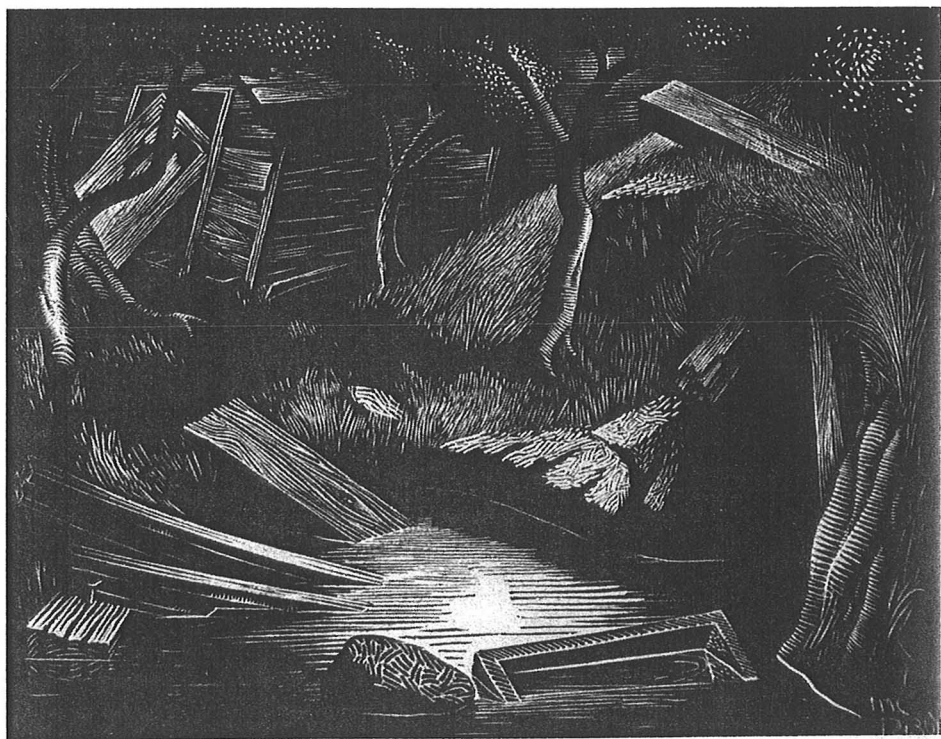


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Crumbling Borders

You listen to the thump
the dirt makes as you
spade it on to more dirt while
you till the garden by hand because
the Roto-tiller is broken and
you push the spade in the ground
with your foot, turn a clod of dirt
over and lay it diagonally in front of you,
working your way across the garden,
in rows, left to right, then right to left,
so you don't step in the dirt
that's already been spaded, and you realize
you still have to hoe and rake
the soil before you can even plant
any seeds, and then you'll have to water
the seeds each day and care for the plants
as each breaks through the soil, stretching
towards the sun, and you'll worry that
there will be too much rain or too little,
and you'll fret over the eggplant
in the southern corner of the garden
that keeps losing its leaves, and your heart
will overflow as the crops begin to come in,
and you'll rush to the house to show anyone
who is there the first of the tomatoes that seemed
to have suddenly ripened in the noonday sun,
and you will begin to wonder if this is why
Cain did not give God the first of his fruits,
when he made an offering, why he brought
the poorer quality fruits, why he wanted to keep
those first fruits for himself.