

All the Rooms of Uncle's Head

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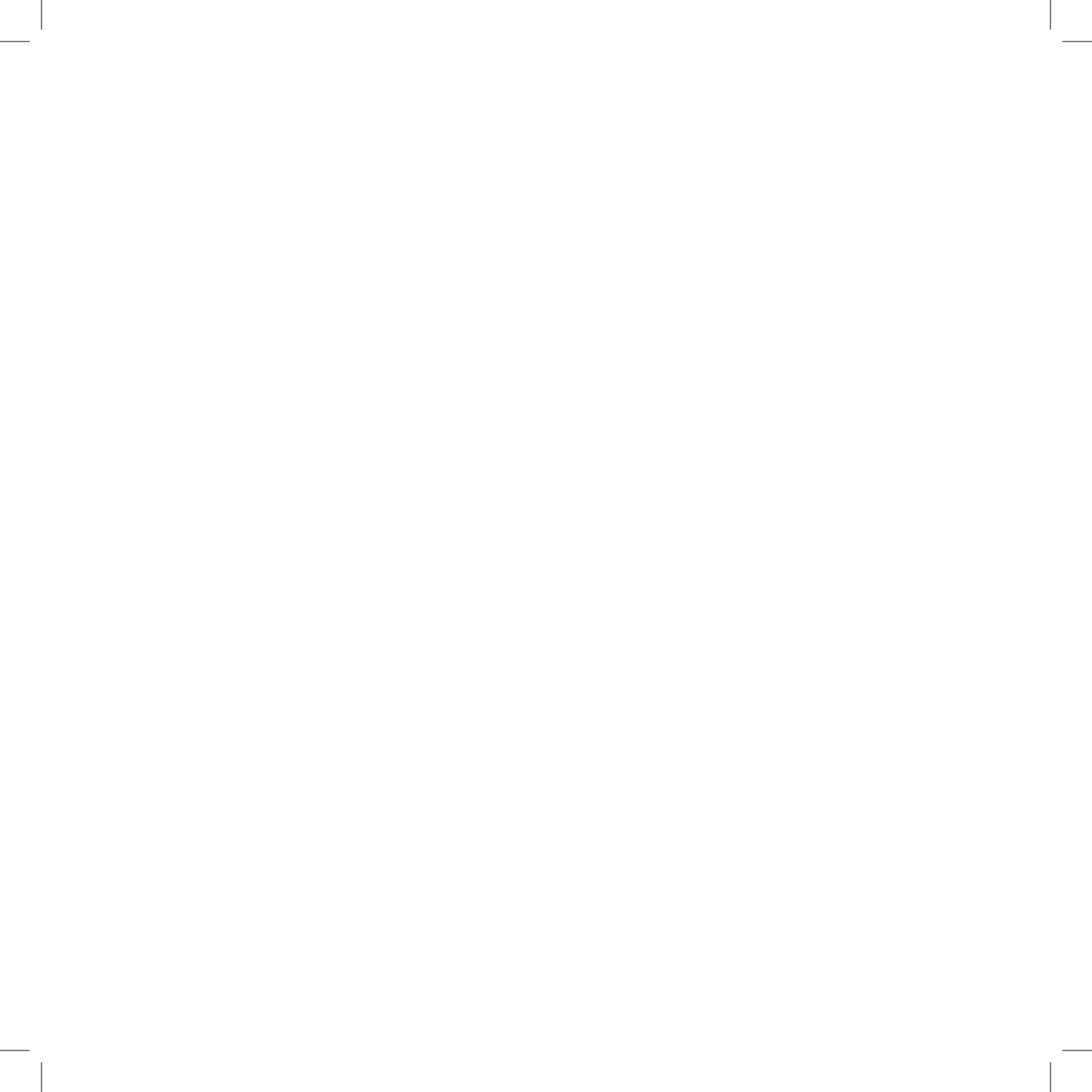
Made in the Midlands

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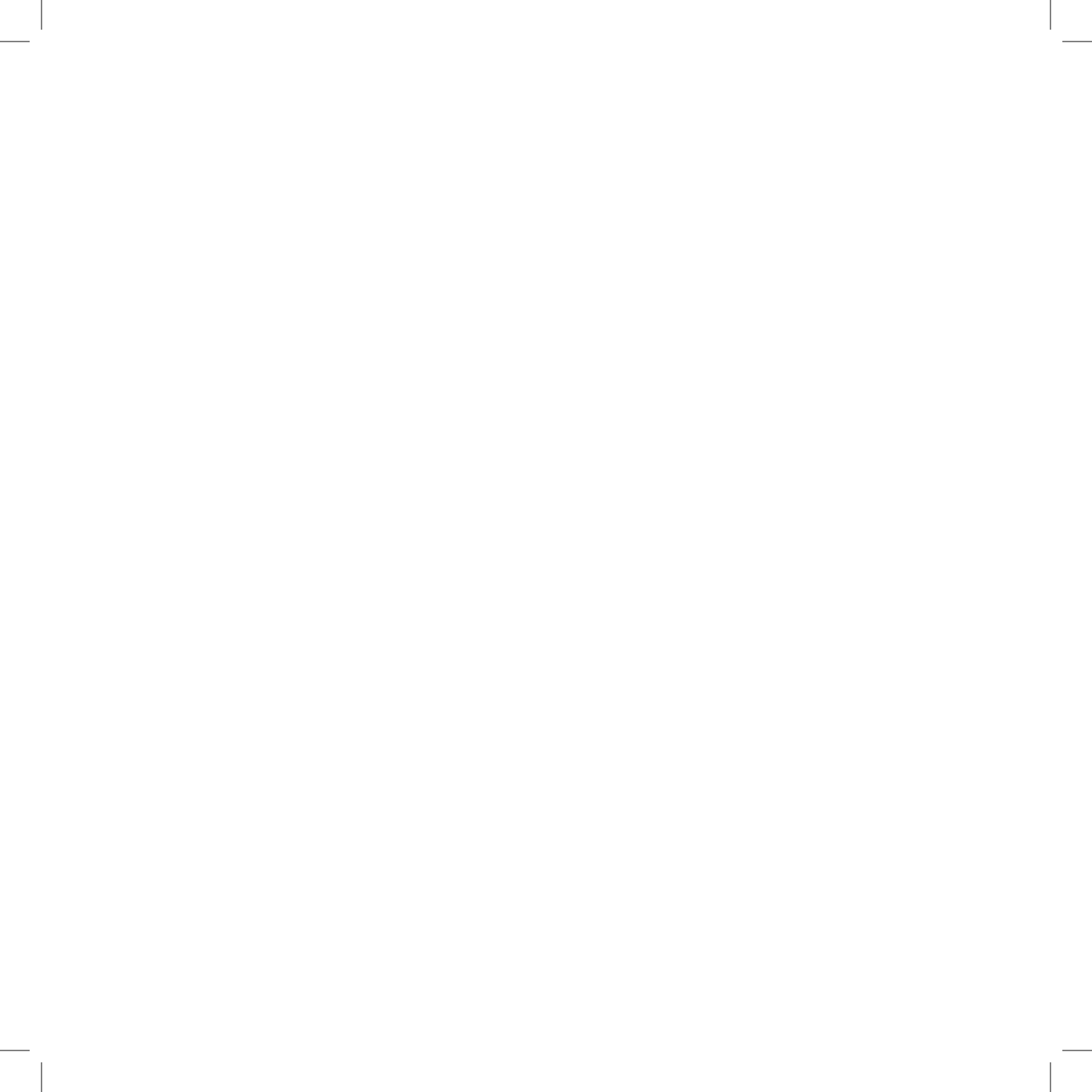


Nine
Arches
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Hans Prinzhorn was a German psychiatrist and art historian whose *Artistry of the Mentally Ill* (1922) explored the relationship between mental illness and artistic expression and is considered a landmark in the history of outsider art.

Prinzhorn died in 1933 in Munich, having retired there with an elderly relative after the failure of his marriages. The building he had lived in was stripped for renovation as a chiropractic clinic in 1986; in the cellar a number of his patients' works were discovered, including a large crate of hand-painted ceramic tiles. Most were smashed, but a significant remnant were able to be pieced together with some hope of accuracy; a selection of these reconfigured tiles is presented here.



• DONKEY-DRIVEN • A STRAIT-LACED BAGNIO FOR MY SINS • OPALS •

UNCLE

TO THE PAINTED BEAUTY OF HIS FIGUREHEAD' • AWAKENING

*The
Threshold*

{ A CRACK IN THE LINTEL whispers as I pass:
No hope of help or home or harvest here.
Uncle has a chipped tooth. The brass

*The
Baptism*

{ Ewers pour numb waters down;
I'm dumb in an old enamel bath.
Doves strut on the finials of Uncle's crown.

*Consultation
the first*

{ THURSDAYS THE PROFESSOR comes to share a meal—
But how can he exorcise a ghost
He won't believe in? The healer's spiel:
'You must allow the pills a chance, you must!'

*Consultation
the second*

{ Mice clown with the moon in empty lofts.
I cry as evening fails across the lawns.
Their strongarm cures chisel my temple open;
Murmurs of murders, bat-flocks, fly the cleft.

IMAGINES

• KLABOUTERMANNIKIN • *Moral*, A TIMID SAILOR DOES NOT TRUST

VESSEL WHOSE CARGO PRESERVES ITSELF • NUTRITIONAL ADVICE

ALB & AMICE • RIFF-RAFF, DRUNKEN, ELOQUENT, SMELLY • GALENA

ENROUTE

*The first
taxonomy*

AGAINST A WINTER SKY the thin
Fingers of a tree are shivering,
Dotted here and there with leaves
That have not understood their death—
Perverse as fingers that grow hands
To wave goodbye to all their friends.

Breath

THE SKY FILLS with a mass of wind
And light—
And—when darkness falls,

The second

THESE BATS UNFURL their dry wings,
And fly with clean, unspeakable songs
In earless emptiness. Wheel
Without threat of dawn.—How else
Do the souls of the damned arrive in hell?

NOWHERE

OF TRAVEL PLANS. NUTSHELL AS CORACLE • RATS CLAD IN
EXIT THE CATHEDRAL • *Essay*, REASONS FOR THE CURRENCY

• the TREE of LIFE MOULDERING in a GREEN ROMANTIC PARK

• ANTIQUE PATTERN OF ROOMS & THOUGHT • THE FAT ARCHITECT •

Lyric 'MY WHISPERS ARE THE WAN BRANCHES' • MEZZOTINT

GARRRET

*Vibrations of celestial springs, a river,
consumption, voice of a silent reading mind*

ON A WINTER AFTERNOON like this one, Uncle,
Sitting down to coffee and a strudel,
Might think of me and the *other soft lunatics*
Whom he imagines here. Till half past six,
We are allowed to roam the garden of his mind
But not to speak about the blooms we find;
We are bad figments of his old decorum.
His sweetened fancy turns from room to room,
Each placid inmate in his mausoleum,
Refusing to die.

Head full of gloom,
He stares down at the dark lake and sighs.
High on the scarp I face him: the light of his eyes
Lets out on the empty lawn. A straggle of ivy
Turns grey in the dusk. He is smoking merrily.

BRAIN

• SO I EXIST • AN EVENING SPENT IN CONTEMPLATION • *and* A LETTER, *and* NEWSPAPER, *and* TRAM RIDE, *and* SCENT, MACKEREL SKIES,

• GOLD & GANGUE • CURARE CEREMONIAL • MY UNSPEAKABLE OBEDIENCE •

F O L K

WHO OR HOW OR WHAT MAKES ME A BROTHER TO VIOLENCE •

*The sun
observing
the planets*

SCRAP OF LAWN outside the kindergarten.
I returned.
The foul weather abated. A crocus,
A plait of bread rising in a dingy wood.

*The crow
observing
the deer*

I knelt among the birches and lay down and vomited
And slept.
Calm, serious voices. The little leaves
Dark and restless against a blue and airy sky—

*Theory of
modern
medicine*

KEEP ME HERE under the trees, my homeland!
My brown heart's seismic stone—peripheries—
The webs of leaves shaking benedictions.
A wet conclave of earth and stone.

*Alternative
theory*

Prone to the laws of season, when I was very close
I flew far distant, and awoke—forgetful—
Raving—a sunflower, blinded by finches,
Torn from its merry scrap of ground.

S O N G

• CLOUDFORMS OR TURBULENCE WITHIN ONE • *Plain*, CAN'T SAY

• FLAT ROOF of the TEMPLE • TO PULL DOWN THEIR FOLKLORIC HEARTS

• A GANDER, A GOAT, A HARE, A CAT, A FOX • FOR THE KITCHENS •

CHEMICAL PROCESSES CONTAIN THEMSEVES' • CAULDRON

E M P T Y

• CRUDITY in the FORM of CATEGORY • SUCH AS IS SCRIPTURE

The boiler needs an overhaul
It is leaking
One day you strike this out at your peril, Professor
too shall live in a hole

UNCLE THINKS OF PEOPLE who were here before,
 The perfect, serious girls, the Russians and younger sons,
 The bachelors melancholy with the wealth, the dead:
 They *laugh*, skip across the landing in stockinged feet,
 Arrive with their cases in the hall; and all
 The rooms of Uncle's head reverberate with their
 Audible absences mingling with the mean constraint
 Of the living who have usurped them. The classless mad
 Exist from room to room as they did, in a light,
 High-ceilinged prison of leisure. Nothing to do
 But one's own self to be despite the moues
 Of disapproving staff.

A HEX on such spectres,
 The unreal assurance of their stately lives.
 We the lonely ones have company enough.

• THE GARDEN AS GRAVE OF FOLLY • *Seance* IN WHICH CERTAIN

G R O T T O