



# Nineteen Thirty-Four

Radiant, in the Paris sun, the clustered chairs  
and canopies, the clustered leaves, one and one  
and one—and down the boulevard, the circus tent  
in a blowsy park, the Hospital, boulangeries,  
the Institute where Curie turns, then takes  
in her blackened, slender fingers a finger-shaped

tube of radiation. And the blue Atlantic, radiant,  
the American shore, the gold-flecked palette  
Paul Cadmus lifts. It is a midday and sundown  
in March. He will paint on the flank of an acrobat  
a gilded skin. She will stroke down the test tube  
a ticking wand. There is sunlight on their sleeves,

as the equinox shifts and the pale-bricked house  
of Physics throws open its smallest doors. Radiant,  
the boulevards and shorelines, the peat fields, polders,  
steeple tops, the Appalachians, Pyrenees,  
the river-etched terraces of Warsaw.

And the circus tent with its acrobats, stern-faced

and gilded, circling the ring on their parallel horses.  
Radiant, their sudden shape, like fission's sudden  
pyramid: one on the shoulders of two, two  
on the shoulders of four, four on the eight  
pumping, glistening haunches, and the sixteen  
polished hooves, mute in the swirling dust.