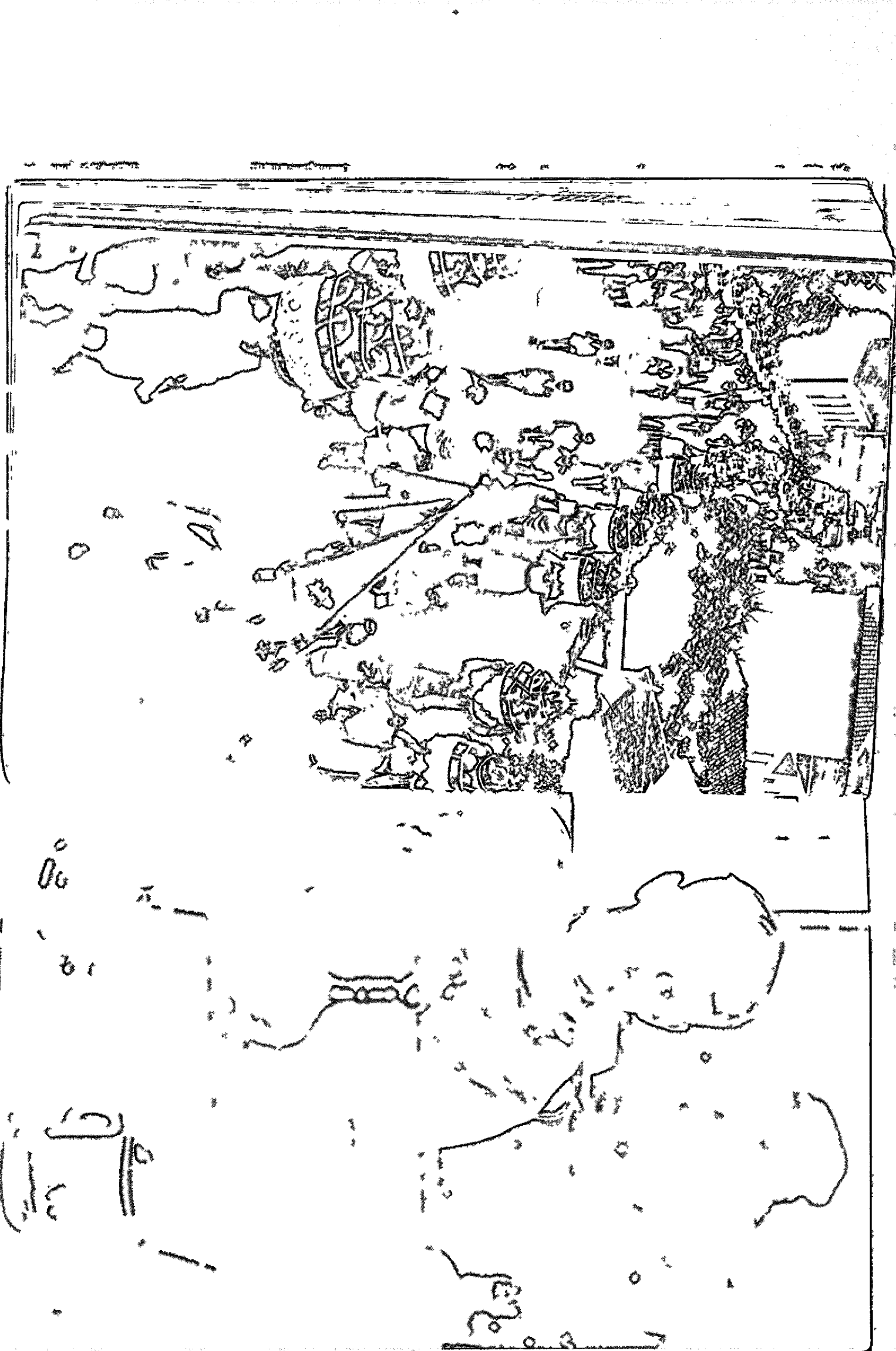

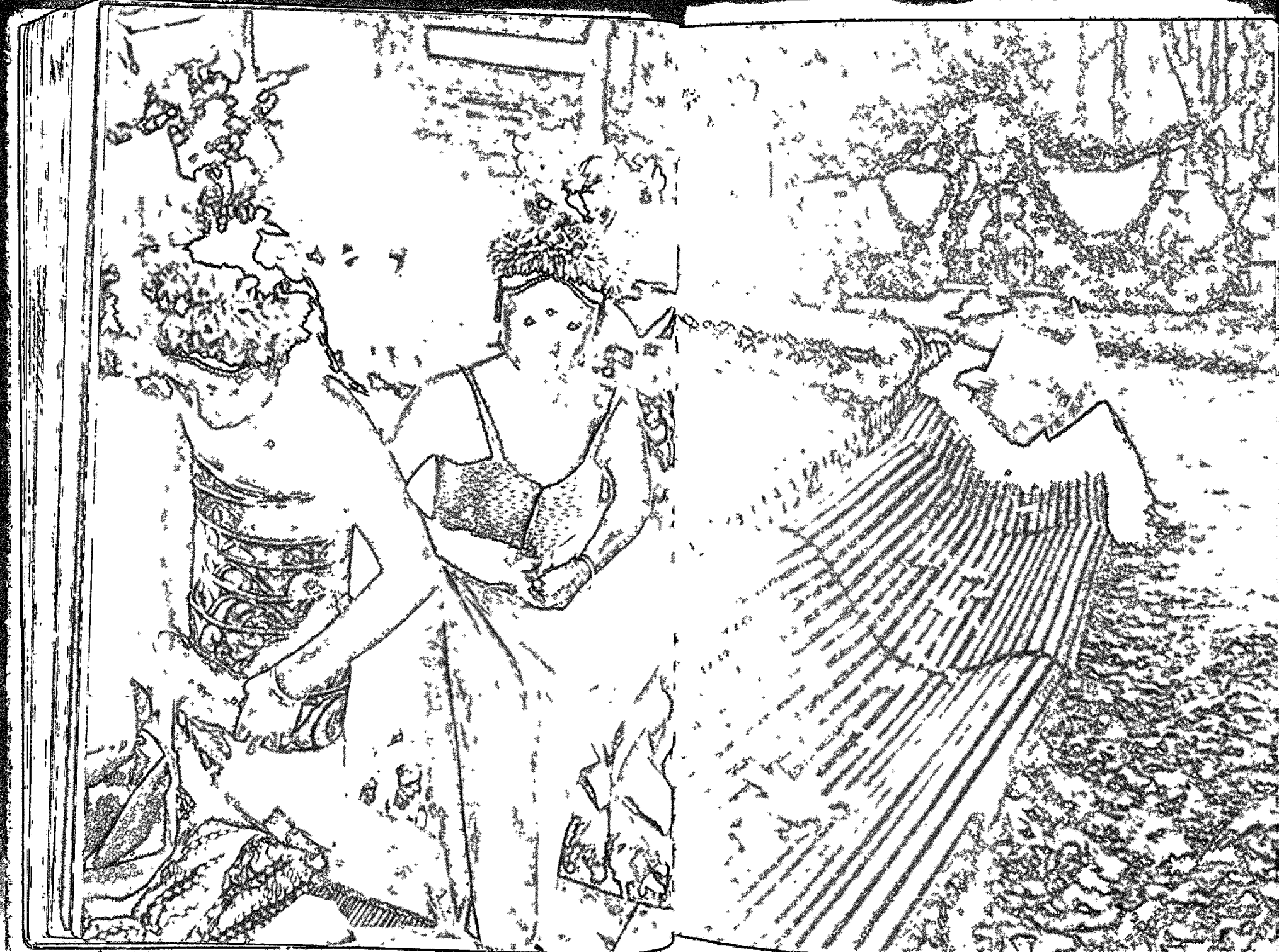

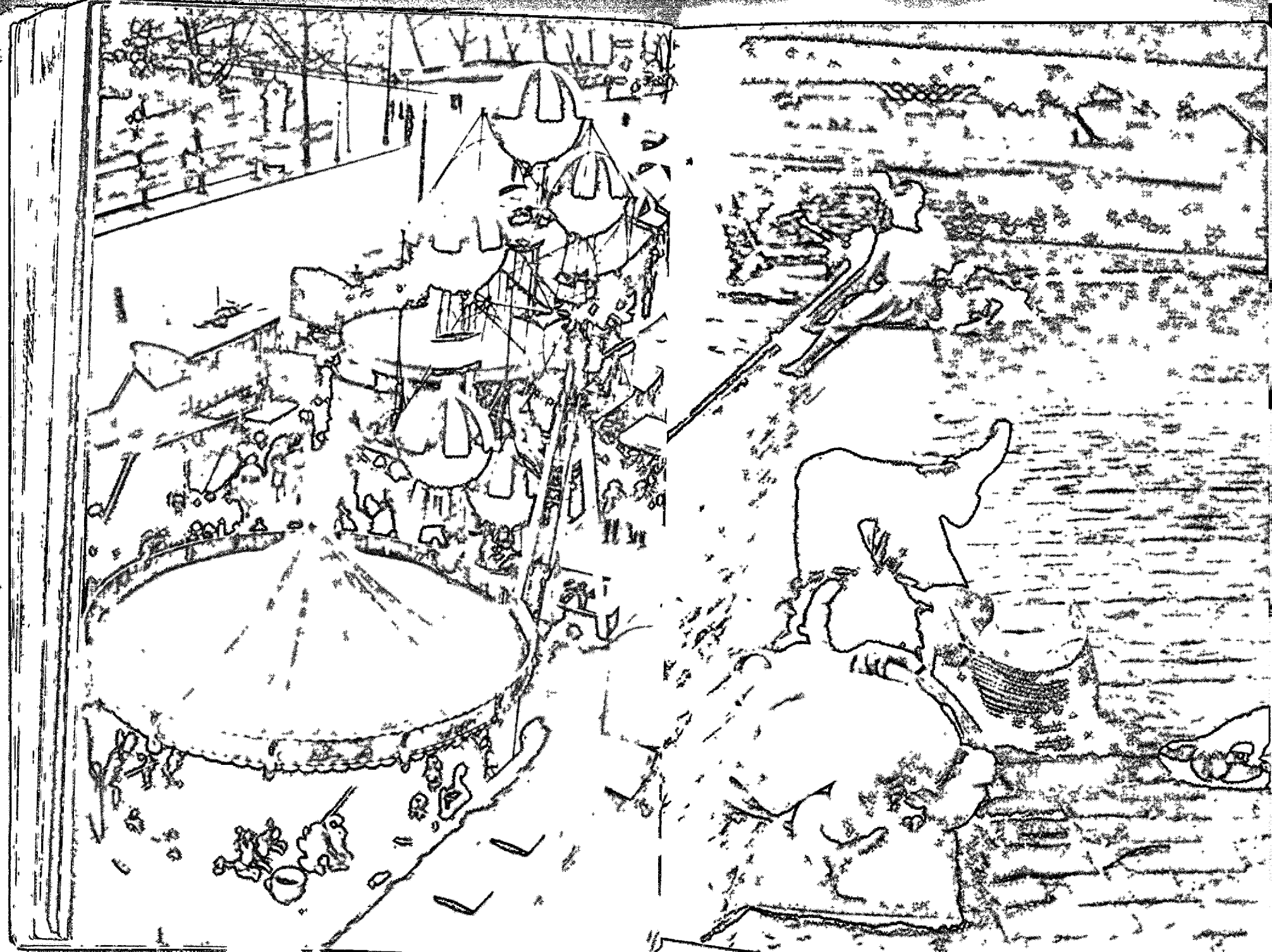

We know what the quality without a name is like in our own lives.

As we shall see in the next few chapters, this quality can only come to life in us when it exists within the world that we are part of. We can come alive only to the extent the buildings and towns we live in are alive. The quality without a name is circular: it exists in us, when it exists in our buildings; and it only exists in our buildings, when we have it in ourselves.

To understand this clearly, we must first recognize that what a town or building is, is governed, above all, by what is happening there.

I mean this in the most general sense.

Activities; events; forces; situations; lightning strikes; fish die; water flows; lovers quarrel; a cake burns; cats chase each other; a hummingbird sits outside my window; friends come by; my car breaks down; lovers' reunion; children born; grandparents go broke. . . .

My life is made of episodes like this.

The life of every person, animal, plant, creature, is made of similar episodes.

The character of a place, then, is given to it by the episodes which happen there.

Those of us who are concerned with buildings tend to forget too easily that all the life and soul of a place, all of our experiences there, depend not simply on the physical environment, but on the patterns of events which we experience there.

What is Lima—what is most memorable there—eating anticuchos in the street; small pieces of beef heart, on sticks, cooked over open coals, with hot sauce on them; the dark, badly lit night streets of Lima, small carts with the flickering fire of the hot coals, the faces of the sellers, shadowy figures gathered round, to eat the beef hearts.

Or in Geneva—chestnuts, hot, in small paper bags, eaten in the autumn mist, warming the fingers.

And, what is it about the California coast—the shock of the waves, the hiss of the surf, standing on a rock while the white water hisses in, runs out, a dash across the wet sand to the rock, before the sea comes in again.

And it is just the same indoors. Think of a big room, vast, huge windows, big empty fireplace, completely empty, no furniture at all, except an easel and a chair—Picasso's studio. Is this not made entirely of the situations, the forces let loose by the configuration of events?

And what of a party around a kitchen table, people drinking together, cooking together, drinking wine, eating grapes, together preparing a stew of beef and wine and garlic and tomatoes which takes four hours to cook—and while it cooks, we drink, and then, at last we eat it.

What of the kind of moment we remember most of all: the flickering candles on the Christmas tree, the small bell ringing, the children waiting, hour by hour, outside the door, peeping through the crack, and finally rushing in, when they hear the tinkling of that small bell, and see the tree there, lit, with fifty white and red candles, burning, and the smell of singed pine needles where a twig caught fire while the candles were being lit.

What of the process of scrubbing the floor, working the stiff bristles of the brush, and the pail of water, over the soft boards, with fibers breaking loose, and the smell of the soap that stays in the wood.

Or saying goodbye, at a train, leaning through the window of the train, waving, kissing, as the train pulls out, running along the platform. . . .

Or, taking the Sunday walk, a family, abreast, in twos and threes, walking along the road, pushing the smallest child perhaps, the others lagging behind to look at frogs, and an old shoe.

These patterns of events which create the character of a place are not necessarily human events.

The sunshine shining on the windowsill, the wind blowing in the grass are events too—they affect us just as much as social events.

Any combination of events, which has a bearing on our lives—an actual physical effect on us—affects our lives.

If, for example, there is a stream bed gouged in the rock outside my house, which fills each time it rains, this is a situation which has a powerful effect on the character of the environment, yet is not a human situation at all.

Compare the power and importance of these events with the other purely geometrical aspects of the environment, which architects concern themselves with.

Compare, for instance, two ways of including water in a building.

Suppose, on the one hand, that there is a concrete reflecting pool outside your room—with no purpose except to reflect the sky.

And suppose, on the other hand, that there is a stream outside your room, with a small rowing boat on it, where you can go, to row, lie on the water, struggle against the stream, tip over . . . .

Which of these two makes the most difference to the building? The rowing boat, of course, because it alters the entire experience of the building.

It is the action of these moments, the people involved in them, and the peculiar situations, which make the impression on our lives.

The life of a house, or of a town, is not given to it, directly, by the shape of its buildings, or by the ornament and plan—it is given to them by the quality of the events and situations we encounter there. Always it is our situations which allow us to be what we are.

It is the people around us, and the most common ways we have of meeting them, of being with them, it is, in short, the ways of being which exist in our world, that make it possible for us to be alive.

We know, then, that what matters in a building or a town is not its outward shape, its physical geometry alone, but the events that happen there.

It is all the events which happen there—the human events given by the situations which are repeated, the mechanical events, the rush of trains, the fall of water, the slow cracking of structures, the growing of the grass, the melting of the snow, the rusting of iron, the flowering of roses, the heat of a summer's day, the cooking, loving, playing, dying, and not only of ourselves, but of the animals, and plants, and even of the inorganic processes which make the whole.

Of course, some events happen once in a lifetime; others happen more often; and some happen very often indeed. But although it is true that a unique event can sometimes change our lives completely, or leave its mark on us, it is not too much to say that, by and large, the overall character of our lives is given by those events which keep on recurring over and over again.

And, by the same token, it is roughly true that any system, any aspect of the life of a part of the world, is essentially governed by those situations, human or non-human—which keep on repeating there.

A building or a town is given its character, essentially, by those events which keep on happening there most often.

A field of grass is given its character, essentially, by those events which happen over and over again—millions upon millions of times. The germination of the grass seed, the blowing wind, the flowering of the grass, the

movement of the worms, the hatching of the insects . . . .

A car is given its character by the events which keep on happening there—the rolling of the wheels, the movement of the pistons in the cylinders, the limited to and fro of the steering wheel and axle, as the car changes direction.

A family is given its character by the particular events which keep on happening there—the small affections, kisses, breakfast, the particular kinds of arguments which keep on happening, the way these arguments resolve themselves, the idiosyncrasies of people, both together and alone, which make us love them . . . .

And just the same is true in any person's individual life.

If I consider my life honestly, I see that it is governed by a certain very small number of patterns of events which I take part in over and over again.

Being in bed, having a shower, having breakfast in the kitchen, sitting in my study writing, walking in the garden, cooking and eating our common lunch at my office with my friends, going to the movies, taking my family to eat at a restaurant, having a drink at a friend's house, driving on the freeway, going to bed again. There are a few more.

There are surprisingly few of these patterns of events in any one person's way of life, perhaps no more than a

dozen. Look at your own life and you will find the same. It is shocking at first, to see that there are so few patterns of events open to me.

Not that I want more of them. But when I see how very few of them there are, I begin to understand what huge effect these few patterns have on my life, on my capacity to live. If these few patterns are good for me, I can live well. If they are bad for me, I can't.

Of course, the standard patterns of events vary very much from person to person, and from culture to culture.

For a teenage boy, at high school in Los Angeles, his situations include hanging out in the corridor with other boys; watching television; sitting in a car with his girlfriend at a drive-in restaurant eating coke and hamburgers. For an old woman, in a European mountain village, her situations include scrubbing her front doorstep, lighting a candle in the local church, stopping at the market to buy fresh vegetables, walking five miles across the mountains to visit her grandson.

But each town, each neighborhood, each building, has a particular set of these patterns of events according to its prevailing culture.

A person can modify his immediate situations. He can move, change his life, and so on. In exceptional cases he can even change them almost wholly. But it is not possible

to go beyond the bounds of the collection of events and pattern of events which our culture makes available to us.

We have a glimpse, then, of the fact that our world has a structure, in the simple fact that certain patterns of events—both human and nonhuman—keep repeating, and account, essentially, for much the greater part of the events which happen there.

Our individual lives are made from them . . . so are our lives together . . . they are the rules, through which our culture maintains itself, keeps itself alive, and it is by building our lives, out of these patterns of events, that we are people of our culture . . . .

There is no aspect of our lives which is not governed by these patterns of events. And if the quality without a name can come into our lives at all, it is clear that it depends entirely on the specific nature of these patterns of events from which our world is made.

And indeed, the world does have a structure, just because these patterns of events which repeat themselves are always anchored in the space.

I cannot imagine any pattern of events without imagining a place where it is happening. I cannot think of sleeping, without imagining myself sleeping *somewhere*. Of course, I can imagine myself sleeping in many different kinds of places—but these places all have at least certain physical geometrical characteristics in common. And I can-

not think about the place without also knowing, or imagining, what happens there. I cannot think of a bedroom, without imagining the bed, lovemaking, sleeping, dressing perhaps, waking up . . . breakfast in bed . . . .

Consider, for example, the pattern of events which we might call "watching the world go by."

We sit, perhaps slightly raised, on the front porch, or on some steps in a park, or on a café terrace, with a more or less protected, sheltered, partly private place behind us, looking out into a more public place, slightly raised above it, watching the world go by.

I cannot separate it from the porch where it occurs.

The action and the space are indivisible. The action is supported by this kind of space. The space supports this kind of action. The two form a unit, a pattern of events in space.

The same in a barbershop. Inside, barbers, customers sitting in a row along one side, chairs for haircuts in another row, widely spaced, facing the mirrors, the barber idly talking while he cuts your hair, bottles of pomade around, hair dryer lying on the table, a basin in front for rinsing, a strop hanging on the wall, for stropping the razors . . . . Again, the activity and its physical space are one. There is no separating them.

Indeed, a culture always defines its pattern of events by referring to the names of the physical elements of space which are "standard" in that culture.

If you look back at the patterns of events that I have mentioned, each one is almost completely defined by the spatial character of the place where it occurs.

The barbershop, the porch, the shower, the study with its writing desk, the garden with its path, the bed, the communal lunch table, the cinema, the freeway, the high school corridor, the television set, the drive-in restaurant, the front doorstep, the candlestand at the back of the church, the market with its vegetable stalls, the mountain path. Each of these elements defines a pattern of events.

And the mere list of elements which are typical in a given town tells us the way of life of people there.

When you think of Los Angeles, you think of freeways, drive-ins, suburbs, airports, gas stations, shopping centers, swimming pools, hamburger joints, parking lots, beaches, billboards, supermarkets, free-standing one-family houses, front yards, traffic lights . . . .

When you think of a medieval European town, you think of the church, the marketplace, the town square, the wall around the town, the town gates, narrow winding streets and lanes, rows of attached houses, each one containing an extended family, rooftops, alleys, blacksmiths, alehouses . . . .

In each case the simple list of elements is intensely evoc-

ative. The elements are not just dead pieces of architecture and building—each one has an entire life associated with it. The names of the elements make us imagine and remember what people are doing in those elements, and what life is like in an environment which has those elements.

This does not mean that space creates events, or that it causes them.

For example, in a modern town, the concrete spatial pattern of a sidewalk does not "cause" the kinds of human behavior which happens there.

What happens is much more complex. The people on the sidewalk, being culture-bound, know that the space which they are part of is a sidewalk, and, as part of their culture, they have the pattern of a sidewalk in their minds. It is this pattern in their minds which causes them to behave the way that people do behave on sidewalks, not the purely spatial aspect of the concrete and the walls and curbs.

And this means, of course, that in two cultures, people may see sidewalks differently, that is, they may have different patterns in their minds—and, that they will, as a result, act differently on the sidewalks. For example, in New York, a sidewalk is mainly a place for walking, jostling, moving fast. And by comparison, in Jamaica, or India, a sidewalk is a place to sit, to talk, perhaps to play music, even to sleep.

It is not correct to interpret this by saying that the two sidewalks are the same.

It simply means that a pattern of events cannot be separated from the space where it occurs.

Each sidewalk is a unitary system, which includes *both* the field of geometrical relationships which define its concrete geometry, *and* the field of human actions and events, which are associated with it.

So when we see that a sidewalk in Bombay is used by people sleeping, or for parking cars . . . and that in New York it is used only for walking—we cannot interpret this correctly as a single sidewalk pattern, with two different uses. The Bombay sidewalk (space + events) is one pattern; the New York sidewalk (space + events) is another pattern. They are two entirely different patterns.

This close connection between patterns of events and space is commonplace in nature.

The word "stream" describes a pattern of physical space and a pattern of events, at the same time.

We do not separate the stream bed from the stream. There is no distinction in our minds between the bed of the stream, its banks, its winding configuration in the land, and the rushing of the water, the growth of plants, the swimming of the fish.

And, in the same way, the patterns of events which govern life in buildings and in towns cannot be separated from the space where they occur.

Each one is a living thing, a pattern of events in space,

just like a stream, a waterfall, a fire, a storm—a thing which happens, over and again, and is exactly one of the elements from which the world is made.

And it is therefore clear that we can only understand these patterns of events by seeing them as living elements of space themselves.

It is the space itself which lives and breathes; it is the space which is the walking, jostling sidewalk in New York; it is the space we call the porch, which is the pattern of events we also call watching the world go by.

The life which happens in a building or a town is not merely anchored in the space but made up from the space itself.

For since space is made up of these living elements, these labeled patterns of events in space, we see that what seems at first sight like the dead geometry we call a building or a town is indeed a quick thing, a living system, a collection of interacting, and adjacent, patterns of events in space, each one repeating certain events over and over again, yet always anchored by its place in space. And, if we hope to understand the life which happens in a building or a town, we must therefore try to understand the structure of the space itself.

We shall now try to find some way of understanding space which yields its patterns of events in a completely natural way, so that we can succeed in seeing patterns of events, and space, as one.

CHAPTER 5

PATTERNS OF SPACE

These patterns of events are always interlocked with certain geometric patterns in the space. Indeed, as we shall see, each building and each town is ultimately made out of these patterns in the space, and out of nothing else: they are the atoms and the molecules from which a building or a town is made.