Capitals

b. 1938, d. ? Along the way he turned into a capital, survived a war. And now he ponders maps, searches for street signs not in an international and wordless symbol-speech — and all to find out where he is, or what. This could be Warsaw, most painstakingly restored (and who could tell, therefore?), baroque; it could be labyrinthine Prague, saved by surrender (whatever that means), melancholy, compliant; it could be Berlin, quite transformed (who would know it? who would really desire to encounter its glamor again?), a prism rising from its ruins. His finger pokes direction into realigned lines, a triangle of getting by. Each year, there are the bicycle races — 180° completed to the cheers of crowds.

JOHN DITSKY
The Anatomy of a Prude's Dismay

This springtime of birds, mating: these are such days as to make the person inquiring politely, or *not* inquiring, as politely, into the possibly messy details of the lives of friends, house guests, or disappearing clergy — to make that same first person feel *himself* the voyeur, pervert, or Puritan for his holding off a ways, maintaining his "open mind," but in the clear fresh air. Or as to make the grimace with which he faces the fetus-chuckers and the free-flingers he's told he ought to reverence as prototypes of the New Man — to make that grimace a fake acceptance and an insufficient damning, both, and augmenting the wearer's unease. And rage is futile, scoffed at. Still they bring their little victories to him, waiting to be approved for what they'd once have hid — like cats with dead things, trophies, horrible offerings made the more awful to those who can see, looming over them, ice of ages toppling to the sea.

*JOHN DITSKY*