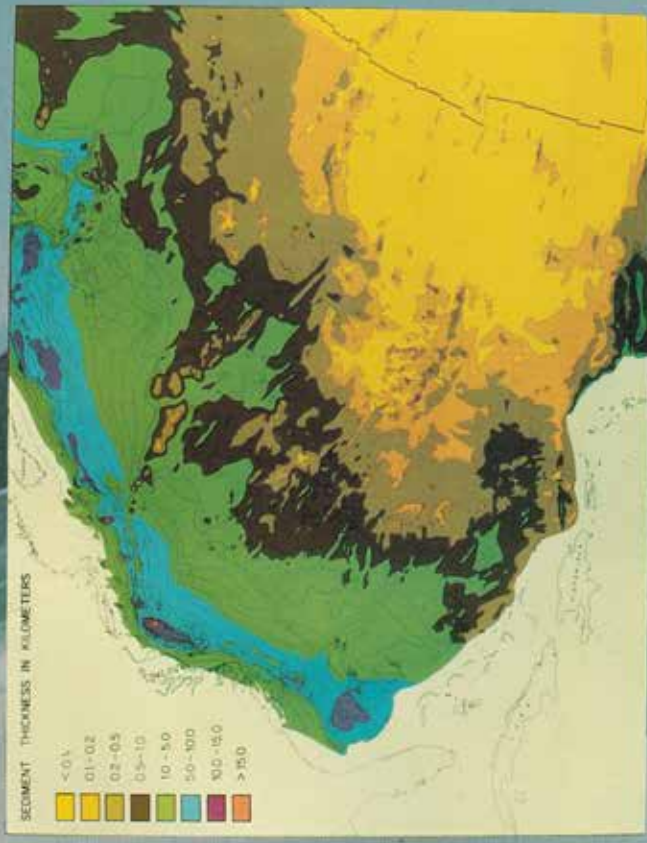


*South*

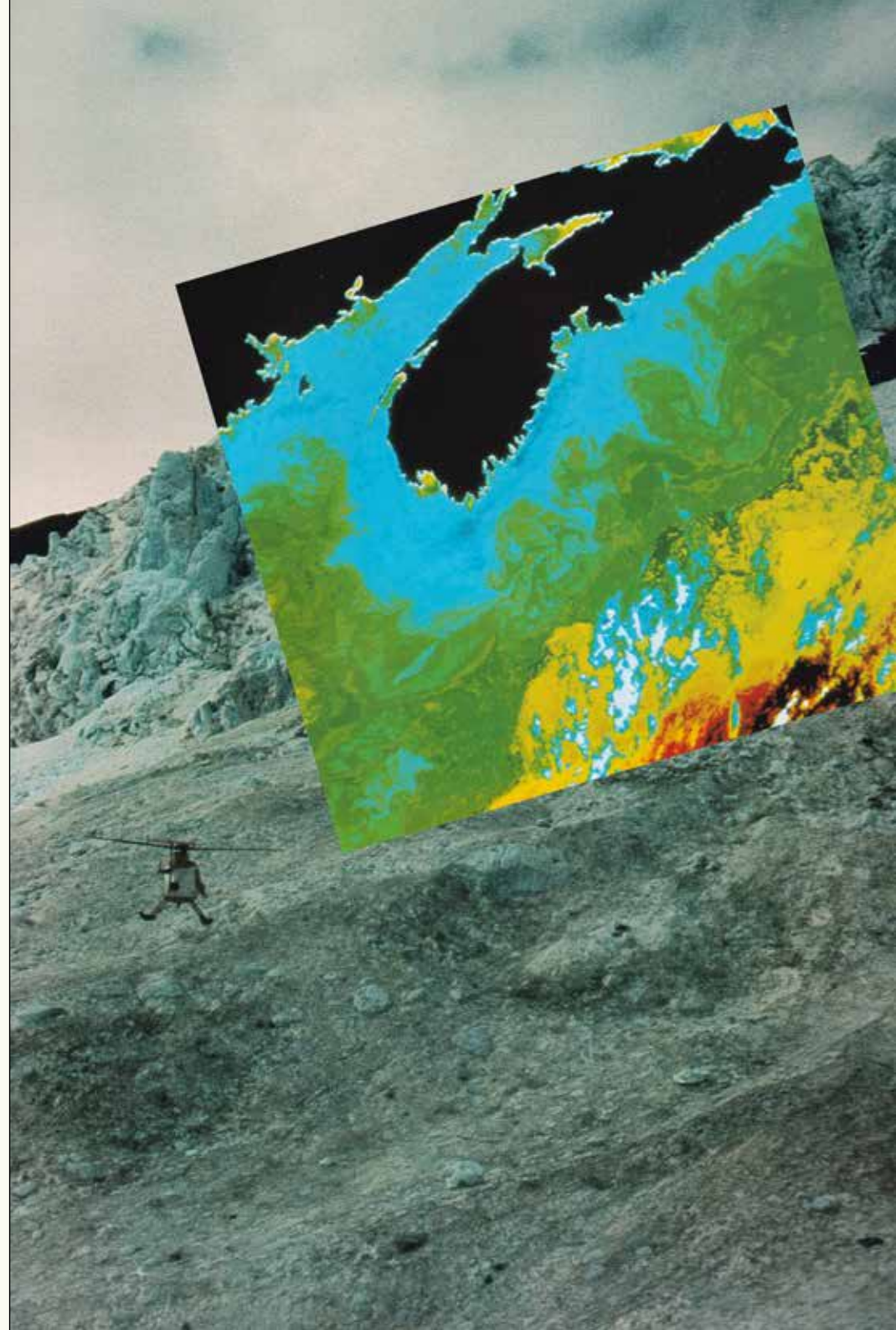
*Out of whose womb came the ice?  
And the hoary frost of Heaven, who hath gendered it?  
The waters are hid as with a stone,  
And the face of the deep is frozen.*

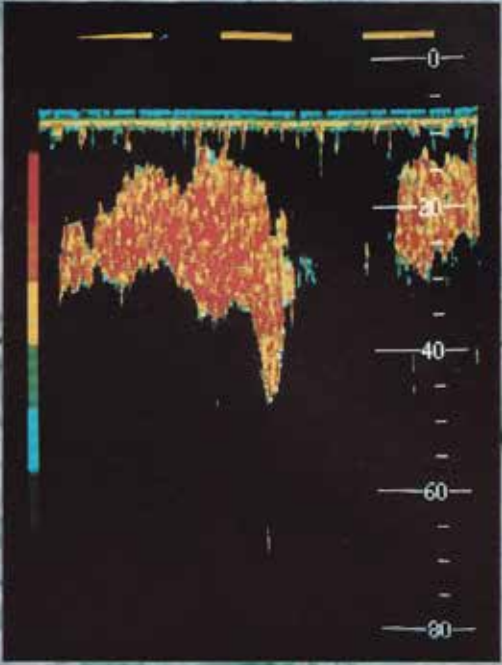
Job 38:29–30

I









So landed on a vast deposit of shells and bones—  
cephalopods, corals, echini, spinifera, teleosts, sharks  
and ganoids. Tertiary cycads, fan-palms, fungi. Conifers.  
Ocean floor and rifted land mass. Long geologic ages.  
The course of some great river: pierced the foothills and  
approached its sinking-place in the range.

The dead city lay around. Descended story by story into  
the submerged part, impeded by local collapses. Star-  
shaped open spaces. Signs of decadence.

Some electrical condition in the disturbed air to the  
west.



High windows and massive doorways in the upper levels. Below the ice-cap, the twilight deepened. In certain rooms the dominant arrangement was varied by the presence of maps, astronomical charts and other scientific designs on an enlarged scale.

Threaded a dim way through the labyrinth. Encountering choked hallways. Once in a while struck the base of an open shaft through which daylight poured.

In the smoother places there were suggestions of the dragging of heavy objects. In certain obscure legends, the object never allowed to appear.

Had lived under the sea a good deal. Now and then flew to tremendous heights or over long distances. Eocene. Miocene. The coming of the ice in the Pleistocene. Finding decayed organisms, huge blind birds—the wings held a persistent suggestion of the aerial.

Homecoming, that awakening. By the time of the great cold.

Had crossed the icy peaks. Remembering an older scene: lush vegetation, river sweeping north along the base of the mountains. Sloped the ancient table-land, the river traversing it as an irregular ribbon of shadow.

Fugitive moods, memories and impressions. Carried through a series of rooms and corridors, in every state of ruin or preservation. Taking false leads and retracing the way. Sunless cliffs, hidden ocean.

The true bottom lay at a considerably lower depth, deliberately closed and deserted. As if the coming of the ice had been foreseen.

Let it be plain. Let the thing be stated: We were coming to the circular place, a perfect hemisphere. The colossal black front looming, constellated with lights.

Passed the star-shaped ruin and out onto the glaciated surface. Ice-sheet deeply riven. Seeing, once more, that remote and snowy rim. Once more outlined against the unknown west.

What must have remained. Rose from the abyss—

The dark bulk of the plane. That advancing white mist.

## *Notes*

This sequence of poems uses phrases sourced from H.P. Lovecraft's novella 'At the Mountains of Madness', first published in the periodical *Astounding Stories* in 1936.

The images for the collages were sourced from *Ocean Frontiers: Explorations by Oceanographers on Five Continents*, edited by Elisabeth Mann Borgese (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1992) and *The Miracle Planet*, by Bruce Brown and Lane Morgan (Child & Associates, Frenchs Forest, NSW, 1989).