

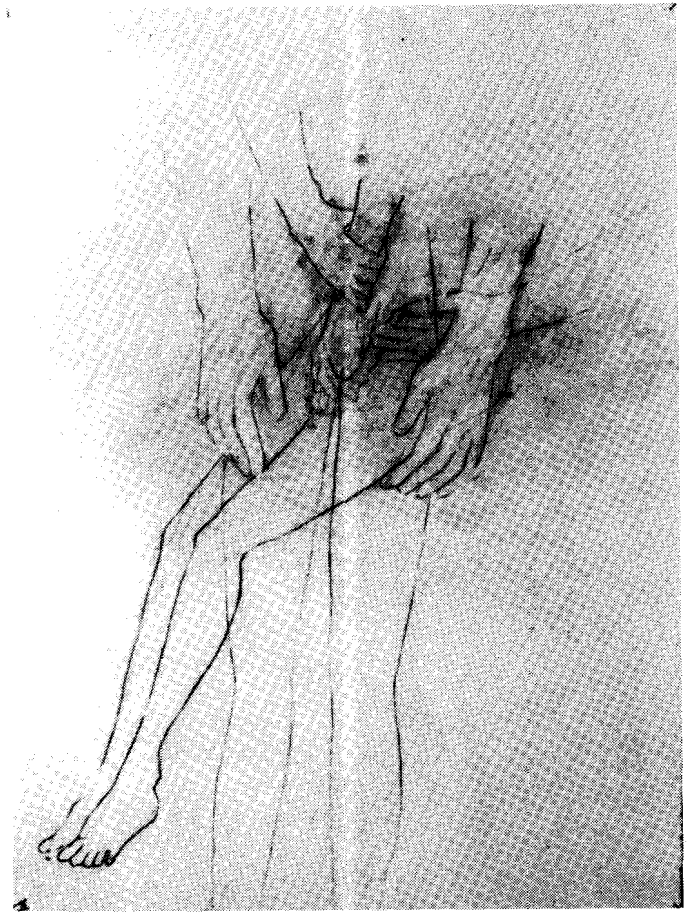
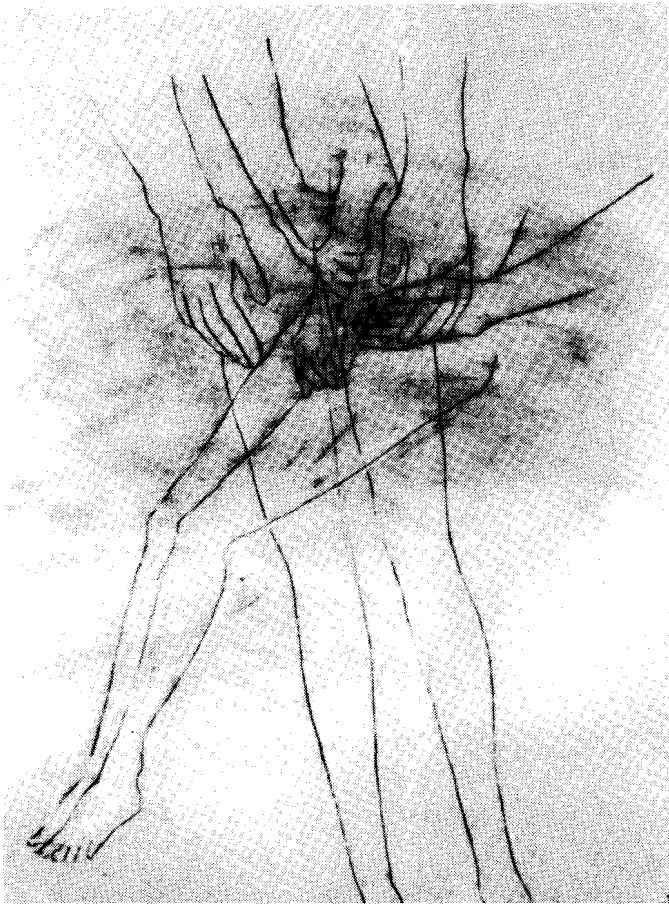
## Dispersal of a Black Cloud

DRAWINGS BY NELL TENHAAF AND TEXT BY K. GRAMSCI\*

In my father's house, there came a point, quite early on, when I became the mother. This is a delicate story of incest, of subtle perversions and gentle abuse. He looked at me a certain way, which I knew was how he should have been looking at my mother. Not as though he wanted to fuck me or feel up under my ten-year-old's shirt, but rather that he wanted to marry me. I was the perfect virgin mother, the idealized then-virgin daughter, to be his archetypal Mary-goddess — held in the same esteem as the patriarch's own aging mother, as a being of the highest virtue, the most prized possession.

For a time, then, she became the errant daughter — she was mistrusted and punished, but thus also gained the freedom to die — and for a moment, in the very act of refusing his sex, discovered a sexual being.

She had always been the virgin mother, woman bred and trained as obedient concubine, intended in her quiet denial of desire to maintain order everywhere.



*Dispersal of a Black Cloud: Series of Four Drawings, Nell Tenhaaf, 1989, conté, pencil, ash on paper, 55 x 80 cm*

Now the role was passed on to me. In the same instance that reason gave me a curious hand to feel myself, the slide occurred — a transfer of duty, role, responsibility and endless guilt from mother to that daughter who was now mother. Now I was vested with both supreme power over him, and the awesome function of fulfilling his ideal.

Sometimes, when we talk, I realize that what we are is sisters — each other's mothers and daughters, doomed to fight, compete, look at each other enviously, in perpetual, mutual dependence.

It broke when her body began to revolt — instantly he was repulsed by her sex, and she crashed down from the pedestal in a liberating fall.

*\*This is a pseudonym for a woman who wishes to remain anonymous.*