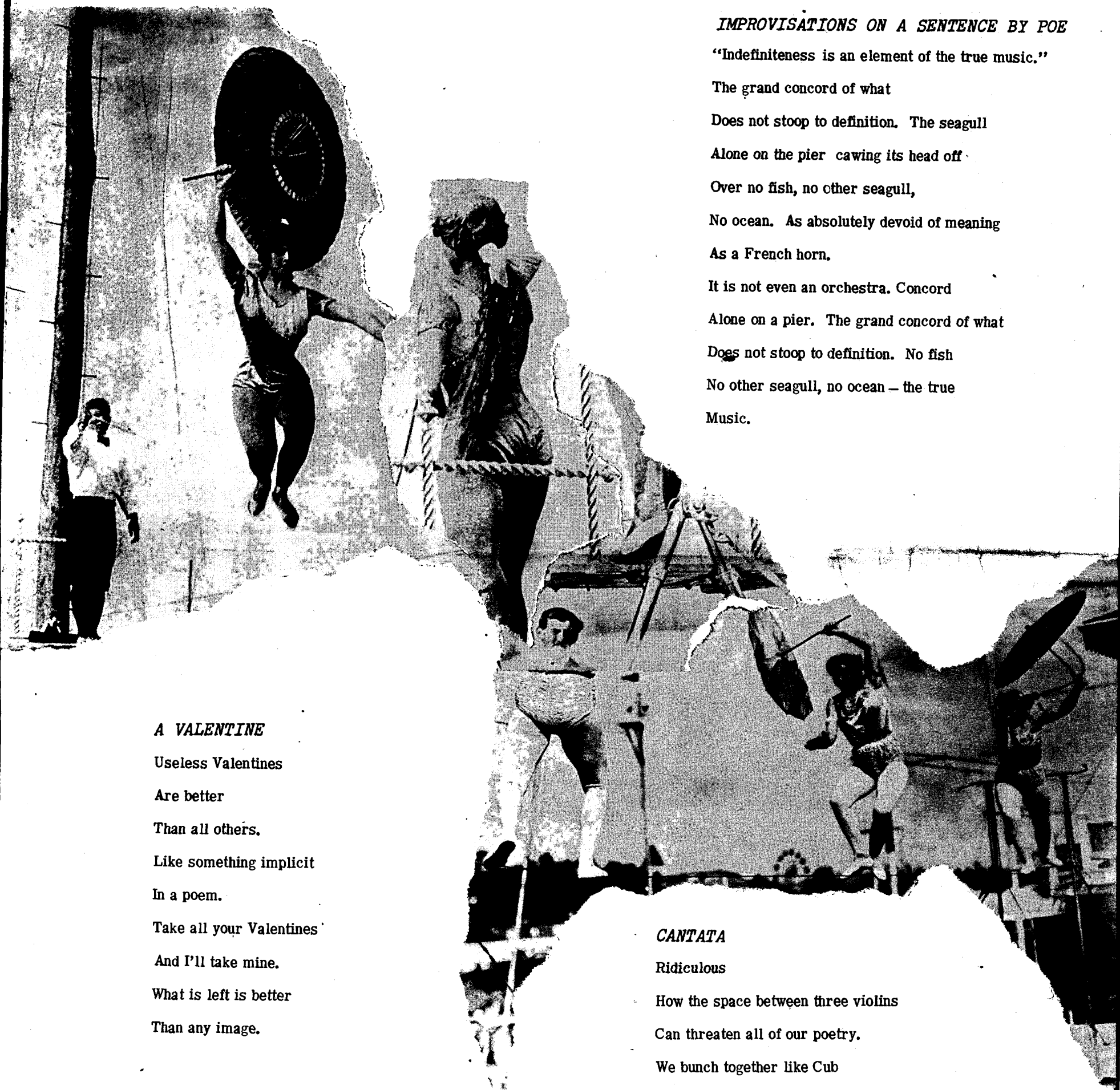


WRITING 2



**JACK
SPICER**

BOOK OF MUSIC with words



IMPROVISATIONS ON A SENTENCE BY POE

"Indefiniteness is an element of the true music."

The grand concord of what
Does not stoop to definition. The seagull
Alone on the pier cawing its head off
Over no fish, no other seagull,
No ocean. As absolutely devoid of meaning
As a French horn.
It is not even an orchestra. Concord
Alone on a pier. The grand concord of what
Does not stoop to definition. No fish
No other seagull, no ocean — the true
Music.

A VALENTINE

Useless Valentines
Are better
Than all others.
Like something implicit
In a poem.
Take all your Valentines
And I'll take mine.
What is left is better
Than any image.

CANTATA

Ridiculous
How the space between three violins
Can threaten all of our poetry.
We bunch together like Cub
Scouts at a picnic. There is a high scream.
Rain threatens. That moment of terror.
Strange how all our beliefs
Disappear.

by jack spicer

ORFEO

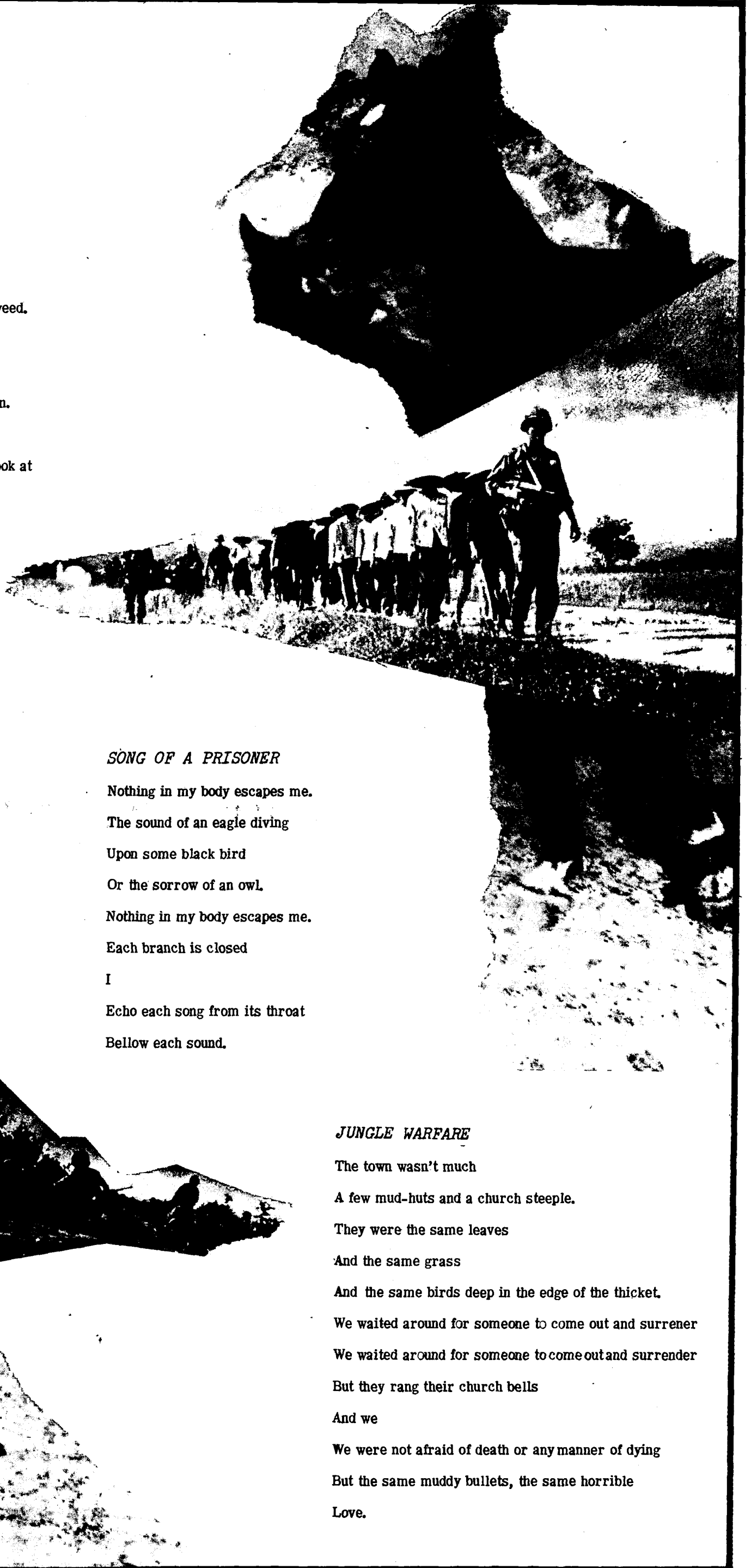
Sharp as an arrow Orpheus
Points his music downward.
Hell is there
At the bottom of the seaciff.
Heal
Nothing by this music.
Eurydice
Is a frigate bird or a rock or some seaweed.
Hail nothing
The infernal
Is a slippering wetness out at the horizon.
Hell is this:
The lack of anything but the eternal to look at
The expansiveness of salt
The lack of any bed but one's
Music to sleep in.

SONG OF A PRISONER

Nothing in my body escapes me.
The sound of an eagle diving
Upon some black bird
Or the sorrow of an owl.
Nothing in my body escapes me.
Each branch is closed
I
Echo each song from its throat
Bellow each sound.

JUNGLE WARFARE

The town wasn't much
A few mud-huts and a church steeple.
They were the same leaves
And the same grass
And the same birds deep in the edge of the thicket.
We waited around for someone to come out and surrener
We waited around for someone to come out and surrender
But they rang their church bells
And we
We were not afraid of death or any manner of dying
But the same muddy bullets, the same horrible
Love.



GOOD FRIDAY: FOR LACK OF AN ORCHESTRA

I saw a headless she-mule
 Running through the rain
 She had the hide of a chessboard
 And withers that were lank and dark
 "Tell me," I asked
 "Where
 Is Babylon?"
 "No," she bellowed
 "Babylon is a few baked bricks
 With some symbols on them.
 You could not hear them. I am running
 To the end of the world."
 She ran
 Like a green and purple parrot, screaming
 Through the sand.

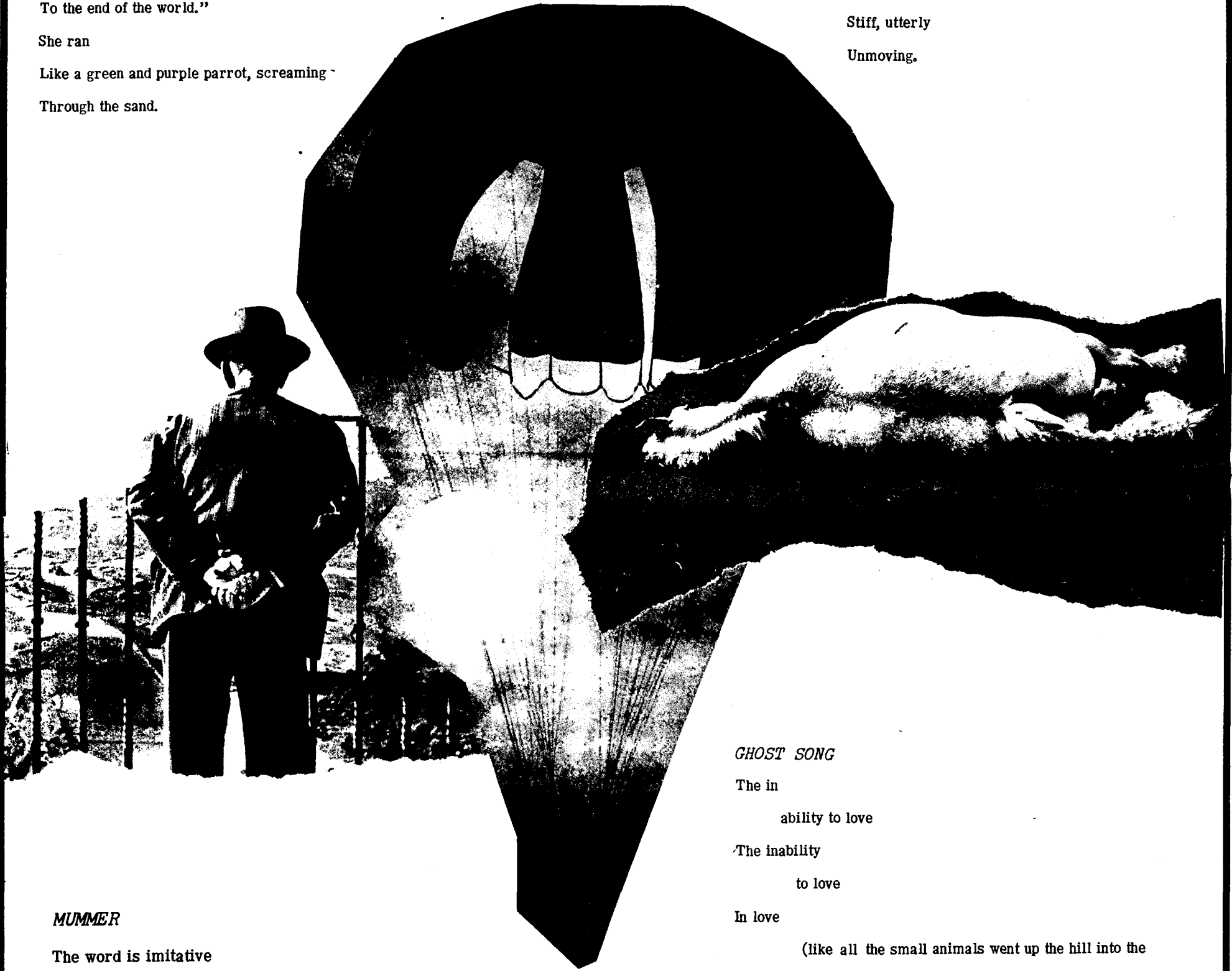
THE CARDPLAYERS

The moon is tied to a few strings
 They hold in their hands. The cardplayers
 Sit there stiff, hieratic
 Moving their hands only for the sake of
 Playing the cards.
 No trick of metaphor
 Each finger is a real finger
 Each card real pasteboard, each liberty
 Unaware of attachment.
 The moon is tied to a few strings.

Those cardplayers

Stiff, utterly

Unmoving.

*MUMMER*

The word is imitative
 From the sound mum or mom
 Used by nurses to frighten or amuse children
 At the same time pretending
 To cover their faces.
 Understanding is not enough
 The old seagull died. There is a whole army of seagulls
 Waiting in the wings
 A whole army of seagulls.

GHOST SONG

The in
 ability to love
 The inability
 to love
 In love
 (like all the small animals went up the hill into the
 underbrush to escape from the goat and the bad tiger)
 The inability
 Inability
 (tell me why no white flame comes up from the earth
 when lightning strikes the twigs and the dry branches)
 In love. In love. In love. The
 In-
 ability
 (as if there were nothing left on the mountains but
 what nobody wanted to escape from)

ARMY BEACH WITH TRUMPETS

Rather than our bodies the sand
Proclaims that we are on the last edge
Of something. Two boys
Who cannot catch footballs horseplay
On the wet edge.
Or if the sight of the thing ended
Did not break upon us like a wave
From every warm ocean.
We call it sport
To play on the edge, to drop
Like a heartless football
At the edge.

DUET FOR A CHAIR AND A TABLE

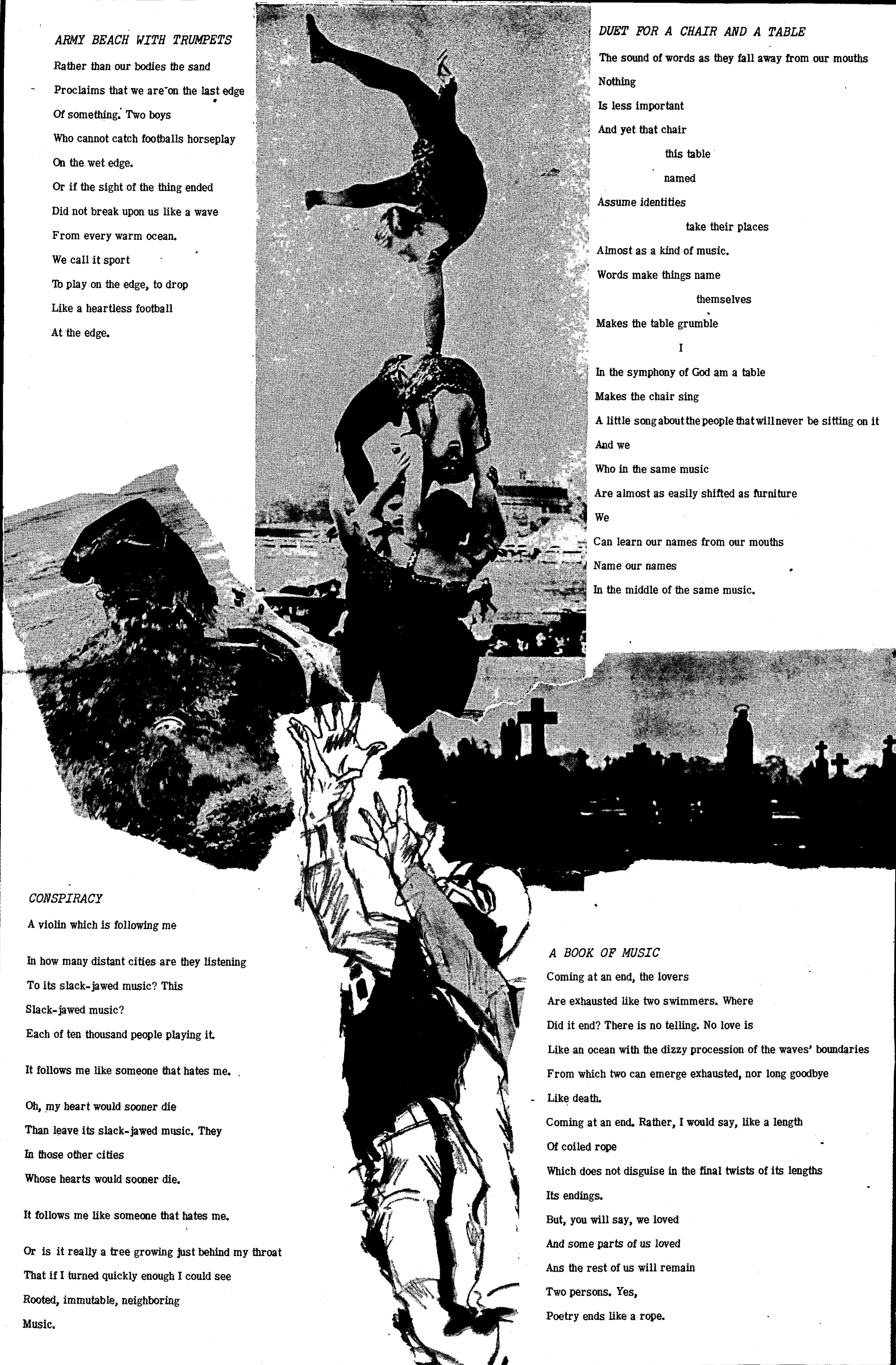
The sound of words as they fall away from our mouths
Nothing
Is less important
And yet that chair
this table
named
Assume identities
take their places
Almost as a kind of music.
Words make things name
themselves
Makes the table grumble
I
In the symphony of God am a table
Makes the chair sing
A little song about the people that will never be sitting on it
And we
Who in the same music
Are almost as easily shifted as furniture
We
Can learn our names from our mouths
Name our names
In the middle of the same music.

CONSPIRACY

A violin which is following me
In how many distant cities are they listening
To its slack-jawed music? This
Slack-jawed music?
Each of ten thousand people playing it.
It follows me like someone that hates me.
Oh, my heart would sooner die
Than leave its slack-jawed music. They
In those other cities
Whose hearts would sooner die.
It follows me like someone that hates me.
Or is it really a tree growing just behind my throat
That if I turned quickly enough I could see
Rooted, immutable, neighboring
Music.

A BOOK OF MUSIC

Coming at an end, the lovers
Are exhausted like two swimmers. Where
Did it end? There is no telling. No love is
Like an ocean with the dizzy procession of the waves' boundaries
From which two can emerge exhausted, nor long goodbye
Like death.
Coming at an end. Rather, I would say, like a length
Of coiled rope
Which does not disguise in the final twists of its lengths
Its endings.
But, you will say, we loved
And some parts of us loved
Ans the rest of us will remain
Two persons. Yes,
Poetry ends like a rope.



ADMONITIONS

Dear Joe,

Some time ago I would have thought that writing notes on particular poems would either be a confession that the poems were totally inadequate (a sort of a patch put on a leaky tire) or an equally humiliating confession that the writer was more interested in the terrestrial mechanics of criticism than the celestial mechanics of poetry — in either case that the effort belonged to the garage or stable rather than to the Muse.

Muses do exist, but now I know that they are not afraid to dirty their hands with explication — that they are patient with truth and commentary as long as it doesn't get into the poem, that they whisper (if you let yourself really hear them), "Talk all you want, baby, but THEN let's go to bed."

This sexual metaphor brings me to the first problem. In these poems the obscene (in word and concept) is not used, as is common, for the sake of intensity, but rather as a kind of rhythm as the tip-tap of the branches throughout the dream of FINNEGANS WAKE or, to make the analogy even more mysterious to you, a cheering section at a particularly exciting football game. It is precisely because the obscenity is unnecessary that I use it, as I could have used any disturbance, as I could have used anything (remember the beat in jazz) which is regular and beside the point.

The point. But what, you will be too polite to ask me, is the point? Are not these poems all things to all men, like Rorschach ink blots or whores? Are they anything better than a kind of mirror?

In themselves, no. Each one of them is a mirror, dedicated to the person that I particularly want to look into it. But mirrors can be arranged. The frightening hall of mirrors in a fun house is universal beyond each particular reflection.

This letter is TO you because you are my publisher and because the poem I wrote FOR you gives the most distorted reflection in the whole promenade. Mirror makers know the secret — one does not make a mirror to resemble a person, one brings a person to the mirror.

Love,

Jack



FOR NEMMIE

When they number their blocks they mean business.
If you hear the Go sign
Around 32nd Avenue
Bear it
Others have
Better
On the same street.
If you hadn't seen it
On 16th
Or 23rd street
Shit.
This thing is all traffic.
And you say
As you are going through a signal
Look
Those motorcycle policemen
That police love
Those avenues -
And the strangers
(Road agents)
No one can stop their whispering.



FOR EBBE

Oh there are waves where the heart beats fully
Where the blood wanders
Alive like some black sea fish
Teach the young to be young
The old
To be old
The heartless
To swim in the sea they do not believe in.
Oh, no
Re constituted universe
Is as warm as the heart's blood.

FOR ED

Bewildered
Like the first seagull that ever ate a fish
Everyone's heart dives and
Stops just before eating.
Ah
What comfort is there in the sight
Or in the belly?
No fish in this pond or ocean is supreme
No fish tastes.
In all this muck and water there is only
The ocean's comfort.



FOR RUSS

Christ,
You'd think it would all be
Pretty simple
This tree will never grow. This bush
Has no branches. No
I love you. Yet.
I wonder how our mouths will look in twenty five years
When we say yet.

FOR HARVEY

When you break a line nothing
Becomes better.
There is no new (unless you are humming
Old Uncle Tom's Cabin) there is no new
Measure.
You breathe the same and Rimbaud
Would never even look at you.
Break
Your poem
Like you would cut a grapefruit
Make
It go to sleep for you
And each line (There is no Pacific Ocean) And make each line
Cut itself. Like seaweed thrown
Against the pier.

FOR MAC

A dead starfish on a beach
 He has five branches
 Representing the five senses
 Representing the jokes we did not tell each other
 Call the earth flat
 Call other people human
 But let this creature lie
 Flat upon our senses
 Like a love
 Prefigured in the sea
 That died.
 And went to water
 All the oceans
 Of emotion. All the oceans of emotion
 Are full of such fish
 Why
 Is this dead one of such importance?
 Died
 With blue of heart's blood, the brown
 Of unknowing
 The purple of unimportance
 It lies upon our beach to be crowned.
 Purple
 Starfish are
 And love. And love
 Is like nothing I can imagine.

FOR DICK

Innocence is a drug to be protected against strangers
 Not to be sold to police agents or rather
 Not to be sold.
 When you protect it a sudden chill
 Comes in the window
 When you proclaim it it becomes a wet marijuana cigarette
 Which cannot be lit by matches.
 Hear the wind outside
 The bloody shell of your life.
 Hear the wind rumble
 Like a sabre-toothed ape.
 Look
 Innocence is important
 It has meaning
 Look
 It can give us
 Hope against the very winds that we batter against it.

FOR BILLY

That old equalizer
 Called time by some
 Love by others
 Cock by a few
 Will come to meet you at the door
 When you go
 (Knowing that death is as near to you as water)
 Go to fuck and say goodbye to your Mexican whore.
 They will be waiting in the same room for you:
 Time with his big jeans
 Love with his embarrassed laugh
 Cock with his throat cut wearing a bandana.
 They can equalize anybody
 January, February, March,
 April, May, June, July, August, September,
 October,
 November,
 December,
 I love you, I love you,
 Scream when you come.
 There is not another room to go into
 But hell, Billy,
 It was hell when they shot you.



Dear Robin,

Enclosed you find the first of the publications of White Rabbit Press. The second will be much handsomer.

You are right that I don't now need your criticisms of individual poems. But I still want them. It's probably from old habit — but it's an awfully old habit. Halfway through AFTER LORCA I discovered that I was writing a book instead of a series of poems and individual criticism by anyone suddenly became less important. This is true of my admonitions which I will send you when complete. (I have eight of them already and there will probably be fourteen including, of course, this letter.)

The trick naturally is what Duncan learned years ago and tried to teach us — not to search for the perfect poem but to let your way of writing of the moment go along its own paths, explore and retreat but never be fully realized (confined) within the boundaries of one poem. This is where we were wrong and he was right, but he complicated things for us by saying that there is no such thing as good or bad poetry. There is — but not in relation to the single poem. There is really no single poem.

That is why all my stuff from the past (except the ELEGIES and TROILUS) looks foul to me. The poems belong nowhere. They are one nightstands filled (the best of them) with their own emotions, but pointing nowhere, as meaningless as sex in a Turkish bath. It was not my anger or my frustration that got in the way of my poetry but the fact that I viewed each anger and each frustration as unique — something to be converted into poetry as one would exchange foreign money. I learned this from the English Department (and from the English Department of the spirit — that great quagmire that lurks at the bottom of all of us) and it ruined ten years of my poetry. Look at those other poems. Admire them if you like. They are beautiful but dumb.

Poems should echo and reecho against each other. They should create resonances. They cannot live alone any more than we can.

So don't send the box of old poetry to Don Allen. Burn it or rather open it with Don and cry over the possible books that were buried in it — the SONGS AGAINST APOLLO,

the GALLERY OF GEORGEOUS GODS, the DRINKING SONGS — all incomplete, all abortive — all incomplete, all abortive because I thought, like all abortionists, that what is not perfect had no real right to live.

Things fit together. We knew that — it is the principle of magic. Two inconsequential things can combine together to become a consequence. This is true of poems too. A poem is never to be judged by itself alone. A poem is never by itself alone.

This is the most important letter that you have ever received.

Love,
 Jack

FOR JOE

People who don't like the smell of faggot vomit
 Will never understand why men don't like women
 Won't see why those never to be forgotten thighs
 Of Helen (say) will move us into screams of laughter.
 Parody (what we don't want) is the whole thing.
 Don't deliver us any mail today, mailman.
 Send us no letters. The female genital organ is hideous. We
 Do not want to be moved.
 Forgive us. Give us
 A single example of the fact that nature is imperfect.
 Men ought to love men
 (And do)
 As the man said
 It's
 Rosemary for remembrance.

FOR JUDSON

El guardarropa, novedad, dispersar.
 There are little fish that are made angry
 At all that we do. No one can look at us better
 Than their mouth. Little mouths
 That eat anything.
 Ale, automatization, scattering.
 I could not invent a better skeleton
 That you could
 Like a pumpkin on wet Halloween
 Flicker into.

FOR ROBERT

The poet
 Robert D.
 Writes poetry while we
 Listen to him.
 Commentary - follow
 The red dog
 Down the
 Limit
 Of possible
 Quarterbacks.

FOR WILLIE

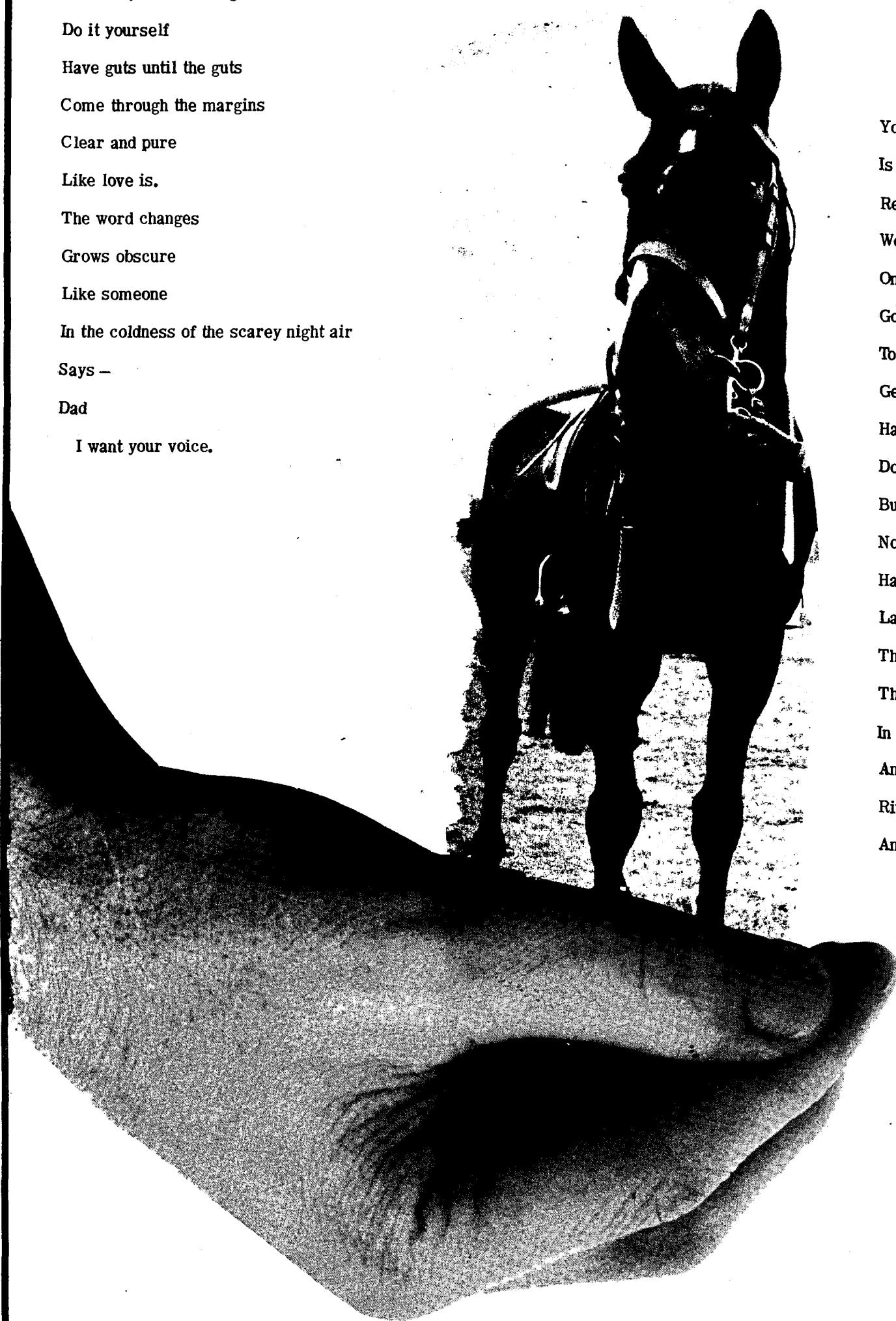
There is no excuse for bad ghosts
 Or bad thoughts.
 6x/10 equals 150
 An electric socket with a plug in it
 Or a hole in your eyeball:
 It is bad
 And everyone says, "What?" X
 - 4X/10 equals 150.

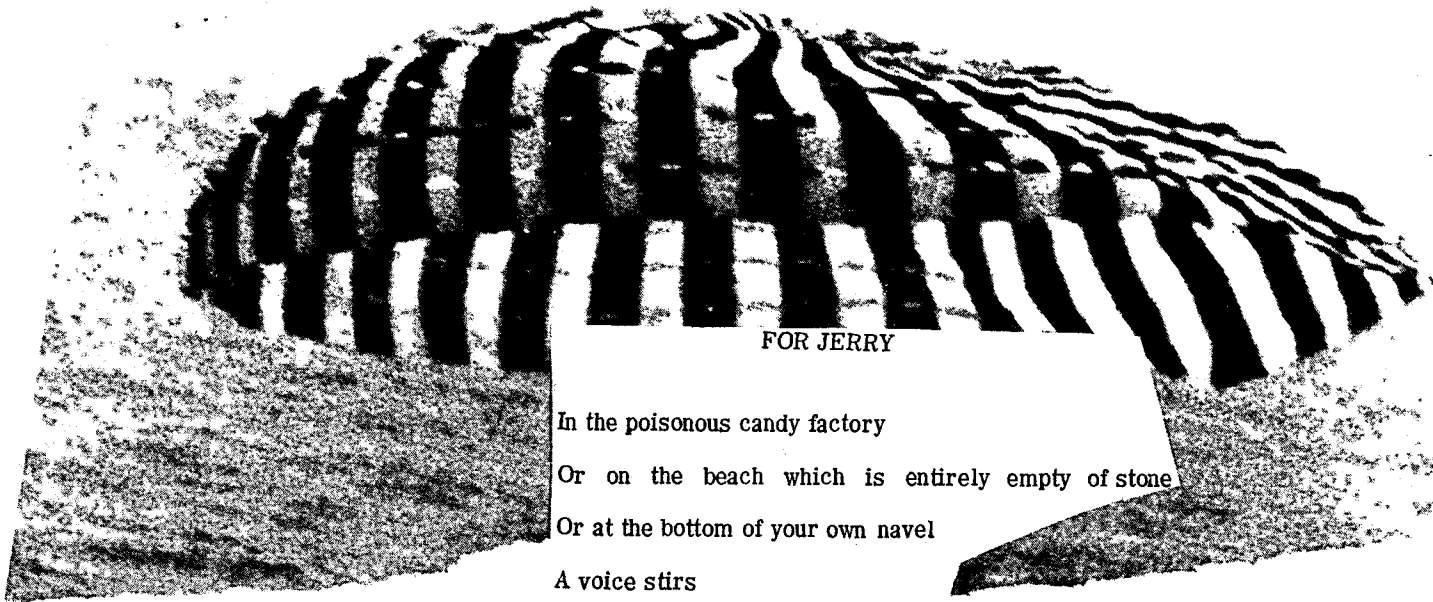
FOR JACK

Tell everyone to have guts
 Do it yourself
 Have guts until the guts
 Come through the margins
 Clear and pure
 Like love is.
 The word changes
 Grows obscure
 Like someone
 In the coldness of the scary night air
 Says -
 Dad
 I want your voice.

FOR HAL

Youth
 Is no excuse for such things
 Responsibilities
 Weigh like strawberries
 On a shortcake.
 Go
 To the root of the matter
 Get laid
 Have a friend
 Do anything
 But be a free fucking agent.
 No one
 Has lots of them
 Lays or friends or anything
 That can make a little light in all that darkness.
 There is a cigarette you can hold for a minute
 In your weak mouth
 And then the light goes out,
 Rival, honey, friend,
 And then you stub it out.



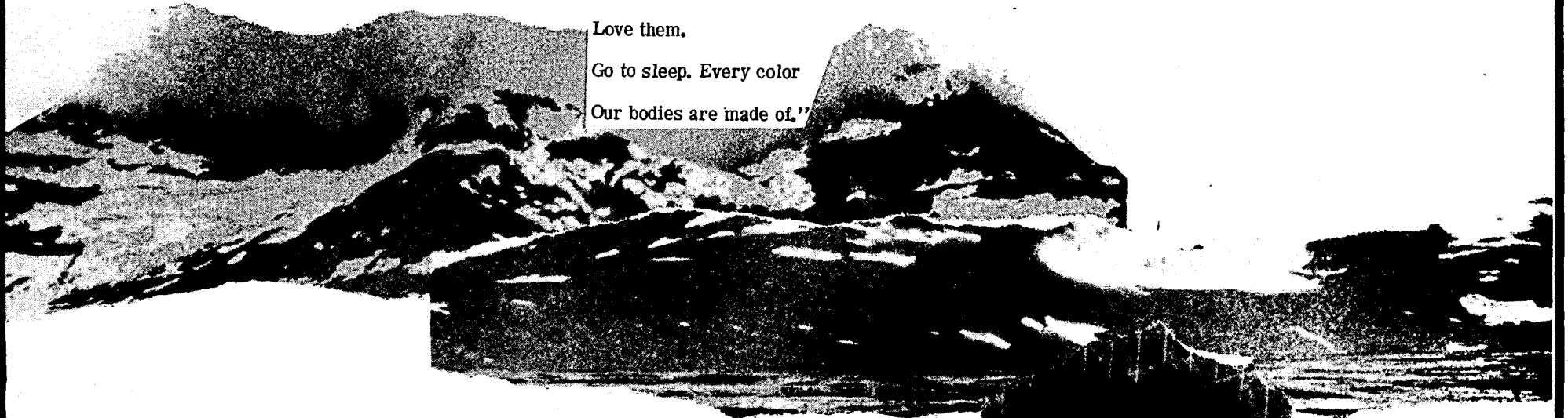


FOR JERRY

In the poisonous candy factory
Or on the beach which is entirely empty of stone
Or at the bottom of your own navel

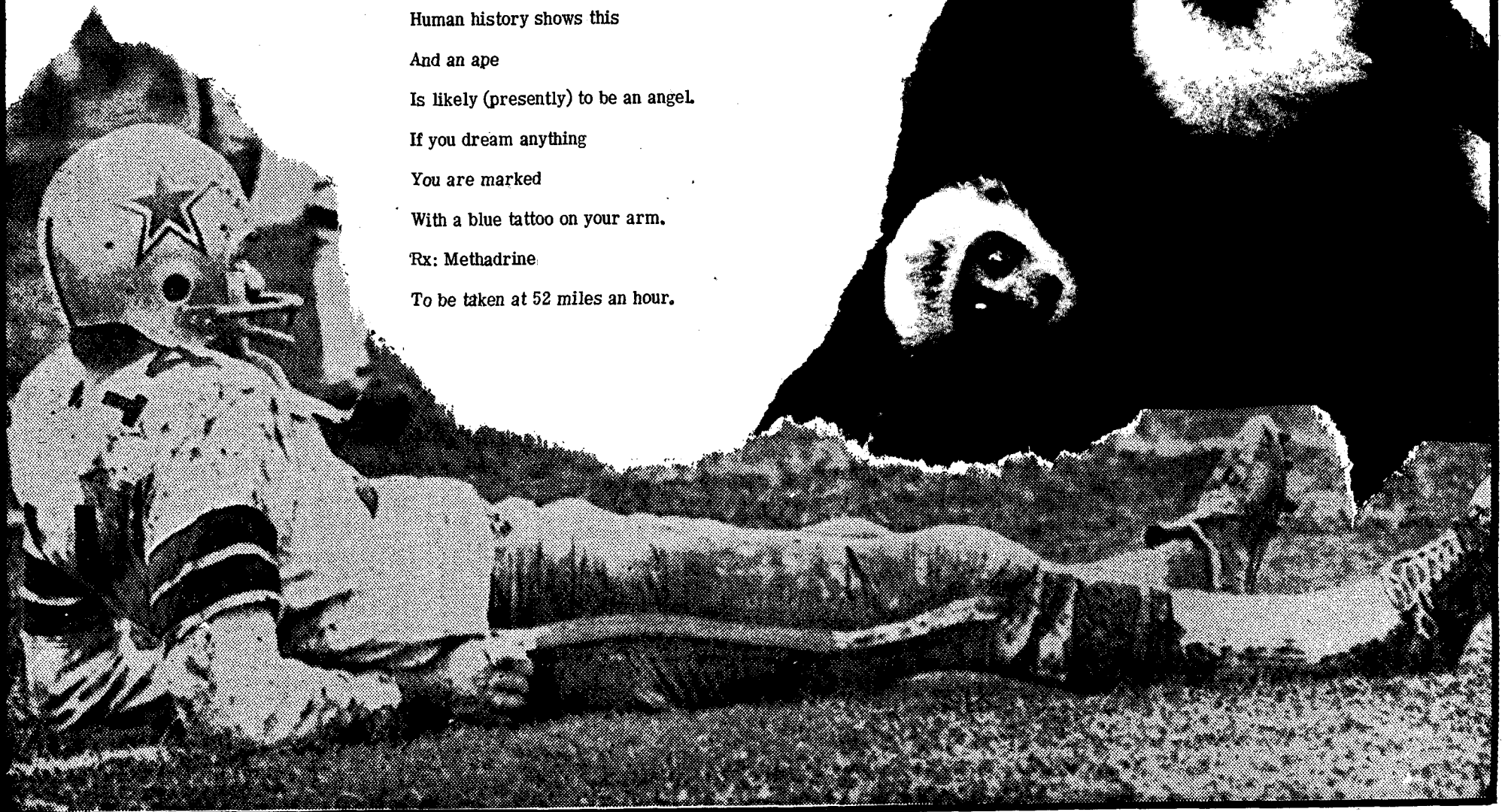
A voice stirs
Saying, "Sleep
Though you are no longer young.
Cry
On nobody else's shoulder.

Love them.
Go to sleep. Every color
Our bodies are made of."

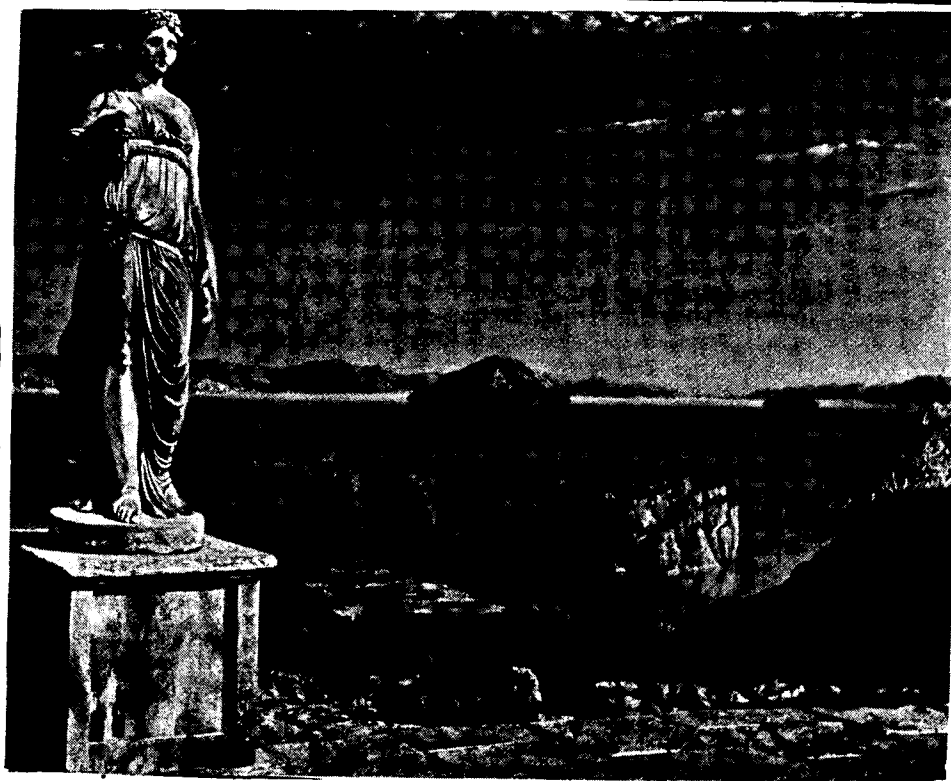


A POSTSCRIPT FOR CHARLES OLSON

If nothing happens it is possible
To make things happen.
Human history shows this
And an ape
Is likely (presently) to be an angel.
If you dream anything
You are marked
With a blue tattoo on your arm.
Rx: Methadrine
To be taken at 52 miles an hour.



AFTER



WORDS

This essay is merely a companion piece to the passion and intellect of Jack Spicer's poetry, and it reflects my view that all high poetry is entrance to the worlds. Here I intend to point to the largeness of Jack's work, and in doing so, my readers must hold on to the laughter and anger, the made place of his poems, for these inform his seriousness. AFTER LORCA leads the reader at once into this, into worlds of which only one remains personal. It acts as a sort of preface and introduction to the books collected in this volume, the major works of the years 1957-1965. As a poet Jack sights his own beginnings around 1945 when he arrived in Berkeley, to enroll at the University of California. In response to a questionnaire he received in 1958, he wrote in the blanks for name, birthdate, and birthplace: "Jack Spicer 1946 Berkeley. "In Boston, 1956, irascible, "out of place," he said, and unable to write much, he returned to those beginnings and the poetry of the past years, to revise it. And when he arrived again in San Francisco that winter, he left with me the holograph copy of what he laughingly called 'the Canon' - forty poems, the four elegies, and the play TROILUS. He wanted no typed copy. They were there, and they were left behind. By the end of the summer of the following year AFTER LORCA was complete, and he announced that he was finally writing the poetry he wanted. Among poets, such rejection of early work is not unusual, and with Jack it was operative, magically so, in the metamorphosis of personal and private intensities to that other world which is ELSEWHERE, out of the center of his own feeling and thought into events, stories and astonishments. The movement of Jack's poetics from 1957 toward larger and more difficult sensibility never brought him back again to include the earlier poetry. In the book ADMONITIONS (1958), he says the earlier poems 'belong nowhere', but he does maintain a kind of respect for THE ELEGIES and TROILUS. The intelligence of the harsh and beautiful worlds of Spicer's later poetry is certain, and the effort of the intelligence here is to hold on to an actuality which is outside of the personal, and as I will point out, the mode of the poetry is revelatory. A SPY OF THE HEART, Jack's final effort was to hold on to this actuality, whatever the cost. Where I may read in the narrative of this poetry pieces of Jack's life, I also read that other order of worlds, where event is heart and intellect, and it draws my first attention. Eventfulness. Which makes the man, the land, and the act of this poetry outward.

AFTER LORCA is then the preface to the whole of this ensuing poetry. The book proposes a relationship with Garcia Lorca and moves without warning beyond the strictly relational. Lorca's introduction, posted from his grave outside Granada, tells the reader there is a mix here, translations which are not translations, poems which are not Lorca's, dependant upon a sense of the game. The challenge may be accepted to search through Lorca to know what is Lorca's, what is Spicer's, what is translated or changed, which is which, the joining. This I have done, yet would not supply the information here because it draws attention to what is essentially technicality. The book proposes, instead, the lack of separation, that one poet is the other. These poems and this poet conclude the recognitions of the other poet and his poems. They are in themselves conclusive, but the game may be reopened and replayed by the reader. I notice the final letter from Jack to Lorca:

It was a game I shout to myself. A game. There are no angels, ghosts, or even shadows. It was a game made out of summer and freedom and a need for a poetry that would be more than the expression of my hatreds and desires. It was a game like Yeats' spooks, or Blake's

sexless seraphim.

The game had been the original idea of the book - translations to learn, and a trick of composition which would leave one wondering. But it is clear that Jack found another order in the book, as though the game were life itself. It is a profound turn of Jack's thought that the real proposed by the poems is always possibly unreal. In AFTER LORCA, there is a single poet, composed simultaneously of the live Jack and the dead Lorca. They stream into one another.

This streaming, in its particularity, is the subject of this book, and all action within those 'first terms' which designate the elemental, invisible flowing of what men are. And one measure of its importance lies in the fact that neither bios nor spirit is turned over to sentimentality or dogma, or to those other definitions, four elements, family, friends, job, society's or tradition's future. In such turning over and giving away there is present a loss of intellect, a giving up, because these 'first terms' are concomitants of that necessary loneliness Jack points to, late in the narrative of AFTER LORCA. In this sense the book is not about life and death; it is a narrative of events in which lives appear and disappear. And the reader's stake in this is known only in reenactment. If it is a game, that is because games like chess or baseball always propose a seeing of the terms. The rules are invisible, and the images on the board or diamond move in a gradually tightening sequence of events, until the skill and courage of one man is at stake. Images from chess and baseball run like a theme through Jack's poetry. His point is most clear in THE HOLY GRAIL, where in the second poem of the Gawain sequence:

...George

Said to me that the only thing he thought was important in chess was the killing of the other king. I had accused him of lack of imagination.

I talked of fun and imagination but I wondered about the nature of poetry...

As a young friend wrote me: "when George said he thought the object of chess was to get the king, that is of course, end game. And what kind of objective is that? Its a given. What really counts is the quality of the play, of the thought which is the texture of the game. That's where the exstasy is. It has to do with consciousness and skill, a board and pieces, a beginning and an end." In a conversation a few months before his death that August, Jack was accused of being more interested in truth than in poetry, and he replied, "I'm more interested in messages", and added that poetry, baseball, and chess aren't for pleasure. In another context, Jack commented that the poet is more like a catcher, but likes to believe he's a pitcher. "The batter is the Martian, spook, or ghost". The determined assertion of Jack's poetry, that it is among the powers, forces, and events of an outside that we live begins in AFTER LORCA. Poetry becomes an active record of that outside, which draws into itself the man, the poet, and his landscape, as where the sounding of the cosmos, which poets call the music of the spheres, appears at one point as "A noise in the head of the prince". The grief, the dark, and the dying, which give measure to the joyous and the celebratory, and shadow them, are held in the poetry with courage - face into their action.

So much of that action in AFTER LORCA and the following poetry is held pointedly in the use of the word 'ghost'. In the early poems, the word is frequently attached to the ghoulish or spooky, funny and strange, but even then, it is suggestive of a haunting. Here, Garcia Lorca is a ghost, a haunting, but the book and its images bring a man and his shadow together, and the paradox is set - the inseparability of life and death, or on another level, past and present. The act of translation emphasises the bringing over of the Lorcan world; an entrance to that world then turns into Jack's world. Or to follow the metaphor of entrance, one goes into the book of this poet, only to go out to the book of another poet. Traditional elements in Jack's work are consistently seen in terms of information, and thus he avoids that easier accuracy, the imitation of a model. As a trained linguist and philologist, Jack was aware of the uncertain origin of the word ghost, in tearing, in rage (like a fire), and in terror, and he was drawn by the currency of the word to the ambiguity of its meaning. Our sense of the word always plays around that fineness and depth of English meaning, which gives the word its traditional place in the translation of SANCTUS SPIRITUS. And part of the usage of the word in Jack's work reflects the battle of the highest of contemporary poetry to recognise spirit. In AFTER LORCA the power of the ghost is that it prepares a simultaneous appearance and disappearance, as with Lorca who appears and disappears, time and again in the musical movement of this book, until he is finally gone at the end of the summer. Indeed the word's meaning tears at a sense of life, and it is the nature of such tearing that it may lead to rage and terror, as it does throughout Jack's poetry. The ghost gives actuality to the other face of the game and to the other faces of the players, as it attaches to appearance or manifestation it points to life, and as it attaches past to present it affirms two worlds; the after-life, which draws out part of the significance of the title AFTER LORCA. This significance, which is taken up again, although in a different way, in HEADS OF THE TOWN, lends substance to the view that Jack's poetry is a "pot-of-disturbance", and while in AFTER LORCA the reader first notices the presence of this disturbance, it remains at issue in all the poetry, wherein every affirmation accounts for its own destruction, and all elements of order and resolution draw to themselves a fragmentation. This is the actuality of either order or non-order. And whatever one may see in the meaning of the word ghost, it always proposes an image of life, which holds on to the fragmentation, and here I think of that careful use of the word in Donne's poems. It is curious that nothing, not even the Hallowe'en cuteness, has destroyed its strength. This is not to say that the storied laughter of all those teasing, noisy ghosts does not also fill our sense of the word. The joke or trick of it, the turn of meaning:

The jokes
Are ghosts
The joke
Is a ghost
How can you love that mortal creature
Everytime he speaks
He makes
Mistakes

.....

by robin blaser

Thus Jack Spicer Refuted Child Psychology



When Jay was three years old, Jack Spicer used to come over to see us fairly often. Three-year-olds are probably the most charming of human creatures, and so Jack was charmed by Jay. He was also very critical of us as parents. He undertook, therefore to remedy our failures, chiefly by the strict repetition of three standard lessons.

He kept an eye out our window for passing ships, having spotted one, he'd get Jay over there and ask Jay what kind of ship it was? Jay always answered it was a liner or a tank ship, because he knew what kinds of ships were out there on the bay. Then Jack would holler out that it wasn't any such thing. That's a CHICKEN-SHIP! Chicken-ship, Jay, Chicken-ship! Jay would say chickenship a few times because he could see it tickled Jack and then Jack would seriously advise him to tell his nursery-school teacher about how he saw a Chicken-ship.

The second lesson came at dinner. Jack would pick out a portion of whatever it was Jay didn't like at that particular dinner and ask Jay what it was. Hearing the answer POTATOES or BROCCOLI, Jack would deny that and tell Jay its name was CHILD PSYCHOLOGY. Want some Child-Psychology Jay? He'd ask, leaning and grimacing and spilling the Child-Psychology on the tablecloth. Good Child-Psychology Jay! and carry on that way for a bit, smacking his lips and saying Ummm. Jay continuing to refuse the offering, he could then turn to us and point out (eating the potatoes or broccoli) that Child-Psychology, while palatable to adults, is never eaten by children.

See you later, Jack would begin the third lesson, upon leaving. Where's Jack going? Jay would ask Fran or me. Jack's going to Texas! Goin' to Texas, Jack would roar out, and leave. When Jay would ask us later where Jack went, or if he was really going to Texas and if so what and where was that, we were on our honor not to say that Jack was going home or to Gino and Carlo's bar. But often we failed, either out of our feeling that kids ought to be told the simple truth, or out of exasperation with having to be questioned about Texas every damn night. Hell Jay, Jack's just going home!

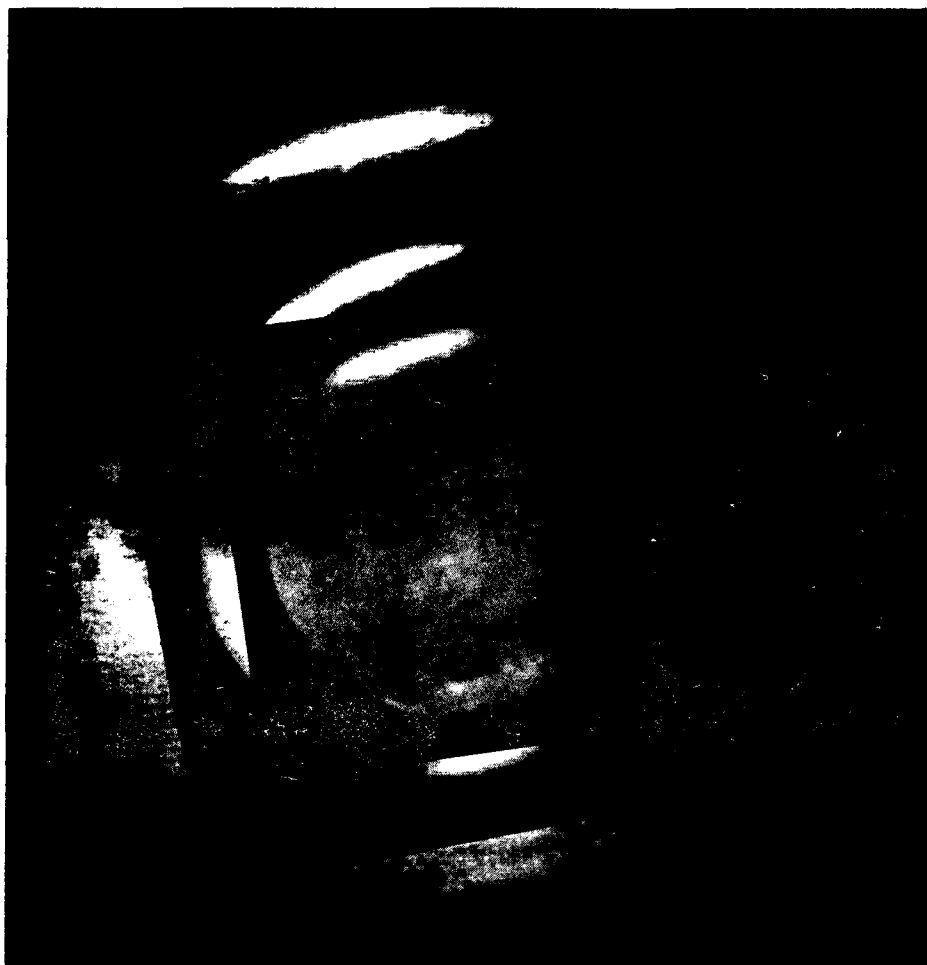
Jack usually contended that the content of his lessons was accidental (in the first place he denied they were lessons at all) and without pedagogic motive and that they were repeated over and over again only because that was what kids liked and how they got to know you. Occasionally, though, when we didn't seem to take it seriously enough (after he'd just been telling us not to take it seriously) he would admit his educational purposes. First, he didn't like our North Beach, Child-Centered, Parent-Cooperative Nursery-School on principle. He didn't mind Jay going there - was in favor of it, in fact, since it gave Fran time to paint - just as long as Jay didn't like it. Unfortunately, Jay did like it. Jack figured that if Jay said Chicken-ship enough times to the nursery-school teacher, she would in the end get mad and forbid Chicken-ship and betray herself as a tyrant, and then Jay would learn Where It Was At.

The lesson about Child-Psychology was obviously meant for us (with a side-effect on Jay, namely that the whole business of eating stuff you didn't like was some kind of adult nonsense, and was of no importance whether you ate it or not); its meaning was that the real concern of, say, professive education and Dr. Spock and so on was to con the kid into doing something you were too timid or guilty to order him to do. That if he didn't want to eat something that you wanted him to eat you either ought to make him do it and accept the fact that you were an adult son-of-a-bitch who had a RIGHT to order kids around, or if you were unable to go that, you ought to shut up and let him eat what he wanted without a word. In between lay the whole mulch of moral suasion, therapy and trickery, where you were trying to get the kid to agree that he really wanted to eat or do something on his own hook, conveniently forgetting that the reason you had to do this in the first place was that the kid really didn't want to do it or eat it at all.

Going to Texas every night involved Jack's feeling that altogether too much concern was being given to telling the truth to children. There was no reason, he thought, to encourage a child to believe that people generally told you the truth or that they generally knew the truth, since all that was manifestly not so. Even if it had been so, you were only giving the child an item he had no use for and depriving him of something to do when he grew up - deciding for yourself about what was true and what was false seemed to Jack about the only occupation adults could take seriously, unless they wrote poems. In any case what children learned best was always bullshit and it was what they liked to learn. The one thing everyone in America was happy to learn in the first grade, he reminded us, was the fact that George Washington chopped down the cherry-tree and couldn't tell a lie. Kids who couldn't ever learn to write their own names learned that, and kids who later turned out to be geniuses learned that too, and it was bullshit and it was also learning, and once you learned anything at all you wouldn't ever stop learning unless someone stopped you. What usually stopped you was people obsessed with telling you the truth. Imagine, he said, the first-grade teacher starting off on Washington's Birthday to talk about George Washington And The Cherry-Tree and the kids all sitting there stirred with anticipation about some really interesting bullshit which they are going to learn (they know when it's coming) but then the intelligent teacher veers off into how that story about the cherry tree is just a myth and what a myth is and what is the importance of this kind of myth in American society and how many children can think of other myths? Virginia? Joseph? and how George Washington owned slaves and had the clap and drank rum and wasn't perfect, not even being in favor of complete democracy

Children ought to be told a random combination of fantasy, outright lies and simple truth, all in the same tone of voice. The Giant's Garden, pigs can fly, cows eat grass. Correctly applied, this principle would keep the child's mind inviolate, curious, alert and, above all, wary.

by jim herndon



FOR DOWNBEAT

4

Well Dennis you don't have to hear
any

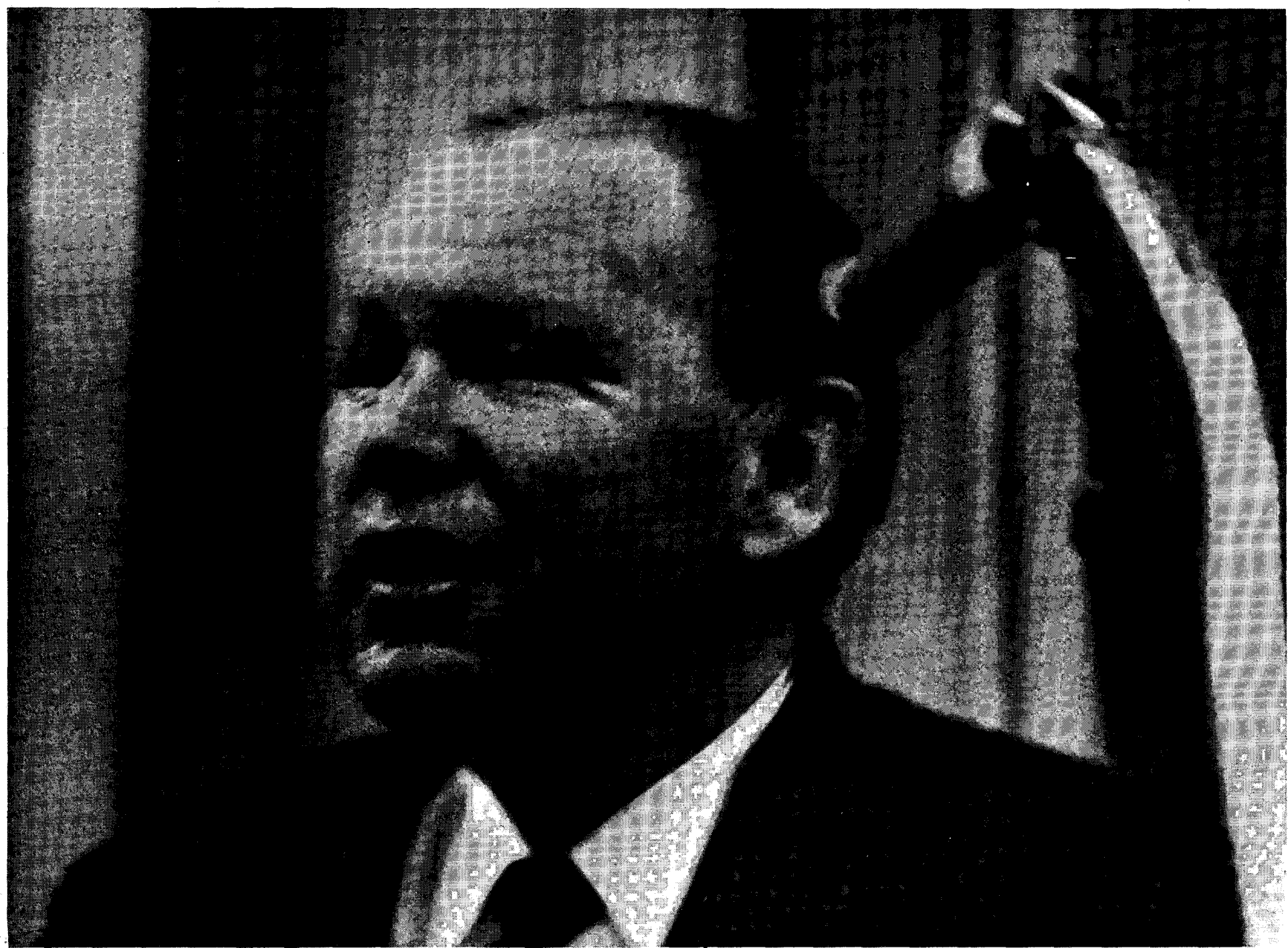
Of the mountain music they play here.
Telling the young lies so that they
can learn to get old. Favouing them
With biscuits. "It's a mighty rough
road from Lynchburg to Danville, declension
on a three mile grade." In either case
collision course. You either pick up
the music or you don't.

British Columbia

Will not become a victim to Western Imperialism
if you don't let it. All those western
roads. Few of them
Northern.



JACK SPICER, Book Of Magazine Verse (White Rabbit, 1966)



Jack Spicer Berkeley, July 1965

What We're Up To

Simply, to publish writing.

As a literary problem, we think that this form ends the bind of the "little magazine" with its exoteric coterie of writers and readers.

As a political problem, we want to serve a notion like: the mind of the community, or the imagination of the place, Vancouver. So instead of a couple hundred people getting to see what's being written, it goes directly to a large audience in the city. It also returns the writer to "the people" instead of him being exclusively in a private world of poetic reputations.

Writing and capitalism: rather than \$1-\$3 litter-chur mags, you get the writing in your regular 25 cent newspaper. (Not a new idea, by the way. Done by reputable 19th century papers all the time).

The general possibility of this idea is that other underground papers in other cities will do likewise— and there could be the same kind of national exchange as now exists for news. So each paper would have the double advantage of being able to encourage local writing in their place and yet to print stuff from other places. This idea also attacks old ideas of copyright

— which are useful as protection against avaricious businessmen

— but all too often merely serve to remove writing from the public.

The first issue of the Writing Supplement came out October 29, 1969 and featured west coast writing: sea stories by Gladys Hindmarch, an Indian section that included B.C. Beaver tales collected by UBC anthropologist Robin Ridington, short stories by Dennis Wheeler and Mark Cacchioni, and poem-letters on jail deaths by Neap Hoover and Stan Persky. In addition, there was a chapter from a new book by Him Heendon, author of *THE WAY IT SPOZED TO BE*, and a first draft chunk of an autobiographical thing by San Francisco poet George Stanley, whose book *YOU*, is coming out next year. We also had a chapter from therapist Fritz Perls' new book *IN AND OUT OF THE GARBAGE PAIL*, and poems from Denise Levertov, whose latest book is *THE SORROW DANCE*.

In the process we learned something about how to work with this form. We found out we need more space for illustrations and that we have to come up with some way of not crunching poems into corners (like we did with Levertov's).

This issue of the *WRITING SUPPLEMENT* is devoted to the work of San Francisco poet Jack Spicer, who wrote some of his last work in British Columbia shortly before his death in August, 1965. Robin Blaser, a poet who has lived in Vancouver since 1966 is editing Spicer's *COLLECTED BOOKS*, which will be published by Harcourt, Brace in 1970. We've pirated unpublished Spicer books as well as a piece of the long essay on Spicer that Blaser has been writing.

The *WRITING SUPPLEMENT* solicits contributions of writing. Send them to:

Supplement,
Georgia Straight
56 A Powell St.
Vancouver 4, B.C.

Don't send return postage. Send us carbon copies and let us keep them. Because of manpower shortage we don't have much time for mailing or critiques (even if we felt competent to undertake them, which we don't) at present.

We want to underscore the political character of this publication. (By the way, this doesn't mean that the writing has to be "political", whatever that means.) By political, we mean we want to develop a relationship with the community. Two ideas that we have in mind, once we find out if the Supplement is going to work, are to sponsor a series of monthly readings of local poets, maybe in the Kitsilano area, and perhaps to encourage a writers' workshop. Naturally, we'd like to hear what you think of the Supplement.

Stan Persky

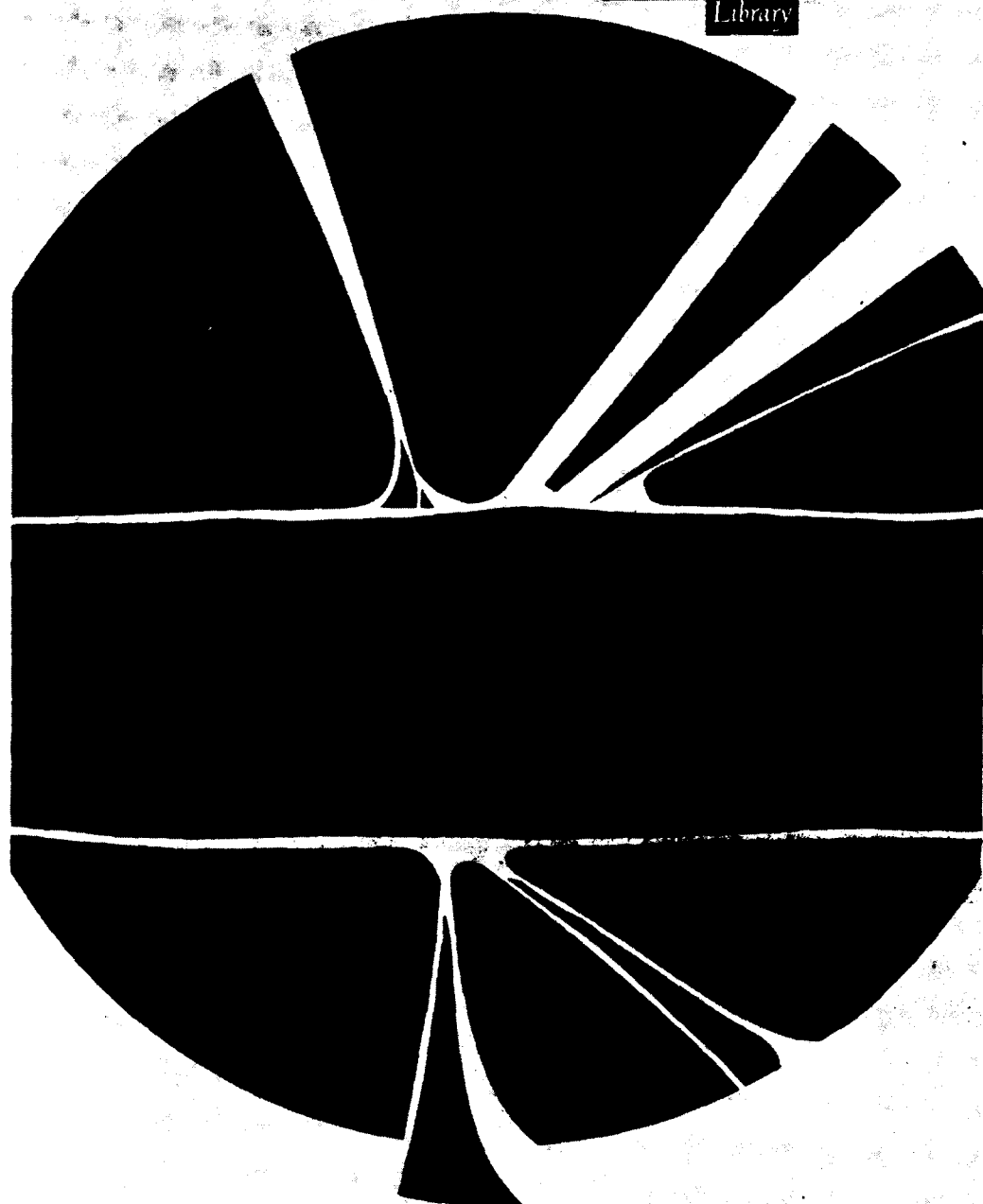
Dennis Wheeler

December, 1969

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