An Expatriation on the Combining of Weathers at Thirty-Seventh and Indiana Where the Southern More or Less Crosses the Dog

Oh, Ammons rolled the octaves slow
And the piano softened like butter in his hands,
And underward Catlett caught the beat
One sixteenth before the measure with a snap-snap touch on the snare
And a feathery brush on the cymbal, and Shapiro
Bowed the bass, half-glissing down past E-flat to A, to D,
And after a while
Berigan tested a limping figure low
In the coronet’s baritone and raised it a third and then another
Until he was poised
On the always falling fulcrum of the blues,
And Bechet came in just as the phrase expired
And doubled it and inverted it
In a growl descending, the voice of the reed
Almost protesting, then to be made explicit
On the trombone as O’Brien took it
And raised it again, while Berigan stroked a high tone
Until it quavered and cried,
And Carruth came achingly on, the clarinet’s most pure
High C-sharp, and he held it
Over the turn of the twelfth measure
And into the next verse with Bechet a fifth below rumbling
Upward on the back beat powerfully,
And O’Brien downward,
And Catlett press-rolling the slow beat now,
The old, old pattern of call and response unending,
And they felt the stir of the animal’s soul in the cave,
And heard the animal’s song, indefinable utterance,
And saw
A hot flowing of the eternal, many-colored, essential plasm
As they leaned outward together, away from place, from time,
In one only person, which was the blues.