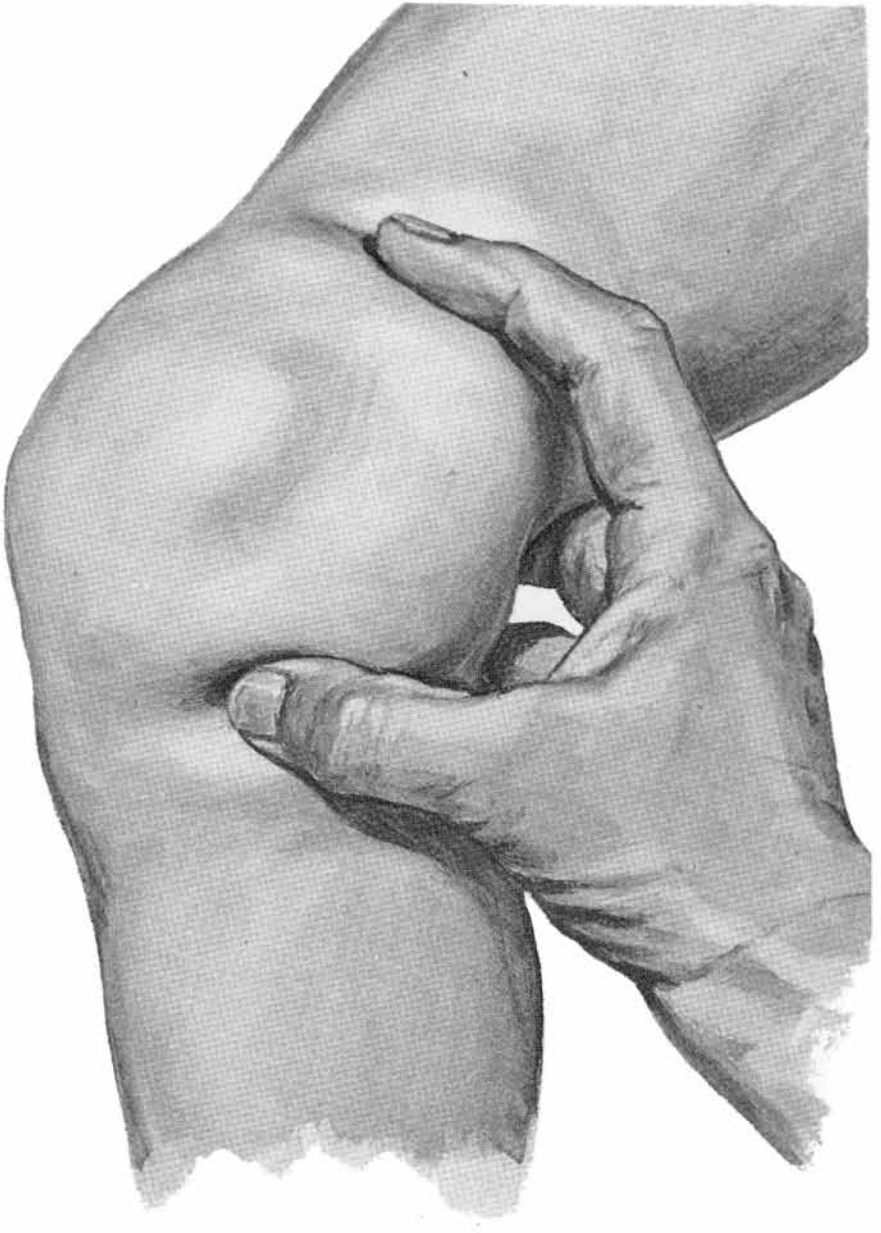


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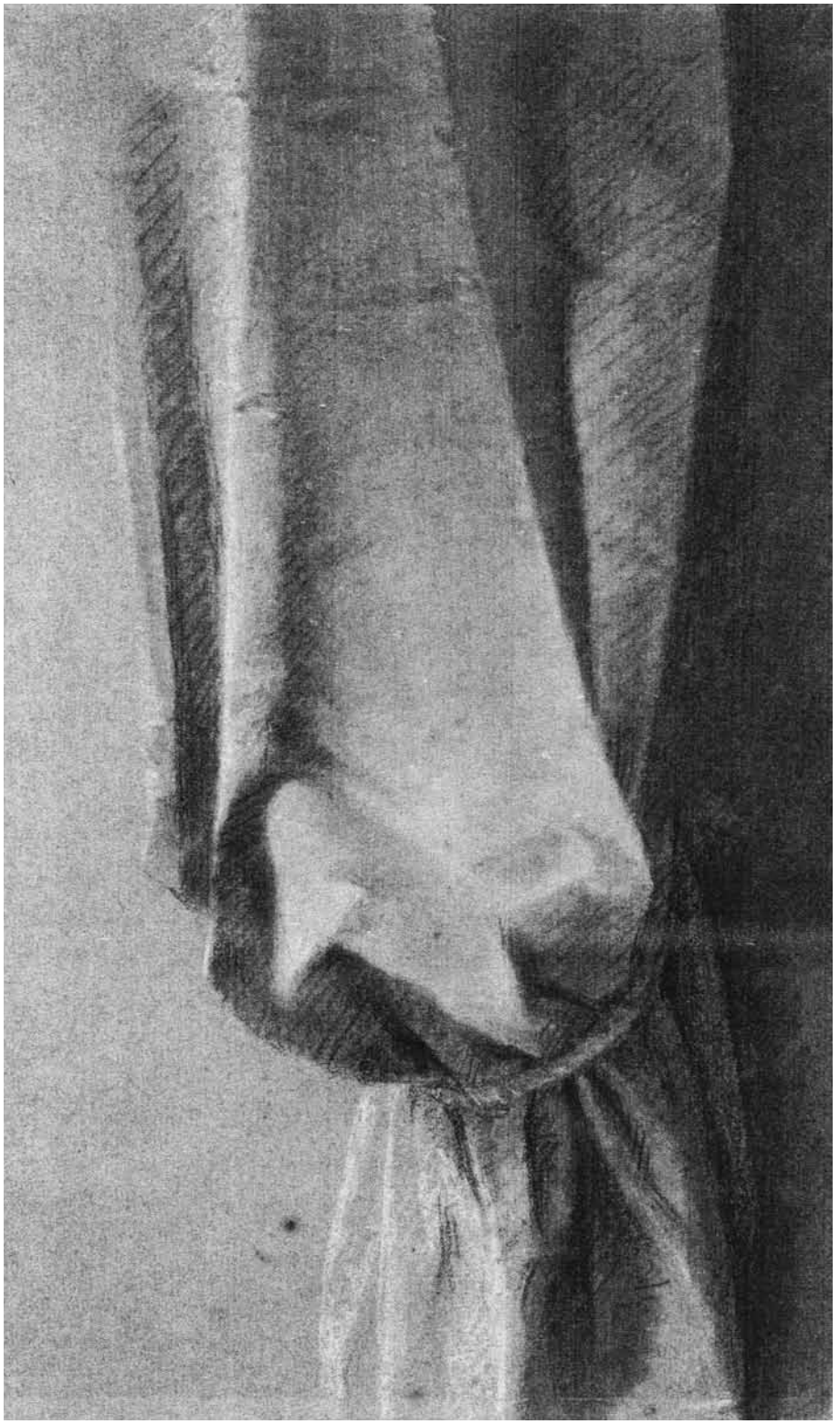

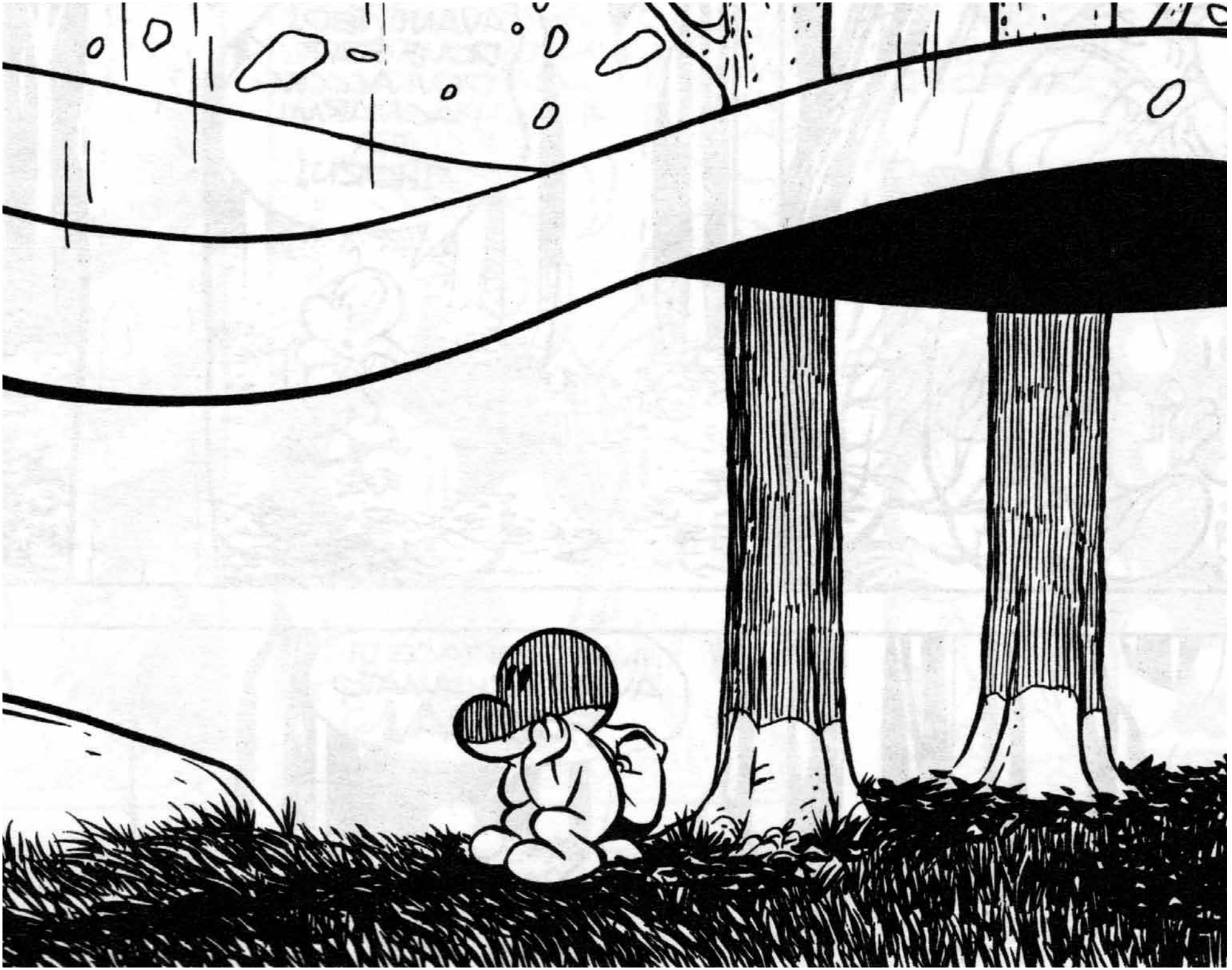


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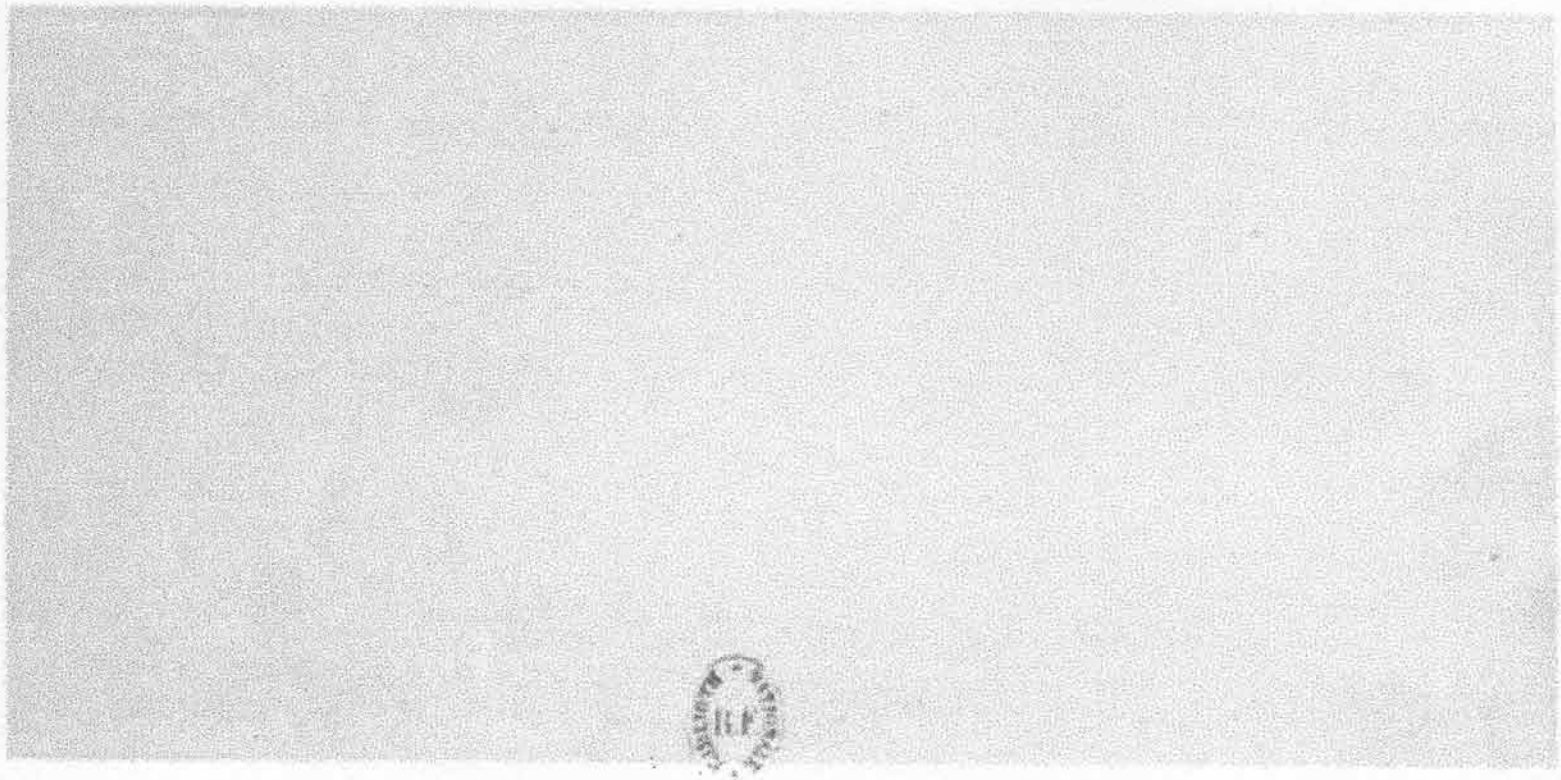

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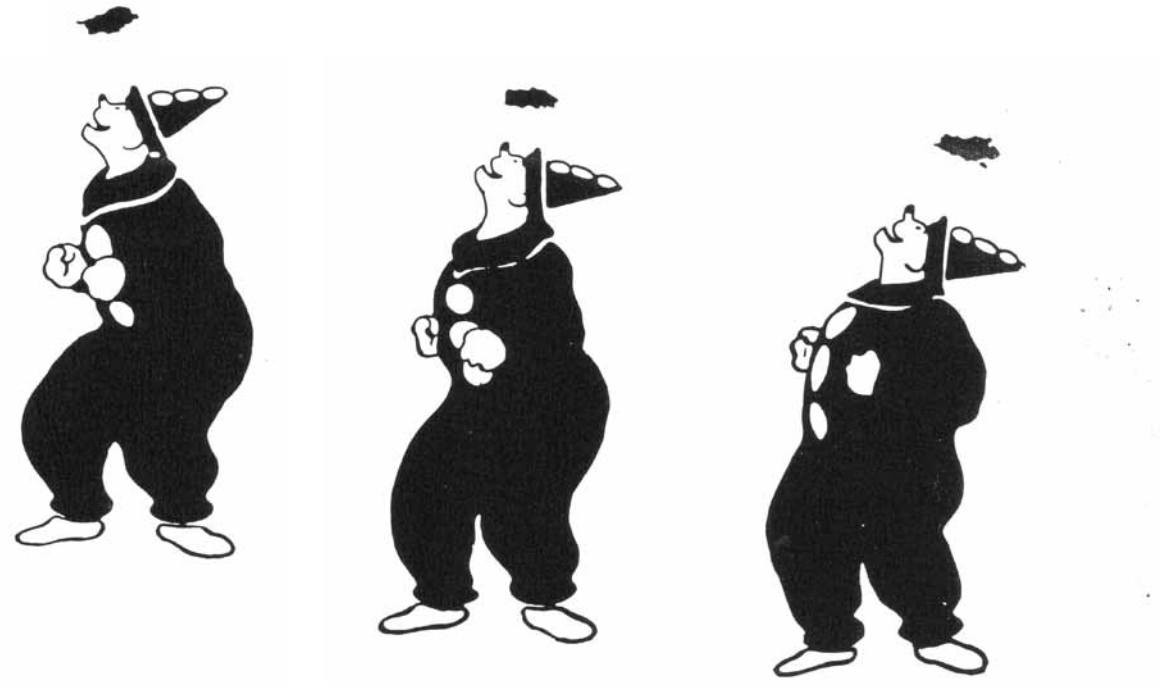
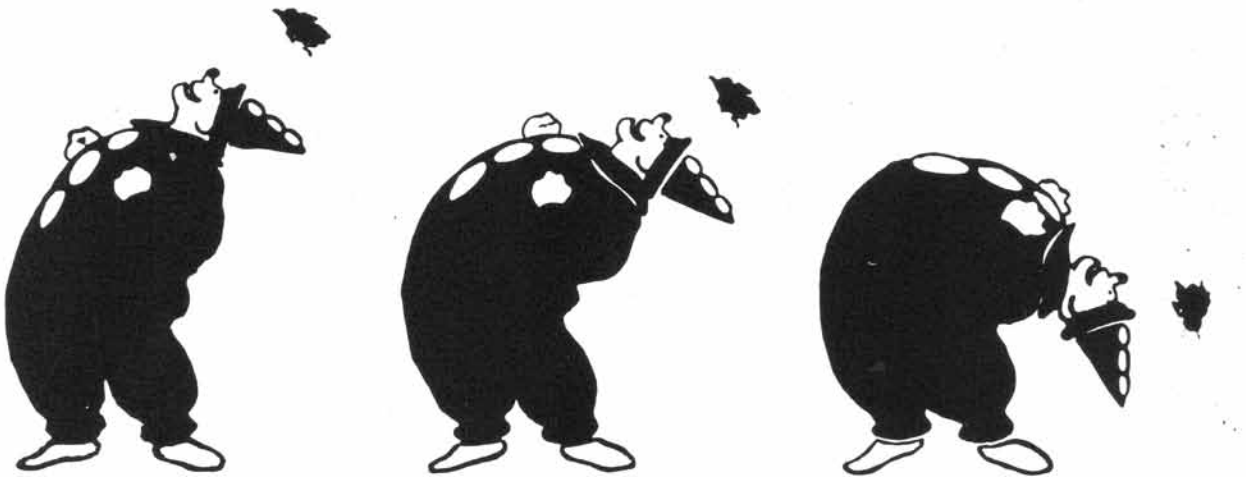


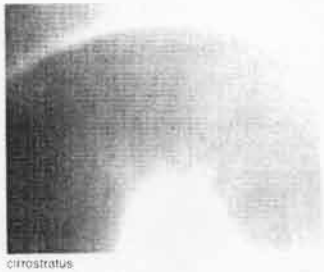



H.J.A. Giles

APPENDIX

cirrus

cirrocumulus



cirrostratus

altocumulus

altostratus

Classification of clouds

The modern method of cloud classification is derived from a system devised by Luke Howard, an English meteorologist, whose work was published in 1803. Howard distinguished three fundamental classes—cirrus, cumulus, and stratus—which served as the basis for the cloud classification work that followed in the 19th century and which culminated in the first *International Cloud Atlas*, published in 1896. The Atlas, now produced by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), an agency of the United Nations, has undergone several revisions reflecting continuing modification in cloud classification. The table presented below is based on data provided in the most current publication of the Atlas, now generally accepted as the standard world source for the classification of clouds. The work divides cloud types into the 10 basic genera that form the structure of the first part of the table. Conventionally, the cloud types are subdivided into three "étages" designated in the table as high clouds, middle clouds, and low clouds. Further, each genus according to its peculiar characteristics may be identified as a particular species. A cloud of a certain genus may only have one species name attached to it, but a species name may appear with any of several genera. Following the cloud genera in the table are listings and descriptions of the various species.

Genera and species represent the main categories of characteristics by which clouds are recognized. Cloud forms, however, are broken down in still further ways according to additional sets of characteristics and refinements. These include *varieties*, which apply to the arrangement of macroscopic elements and degree of transparency; *supplementary features and accessory clouds*, which includes characteristics not covered by the previously mentioned categories; and *mother-clouds*, which classifies clouds according to origin. Clouds formed from mother-clouds are distinguished from clouds that form in clear air and are of two types: *genitus*, formed from the extension of another cloud, and *mutatus*, formed from a whole cloud that has undergone an internal transformation, causing it to change from one genus to another.

A group of special clouds is also distinguished, which arise from unknown or unusual origins; these include rare nacreous clouds, condensation trails, and clouds from waterfalls, fires, and volcanic eruptions. Clouds that develop because of air movements over the land, such as orographic clouds, may differ markedly from any of the 10 basic genera, but nevertheless are always classified as one of the genera.

cloud genera

	genera (Latin etymology)	description	abbreviation	symbol	species*
high clouds	**cirrus** (lock of hair, tuft of horsehair, a bird's tuft)	Detached clouds in the form of white delicate filaments or white or mostly white patches or narrow bands. These clouds have a fibrous (hair-like) appearance or a silky sheen or both.	Ci		fibratus uncinus spissatus castellanus floccus
	cirrocumulus (from the Latin *cirrus* [see above] and *cumulus*, which means a heap, a pile)	Thin white patch, sheet, or layer of cloud without shading, composed of very small elements in the form of grains, ripples, etc., merged or separate, and more or less regularly arranged; most of the elements have an apparent width of less than one degree.	Cc		stratiformis lenticularis castellanus floccus
	cirrostratus (from the Latin *cirrus* [see above] and *stratus*, past participle of *stenere*, which means to extend, to spread out, to flatten out, to cover with a layer)	Transparent, whitish cloud veil of fibrous (hair-like) or smooth appearance, totally or partly covering the sky, and generally producing halo phenomena.	Cs		fibratus nebulosus
middle clouds	**altocumulus** (from the Latin *altum*, which means height, upper air, and *cumulus* [see above])	White or gray, or both white and gray, patch, sheet, or layer of cloud, generally with shading, composed of laminae, rounded masses, rolls, etc., which are sometimes partly fibrous or diffuse and which may or may not be merged; most of the regularly arranged small elements usually have an apparent width of between one and five degrees.	Ac		stratiformis lenticularis castellanus floccus
	altostratus (from the Latin *altum* and *stratus* [see above])	Grayish or bluish cloud sheet or layer of striated, fibrous, or uniform appearance, totally or partly covering the sky, and having parts thin enough to reveal the Sun at least vaguely, as through ground glass. Altostratus does not show halo phenomena.	As		
	nimbostratus (from the Latin *nimbus*, which means rainy cloud, and *stratus* [see above])	Gray cloud layer, often dark, the appearance of which is rendered diffuse by more or less continuously falling rain or snow, which in most cases reaches the ground. It is thick enough throughout to blot out the Sun. Low, ragged clouds frequently occur below the layer, with which they may or may not merge.	Ns		
low clouds	**stratocumulus** (from the Latin *stratus* and *cumulus* [see above])	Gray or whitish, or both gray and whitish, patch, sheet, or layer of cloud which almost always has dark parts, composed of tessellations, rounded masses, rolls, etc., which are nonfibrous (except for virga) and which may or may not be merged; most of the regularly arranged small elements have an apparent width of more than five degrees.	Sc		stratiformis lenticularis castellanus
	stratus (from the Latin *stratus* [see above])	Generally gray cloud layer with a fairly uniform base, which may give drizzle, ice prisms, or snow grains. When the Sun is visible through the cloud, its outline is clearly discernible. Stratus does not produce halo phenomena except, possibly, at very low temperatures. Sometimes stratus appears in the form of ragged patches.	St		nebulosus fractus

cloud genera (continued)

genera (Latin etymology)	description	abbreviation	symbol	species*
cumulus (from the Latin *cumulus* [see above])	Detached clouds, generally dense and with sharp outlines, developing vertically in the form of rising mounds, domes, or towers, of which the bulging upper part often resembles a cauliflower. The sunlit parts of these clouds are mostly brilliant white; their base is relatively dark and horizontal. Sometimes cumulus is ragged.	Cu		humilis mediocris congestus fractus
cumulonimbus (from the Latin *cumulus* [see above] and *nimbus*, which means rain cloud, a sudden downpour, cloudburst)	Heavy and dense cloud, with a considerable vertical extent, in the form of a mountain or huge towers. At least part of its upper portion is usually smooth, or fibrous or striated, and nearly always flattened; this part often spreads out in the shape of an anvil or vast plume. Under the base of this cloud, which is often very dark, there are frequently low, ragged clouds either merged with it or not, and precipitation, sometimes in the form of virga.	Cb		calvus capillatus

*For details on cloud species, see below.

cloud species

species (Latin etymology)	description
fibratus (fibrous, possessing fibers, filaments)	Detached clouds or a thin cloud veil, consisting of nearly straight or more or less irregularly curved filaments that do not terminate in hooks or tufts. This term applies mainly to cirrus and cirrostratus.
uncinus (hooked)	Cirrus often shaped like a comma, terminating at the top in a hook, or in a tuft the upper part of which is not in the form of a rounded protuberance.
spissatus (past participle of *spissare*, which means to make thick, condense)	Cirrus of sufficient optical thickness to appear grayish when viewed toward the Sun.
castellanus (derived from *castellum*, which means castle)	Clouds that present, in at least some portion of their upper part, cumuliform protuberances in the form of turrets that generally give the clouds a crenelated appearance. The turrets, some of which are taller than they are wide, are connected by a common base and seem to be arranged in lines. The castellanus character is especially evident when the clouds are seen from the side. This term applies to cirrus, cirrocumulus, altocumulus, and stratocumulus.
floccus (tuft of wool, fluff, or nap of a cloth)	A species in which each cloud unit is a small tuft with a cumuliform appearance, the lower part of which is more or less ragged and often accompanied by virga. This term applies to cirrus, cirrocumulus, and altocumulus.
stratiformis (from *stratus*, past participle of *stenere*, which means to extend, spread out, flatten out, and *forma*, which means form, appearance)	Clouds spread out in an extensive horizontal sheet or layer. This term applies to altocumulus, stratocumulus, and, occasionally, to cirrocumulus.
nebulosus (full of mist, covered with fog, nebulous)	A cloud like a nebulous veil or layer, showing no distinct details. This term applies mainly to cirrostratus and stratus.
lenticularis (derives from *lenticula*, diminutive of *lens*, which means lens)	Clouds having the shape of lenses or almonds, often very elongated and usually with well-defined outlines; they occasionally show irisation (iridescence). Such clouds appear most often in cloud formations of orographic origin, but may also occur in regions without marked orography. This term applies mainly to cirrocumulus, altocumulus, and stratocumulus.
fractus (from the past participle of the verb *frangere*, which means to shatter, break, snap, fracture)	Clouds in the form of irregular shreds, which have a clearly ragged appearance. This term applies only to stratus and cumulus.
humilis (near the ground, low, of small size)	Cumulus clouds of only a slight vertical extent; they generally appear flattened.
mediocris (medium, keeping to the middle)	Cumulus clouds of moderate vertical extent, the tops of which show fairly small protuberances.
congestus (from the past participle of *congerere*, which means to pile up, heap up, accumulate)	Cumulus clouds which are markedly sprouting and are often of great vertical extent; their bulging upper part frequently resembles a cauliflower.
calvus (bald, also stripped or bared)	Cumulonimbus in which at least some protuberances of the upper part are beginning to lose their cumuliform outlines but in which no cirriform parts can be distinguished. Protuberances and sproutings tend to form a whitish mass, with more or less vertical striations.
capillatus (having hair; derives from *capillus*, which means hair)	Cumulonimbus characterized by the presence, mostly in its upper portion, of distinct cirriform parts of clearly fibrous or striated structure, frequently having the form of an anvil, a plume, or a vast, more or less disorderly mass of hair. Cumulonimbus capillatus is usually accompanied by a shower or by a thunderstorm, often with squalls and sometimes with hail; it frequently produces very well defined virga.

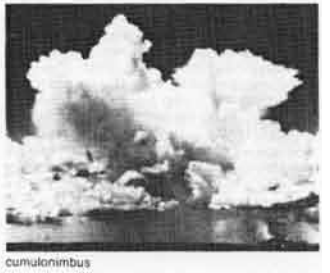
Bibliography by courtesy of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

nimbostratus

stratocumulus

stratus

cumulus



cumulonimbus

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pp. 14-15	J. Constable, *Study of Cloud and Trees* (detail), 1821
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pp. 36-37	*Calcaire à paysage*, Toscana, Italy From: J. Baltrušaitis, *Aberrations: essai sur la légende des formes* Flammarion, Paris 1983
pp. 38-39	J. A. McNeill Whistler, *Slumber* (detail), c. 1883/1884
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/250