for JACK SPICER
January 30, 1925-August 17, 1965

With fifteen cents and that I could get a
subway ride in New York. My heart
Is completely broken. Only an enemy
Could pick up the pieces.
"Fragments of what," the man asked, "what?"
A disordered devotion towards the real
A death note. With fifteen cents and real
Estate I could ride a subway in New York. No
Poet starved. They died of it.

(from a Spicer notebook, late, 1964)

At first this essay was short and simple—about Jack. But that became a reduction which every twist and turn of the work denied—a biography without the world the poet earned or a split between the man and the work which drank him up and left him behind. I fell into the experience of another poet's request: *until you understand a writer's ignorance, presume yourself ignorant of his understanding.*[1] It is difficult, out of friendship and care, to find details disappearing into details rather than into meanings. My essay then became watchful of the context of the poetry and of the composing "real" that is Jack's concern. His ignorance is not one of lack of assurance. He knew the good and size of his work and he had assurance to give away to others. His ignorance seems to have been of the cost of this venture which he turned into a narrative. It is part of his notion that poetry is necessary to the composition or knowledge of the "real" and this drew him into a combat for the context of poetry—that it was an act or event of the real, rather than a discourse true only to itself. He had said early on in conversation with a young poet that one had first to learn to use the I and then to lose it. This becomes an attack on the

"subjective aim" and assurance of a whole culture. And it cuts the ground from under a poetry that ceaselessly returns to wrap itself around a personality. It was especially costly to a poet who refused those resolving images of the writer as victim or hero. In the face of this work, both hero and victim are humanisms which do not measure up. In an extreme move to gain what he variously called a dictation, the unknown, an outside, Jack's work contradicts them as resolutions or explanations of anything. They become names rather than acts, as in the last poem he wrote at the end of the *Book of Magazine Verse*. In an earlier poem on heroes, he laughs at them and at the same time puts them back into a mystery.

Heros eat soup like anyone else. Sometimes
the kitchen is so far away
That there is no soup. No kitchen. An open
space of ground recovered by
The sky.
Heros eat soup like anyone else. False
ground.
Soup
Of the evening
Beautifull soup.
And the sky stays there not an image
And the heros
Like the image of an image
(What is made of soup from)
Zooms.

(*Language*)

In *The Collected Books*, it is as if the reader and the poet had to begin again—not with a false ground—perhaps with a ground that is simultaneously true and false—where a composition begins again. In *Admonitions* he took it up in a poem for himself, "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.

And in "A Postscript for Charles Olson" at the end of the same book:

If nothing happens it is possible
To make things happen.
Human history shows this
And an ape
Is likely (presently) to be an Angel.

Simply and almost childishly expressed, this opens into the ranging care of his work and into its extremity, where the poems carry "messages" and the poet tends to disappear from his work. There may be, in this sense, an "angel of the work."

The poetry of *The Collected Books* begins in 1957, when that composing factor—the dictation, the unknown, or the outside—enters the work, and Jack began to construct a poetry that was not lyric but narrative. This narrative, he came—"jokingly," he said—to call "the serial poem." It had to hold on to a motivation that was not strictly his own. Since I will be following this motivation through and translating it into other terms, it is useful at the outset to hear Jack's description of it. The harsh and beautiful worlds of his poetry are discoveries of it. Here, he is speaking to a group of poets, June 13, 1965, in Vancouver, British Columbia, and it was, he said, the 100th anniversary of Yeats' birth. Yeats' proposition of a poetry by dictation

was the first thing since Blake on the business of taking poetry as coming from the outside rather than from the inside. In other words, instead of the poet being a beautiful machine which manufactured the current for itself, did everything for itself, almost a perpetual motion machine, of emotion, until the poet's heart broke, or was burned on the beach like Shelley's. Instead there was something from the outside coming in.

Now, the difference between, "We have come to bring metaphors for your poetry," and what I think most poets—who I consider good poets—today believe—and this would include people as opposite in their own ways as, say, Eliot on one hand, and Duncan on the other—is essentially that there is an outside to the poet. Now what the outside is like is described differently by different poets, and some of them believe that there's a welling up of the subconscious or the racial memory, or the this or the that, and they try to put it inside the poet. Others take it from the outside—Olson's idea of energy in *Projective Verse*—something that comes from the outside. I think that the source is unimportant, but I think that for the poet writing poetry, the idea of just what the poet is in relationship to this outside—whether it's an id down in the cortex—which you can't reach anyway, it's just as far outside as Mars—or whether it is as far away as those galaxies that seem to be sending radio messages to us with the whole galaxy blowing up just to say something to us, which are in the papers all the time now . . . . But at any rate, the first step is reached, I think, with Yeats' getting the thing. But the way that it works—"We have come to bring metaphors for your poetry"—this is like "We have come to bring fertilizer for your fields"—that kind of thing. You

know—"Well, you've had such nice poetry, Mr. Yeats, the spooks have come down from above to give you metaphors to hang it onto."

Now this is not really what happens—in my own experience—and I'll be talking about my own experience most of the time, but I think I can say for other people's experiences too, of those that I know—in dictated poetry—I think that the first kind of hint one has as a poet, and I must confess I was, as Karen would say, a 'retard' in this respect, is—after you have written poems for a while and struggled with them, and everything else, a poem comes through just in about one-eighth the time that a poem normally does, and you say, "Well, gee, it's going to be much easier if I can just have this happen very often." And so then you write 17 or 18 different things which are just what you're thinking about at the moment—and are lousy.

It isn't simply the matter of being able to get a fast take. It's something else—but the fast take is a good sign that you're hooked up with some source of power, some source of energy. Then, the next thing is you suddenly figure out, well, gee, when I've been wanting something, I've been, ah—say, I'm in love, and I want to sleep with this person, and, you know, the normal thing is, with the fast take, you write all these things down—with an idea of—essentially a way of selling a used car. And this doesn't work.

So one day, after you have this first experience, which was just something that you couldn't imagine, and the poems haven't come this clean, this fast—and they don't usually in dictated poetry anyway—suddenly there comes a poem that you just hate and would like to get rid of, that says just exactly the opposite of what you mean, of what you have to say—to use Olson's thing in one of its two meanings. Olson talks about the poet is a poet when he says what he has to say. Now, you can read that in two ways. What he *has* to say, namely, "I want to sleep with you, honey." Or, "I think that the Vietnam crisis is terrible," or "Some of my best friends are dying in loony bins," or whatever you want to say that you think is a particular message. That's the bad thing. But what you *want* to say—the business of the wanting comes from the outside, like it wants five dollars being ten—that kind of want is the kind of thing which is the real thing—the thing that you didn't want to say in terms of your own ego—in terms of your image, in terms of your life, in terms of everything. And I think the second step for a poet who's going on to the poetry of dictation is when he finds out that these poems which say just exactly the opposite of what he wants himself, per se, poet, to say, the poems that say just exactly the opposite—if you want to say something about your beloved's eyebrows and the poem says, the eyes should fall out—and you don't really want the eyes to fall out, or have any even vague connection—or you're trying to write a poem on Vietnam and you write a poem about skating in Vermont—these things, again, begin to show you just exactly where the road of dictation leads. But then you—just like when you wrote the first poem which came easily and yet was a good poem, a poem beyond you, the second stage—you then say, "Oh, well, then, you know, I'll just write this thing, and I'll take a line from someplace or another, or use a Dada or Surrealist thing . . . taking the arbitrary and all that . . . and that won't be what *I* want to say—and so that'll be great, that'll be hunky-dory." Unfortunately, that doesn't work terribly well either. You have to—not really want—not what you don't want to say. It's a very complicated kind of thing. You can't play tricks on it. That's the second stage.

The third stage, I think, comes when you get some idea that there is a difference between you and the outside of you which is writing poetry—where

you feel less proud of the poem that you've written, and you know damn well that it belongs to somebody else. The poem then, and for a poem sometimes it's a twelve-hour struggle to get a ten-line poem, not changing a single word of it as you're writing, but just as it goes along—trying to distinguish between you and the poem—the absolute distinction between the outside and the inside—and there the analogy of the medium comes in, which Yeats started out, and which Cocteau in his *Orphée*—both the play and the picture—used a car radio for, but which is essentially the same thing. And the more that you clear the mind away from yourself . . . . Now, if you have a cleft palate and are trying to speak with the tongue of men and angels, you're gonna still speak through a cleft palate. And things which are in you, the poem comes distorted through. Your tongue is exactly the kind of tongue you're born with, and the source of energy, whatever it is, can take advantage of your tongue, can make it do things that you didn't think it could—but your tongue will want to return to the same normal position of ordinary cleft palate speech of your own dialect, and this is the kind of thing you have to avoid. There are a great many things you can't avoid. It's impossible for the source of energy to come to you in Martian or North Korean or Tamil or any language you don't know—it's impossible for the source of energy to use images you don't have—or, at least, don't have something of. It's as if a Martian comes into a room with children's blocks—with ABCDE, which are in English—and he tried to convey a message—this is the way the source of energy goes—but the blocks on the other hand are always resisting it.

Now, the third step in dictated poetry is to try to keep all of yourself that is possible out of the poem . . . . The more you know, the more languages you know . . . the more building blocks the Martians have to play with.[2]

Jack's lively and storied language pushes us into a polarity and experienced dialectic with something other than ourselves. It involves a reversal of language into experience, which is not a dialexis between ourselves or a discourse true only to itself, but a broken and reforming language which composes a "real." The doubleness of a man and a world are recovered to operate in the language. Where, so to speak, a public language has closed itself in order to hold a meaning, it becomes less than the composition of meaning. It stops and relegates both the language and its hold on the "real" to the past. The place of language in the social, as a performance of the "real," is displaced to a transparency and becomes an imposition rather than a disclosure. In Jack's work, a fundamental quarrel with a discourse that does not hold a present or a future possibility is apparent from the visibility and invisibility of *After Lorca*, through the logos and low-ghost of *Heads of the Town up to the Aether* and the dissonant noisy voices of *The Holy Grail* to a culminating argument in the pieces of language in the book *Language*. The last poems of the *Book of Magazine Verse* turn repeatedly from an anger and rage to a simple love that flows

from and composes out of the real. A *reopened language* lets the unknown, the Other, the outside in again as a voice in the language. Thus, the reversal is not a reduction, but anopenness. The safety of a closed language is gone and its tendency to reduce thought to a reasonableness and definiteness is disturbed. Poetry has always kept the unreasonable voice but it is said to be true only in a poetic discourse and, of course, peripheral to the reason our lives are referred to. Here in the insistence of Jack's outside, an other than the reasonable is said to enter the real. The real doubles in the experience and in the language. The voice arguing the necessity of an outside may strike a reader as odd since the outside, in whatever sense one takes it, is usually assumed. It belongs then to a discourse or to a science. Its placement here as a composing factor in the poem disturbs our sense of a settled relation to language. It does, as I hope the ensuing argument makes clear, insist that language is not so simply relational, but rather a knowing, an event in men's lives, as words are important to hold on to whatever it is that composes us.

From *After Lorca* on, Jack works in a poetry that is a "compound of the visible and the invisible." These words are not so difficult once one realized that the visibility of men in speech opens on an invisibility he has not spoken or thought. This fundamental polarity extends into a space that is not recognized. The movement of Jack's work is to retie language and experience as they are composed in the exchange of visibility and invisibility. Perhaps, it was his knowledge as a professional linguist that brought him to this point in an understanding of a composing "real,"—as a "sense" seems visible and a "nonsense" seems fallen out of the visible or about to enter it.

Following a lecture on his own work, he was accused of being more interested in truth than in poetry and he replied, "Well, I'm interested in being a conveyor of messages." (Vancouver Lecture II) This insistence upon an outside becomes an intricate argument for a transcendence—both a distance and a verticality. This verticality—and the looseness of any discourse we have at hand to hold on to it—is caught exactly in the rope trick of "A Textbook of Poetry":

> The Indian rope trick. And a little Indian boy climbs up it. And the Jungians and the Freudians and the Social Reformers all leave satisfied. Knowing how the trick was played. There is nothing to stop the top of the rope though.

Jack was not much given to explaining his work, for it seemed to him that was the reader's job as much as his own, but one of his observations draws attention here. "A Textbook of Poetry," he says, takes the divine in relation to the human and *The Holy Grail* turns this around to take the human in relation to the divine. (Vancouver Lecture II) As I note here in the essay, the word divine is among the ruins of a discourse, broken in thought and experience into belief and disbelief. In Jack's work, the divine is resituated in a composition where belief and disbelief are composing elements of its meaning. The dictation of the outside brings us up against a number of words that float in and out of a meaning. It is not, for Jack, any ordinary supernaturalism, but literal to a condition that may be called a "polar logic" of experience. A meaning is constantly playing within the poetry because the poetry in its openness is more than a meaning and in the composition less than a meaning. Unfixed. A meaning in the poems is also constantly doubling back to meet the manhood and the ghostly, silver voices of it ("A Textbook"), where death is an interrogation close to the world because it is not ourselves. Death and ghostliness in this work must be seen, not as a choice against life or even a helplessness within it, but as a literal pole, where life is present to a point and then suddenly absent from an articulation. The curious thing about language and experience, which haunts Jack's work, is that they are so immediately reversible. And as a friend said, discussing this essay with me, if you don't have knowledge of that reversal, then you don't have the heart of it. This goes for translation, as in *After Lorca*, and for all directnesses of language. Suddenly, in the contemporary experience, the formal, public language does not hold and our language in the midst of a recomposition has to account for what is stopped, lost, loose and silent. I am reminded of Merleau-Ponty's "wild-meaning" and "wild-logos" which include an experience of a "birth of meaning."

It was for this reason Jack refused to accept a language for poetry that is a poetic discourse true only to itself and as such, simply another discourse patterned on the language system we have lived in, and though it is heightened, it has remained equally peripheral, an addition to the real. The "infinitely, small vocabulary," the purity and pointing of *After Lorca* comes into a literal condition, where the meaning plays and composes before our eyes. This comes to be an essential aspect of the narration or serial poem. According to Jack, "you have to go into a serial poem not knowing what the hell you're doing."

"You have to be tricked into it, it has to be some path that you've never seen on a map before . . . ." It has to be a renewed language and information that becomes a kind of map. Ideally, Jack worked in that long form without looking back and without thought of the previous poem, so that the poet could be led by what was composing. The serial poem is often like a series of rooms where the lights go on and off. It is also a sequence of energies which burn out, and it may, by the path it takes, include the constellated. There is further a special analogy with serial music: the voice or tongue, the tone, of the poem sounds individually, as alone and small as the poet is (the cleft palate of Jack's example), but sounded in series, it enters a field.[3] In this way the dictation and the serial form join to bring the poet, his voice, tone and stance into a dimension where he is either lost or found. A "necessary world" is composed in the serial poem.

For this occasion, which is Jack's, I have chosen to follow this polarity through. Our words for it may lead to confusion: a dualism, a dialectic, a contrarium. The point is to take the doubleness out of statement and return the process to experience where the language composes. This man, now silent, leaves us to face his work. The darkness, the torn shapes and ghosts of Jack's poems are an admission and they are also an openness, where thought and feeling begin again. They shadow the laughter, the jokes and the naturalness of his language. Such polarity is not reductive to a simple-minded authenticity or to a signature that is only one's self. The "only-feeling" of so much bad and helpless verse. Where I have found the public language removed from a real, or only, by an irony Jack's ghosts laugh at, an expression of ourselves, I have also found Jack's work returning the language to us. It brings us close to "what must be thought" and to what has been under or outside our discourse (Foucault). Merleau-Ponty again comes to mind in his remarks on dialectic become statement, "embalmed dialectic," and the edge we have reached where we must "recommence perception" and a "thinking speech."[4] Such speech will account for the other that opens before us. It amazes me that Jack Spicer's work moves us to this point, which contemporary philosophers, especially Foucault and Merleau-Ponty, have argued. Though they inform my essay in the effort I am making to say that this is a fundamental poetic concern, Jack did not know their work or care. He moved from the necessity. His fascination with the "unknown" including the complex experience of the contents of

an invisibility led him to emphasize the silence around and between poems. This renewed speech, in another man's words, "teaches us a necessity that is not logical but ontological":

> Thus we were to understand that speech is between two silences: it gives expression to an experience that is mute and ignorant of its own meaning, but only in order to make that experience appear in its purity; it does not break our contact with the things, but it draws us from our state of confusion with all things in order to awaken us to the truth of their presence and to render palpable their relief and the tie that binds us to them. At least such is the speech that speaks in conformity with its essence and . . . does not cede to the vertigo of eloquence, does not wish to suffice to itself or close in upon itself and upon its sense, but opens upon and leads to the outside.[5]

To trace this is difficult. I begin with Jack's visibility and invisibility in *After Lorca*, with the life and death of one poet flowing into another. But I wish to give this a context in a more than personal challenge to the visibility we understand ourselves to be speaking in our language. Or, I wish to take it back to the composition, the ontology, the beginning of a language that is full of the world. It is within language that the world speaks to us with a voice that is not our own. This is, I believe, a first and fundamental experience of dictation and correspondence—the dead speaking to us in language is only one level of the outside that ceaselessly invades our thought. In this way, I mean to suggest Jack's effort to trace the vectors of a composing real in his "disordered devotion." In his books, we begin in an exhange of life and death, visibility and invisibility, known and unknown, human and divine. In the reversal of language into experience, these fold into one another and unfold, composing as voices in our language. They are elemental and also ultimate at either end of a narration. To understand the "outside," that curiously naive-sounding insistence of this work, it will not do to take off on those supernaturalisms which precondition and explain the experience. The dictation remains persistently of the world and as it is unknown, it moves into the language as the imageless moves into image. Jack's discipline of emptying himself in order to allow his language to receive an other than himself may be traced back to his tradition and sources, but he works there independently and fiercely. The discipline is intended to reopen the discourse. (Here I could place him among his direct peers—Poe, Mallarmé, Artaud and Duchamp in their emphasis upon loss of meaning turning into necessity of meaning.) There

is a dangerous factor in such work, for it removes the manhood or the image of it, which the settled discourse gathered and held together in a stoppage or finitude that spoke only of himself. My companions in this thought, which Jack's work forces me to articulate, will help clarify this openness later. Just now, I need only say that Jack's "outside" implies a world and a cosmology without an image. It is unknown and entering the time of language again.

If, along with my sources, I am right that a discourse, a language system, has ended in a "transparency" of descriptions and relations (Foucault), which set the imaginative apart from the real and give it up to the ideal or by a twist, dump the whole business into a sadly limited personality, then I may take seriously the profound consequences of the strangeness and estrangement that enter Jack's work. That "transparency" leaves entire realms unacknowledged. They become unknown, unimaged and unthought. Such "transparency" reverses itself into a lie. And the unknown comes forward without visibility—outside oneself and outside one's language, but it begins to compose itself within language. This brings us to a "recommencement of perception" that has barely begun, and within it, we re-enter a composition of the real.

Magic

Strange, I had words for dinner
Stranger, I had words for dinner
Stranger, strange, do you believe me?

Honestly, I had your heart for supper
Honesty has had your heart for supper
Honesty honestly are your pain

I burned the bones of it
And the letters of it
And the numbers of it
That go 1,2,3,4,5,6,7
And so far.

Stranger, I had bones for dinner
Stranger, I had bones for dinner
Stranger, stranger, strange, did you believe me?

(*Heads of the Town*)

In this poem, the movement from words to bones is an exact expression of a condition. The words disappear into the bones and even those are eaten by the strange voice of the poem. The Orphic explanatory note to the poem makes it clear that in the telling, the voice of the poem is a ghostly other and outside of meaning.

> Orpheus was never really threatened by the Underworld during his visits there. In this poem they present him with a diplomatic note.
> Honesty does not occur again in the poem.
> The numbers do.

The poem and the note both return us to time, a running of the numbers and a traversal. This poem is from the first section of the book *Heads of the Town up to the Aether*, a hell of meaning, a playing out of sense and nonsense, which precedes the concern for paradise in the final section.

The entrance of a strangeness to the work takes many forms—most obviously in the ghosts, who are "not the same as the dead" (Vancouver Lecture III), but who are voices and shadows that enter life. This haunted meaning wanders in and out of the poems. And it is a proposal of the wildness of meaning—a lost and found, a going and coming. It is harsh and beautiful—and, as Jack would say, "scary." It takes the question—who is speaking in a poem?—and changes it into a question of where he is speaking—from what place—in what order—in what composition—a shadowy participant in a folding with something outside himself. I may attach this to traditional motifs and to common experience—the sense of a "cosmic crypt," Spengler's dread, gnostic dualism, and so forth, but Jack's work does not stop in fear. It summons. It brings again into the present a beginning of a man and a world.[6]

The largest, most difficult proposal of this work is then to be found in the stake of Jack's poetics. The outside as it becomes technical to our experience re-poses a tense discourse, which interrogates the humanism and anthropomorphism of what is usually thought to be the poem's expression. The guide here is not the poet of a limited biographical occasion because he is guided toward the disclosure of a tied and retied heart, a manhood entangled with the world. This disclosure must not be reduced to psyche, however much we find it in a time of one man or in the disfigurations of our own time. It is more likely that the limited, psychic man, pushed in this direction, will find

another, still unfigured manhood. For this reason, Jack would remove himself, as that which is expressed, from his language in order to reopen the worldliness of language. An old story comes to mind that once when Pythagoras was asked what Chronos is, he answered that it is the psyche of the universe. His answer implies a differently posed intelligence. As for the disclosure of the retied heart, that veiled thing that is so mixed with thought, I am reminded of Pound's lovely Latin citation in Canto XC: *the human soul is not love, but from it love proceeds, and therefore, the soul does not delight in itself, but in the love which proceeds from it.*] I know these are difficult elements that bring us into a love composed within a commotion of belief and disbelief, but I am after the public love in these poems and the magic of disturbance Jack used among his friends, as if nothing could rest, not even friendship. The love tends to manifest itself as a folding and unfolding of a real which composes out of North Beach and Berkeley and then leads to an outward of contents which are unspoken, unthought and unknown, like the possible diamond in *Book of Magazine Verse*. Why there is this flowing kind of genesis that one either dams up, forgets and gives up to a dead discourse or participates in, is difficult to put into words because it is process and names pop out of it and are never up to date. It may be recognized as elemental. The genesis changes the lyric question, who is speaking, into a double voice. This double voice, as it accounts for the "dictation" opens into speech and begins a redefinition of the heart. I put it back, so to speak, in an ancient sense into the thought that it is participant in intelligence. By way of the poetics, the constant elemental aspect of poetic thought, we "recommence the perception." As perceptions are veils of the heart, at the edge of them there folds an other than oneself. We reach, especially in Jack's work, the poem's real business, an "exhibition of world" (Heidegger). I have, I think, said enough to foreground this extravagant outside, its presence and absence, the edge of its necessity. To be without a discourse, or rather to be within "a disappearance of discourse" (Foucault), as this essay argues, is something like being in a space ship. The outside invades and doubles over us.

A poetry that composes that meeting is tied to the event in the language. One is, to Jack's sporting language, batting or pitching or catching one's life. This is the terrible meaning of

God is a big white baseball that has nothing to do
but go in a curve or a straight line. I studied
geometry in highschool and know that this is true.

Given these facts the pitcher, the batter, and the
catcher all look pretty silly.

(*Book of Magazine Verse*)

To live in a discourse, to use a discourse, which does not hold on to this composition is, as Jack says in *Language*, to "have the ground cut from under us." In such circumstances the language of the real appears to belong to an imposed order rather than to a disclosed order that is performed in public speech. Just here, poetry may become a necessary function of the real, not something added to it. It can best handle thought that is a disclosure. In his last years, Jack talked about "the fix." He meant by that both a political and an economic fix that stops us. He also meant the language of it—a fix of the language that is not true to its own structure and that tends to stop the real in something one can only refer to. This brings forward in Jack's work both an explanation and a performance of all that poetry talking about itself, which has haunted contemporary poetry and annoyed a lot of readers. It does confuse when it is only a young man's desire to be a poet that is being expressed or an older one's failure to get through. In Jack's work, it is a renewal of language and an interrogation of it in terms of our inward and outward life—dangerous because the manhood in the language comes close to a disappearance. I think of Mallarmé's "master" who disappears from the "ceremony of his book" (Foucault).

Jack's oppositions and contrariness look destructive, even despairing, but they tend to bring forward a language that holds. We may read this as an aspect of his sure-footed Americanness—a Puritanism, a Calvinism at the heart of his experience. And certainly, his life-long interest in Hawthorne comes to mind. Such a reading could be useful, but it would, I think, lead to a misreading. Here, it is the holding power and what I have called the commotion of his work that I wish to describe. His last work, *Book of Magazine Verse*, is an example of this. The idea behind the title is an old one with Jack and it is meant to challenge the public place of poetry. The poems were

written in order to prove that the magazines for which he wrote them would not publish them. It is a set-up, of course, but that does not spoil the point he is making. Some of them are for magazines which cannot be expected to publish poetry, though Jack's point is that poetry belongs to the real of them, whether that real is of sports, jazz or politics. The only poems he actually submitted were for *The Nation* and they were predictably rejected. Jack commented that it would have spoiled everything if they'd been accepted. He seemed to want the bitter laughter I heard when the space where his poetry belonged turned out not to be there. The *Book of Magazine Verse* is an unfair interrogation of the public place of poetry. The poems of it combine an anger and an affirmation that unravels the real the magazines talk about:

I can't stand to see them shimmering
in the impossible music of the Star
Spangled Banner. No
One accepts this system better than poets
Their hearts healed for a few dollars.
Hunt
The right animals. I can't. The poetry
Of the absurd comes through San Francisco
television. Directly connected
with moon-rockets.
If this is dictation, it is driving
Me wild.

The poem is dedicated to a young poet, Huntz, and in the poem, his name is changed into the act and event of the "Hunt" as a directive. The hunt for the right animals takes place in an absurd of the shimmering astronauts landing on the moon. The rage at the center of the poem is caught in this lifting of the Star Spangled Banner into space, a shimmering there as false as it is here. It is not, so to speak, a real landing on the moon, a movement beyond the walls, but an extension of the same discourse and its resulting social form. The landing on the moon would perhaps be real if it were not an extension into space of the same conditions. We have landed ourselves on the moon. As the work moves in those last poems from the imagination of a city on a "baseball diamond high / In the Runcible Mountain wilderness" (*Poems for the Vancouver Festival*, 1) toward a departure, "Things desert him" (*Poems for Down Beat*, 6), the shimmer is not true. The shimmering image of the astronauts suggests a beauty one would like to hold just there,

but the words, "I can't stand to see them," turn that beauty back to what it covers. In a stunning refusal, Jack reverses language into experience, where it must begin again. The moon in the poem disappears or is returned to what we will make of it. And the wildness of the poem is a loosened meaning. If one follows the contents of the serial narrative in this book and looks back on the field of its composition, the city on a diamond stands there on a Lewis Carroll mountain—a nonsense fundamental to the sense. This duplicity or commotion is remarkable in his thought and it was both terrible and joyous in his life, as a long list of friends, poets, and enemies may testify. He was so alive in the commotion he made around him. The condition of that beginning again in language and meaning is between our manhood, the anthropology of our thought, and everything outside its orders. It is, at times, almost a *divestment* of the memory of words. Undressed words. Jack shares the profound issue of this divestment in modern poetics, in its lack of wisdom and in its thought and feeling at the edge of a disclosure, with Mallarmé and Artaud.

In the movement of the whole of Jack's work toward the imagination of that city, which remains where he left it, only a possibility, there is also an *investment* of words. An installation. This is the "spiritual discipline" he says a poem must be—out of the dictation. For this Jack used an Orphic methodology, as if the cosmos or love had fallen into hell. The experience is tropic—in the turn, hell is discovered and the true and the false begin to play. And, unfortunately, as Jack says, the dictation will be true and false (tape, Vancouver Lecture III), because as a proposition of an ultimate duplicity in the real itself, the dictation will be wild and playful, a disappearance and an appearance, an invisibility and a visibility exchanging their powers in the heart. The looking into something as it composes in the poem, especially as it is of our own time, is to see what is on the other side, but not separate from this side or its terror. One can't see without meaning and this is the momentary interruption of the "I can't" in the poem for Huntz. As these last poems move to an open end,

> The poem begins to mirror itself.
> The identity of the poet gets more obvious.
>
> (*Poems for Down Beat*, 6)

The poems reflect this reversal of language into experience. This is a costly recovery of an "operative language" (Merleau-Ponty's phrase),

> which possesses meaning less than it is possessed by it, does not speak of it, but speaks *it*, or speaks *according to it*, or lets it speak and be spoken within us, breaks through our present.[7]

This language is then "open upon." In the last poems, the "identity of the poet" returns almost nakedly, driven by the wildness, just at the point where the poet is to disappear from his work. This insistence of the dictation that an outside, an other than ourselves, speaks to us notices first a disappearance or emptying out of a manhood from his language, and then watchfully approaches "a field" including the other and a "topography" that is a folding and unfolding of a real that contains us.[8] Such language may disclose a new manhood and a new visibility along with another courage.

The poet is in the field of his work. He becomes a voice sounded in series that is also another voice, a doubling in the heart of an intelligence. Jack's voice remained to the end outside the paradise or city of its concern because such a city is outside our time or at the edge of it. As his language is open upon an outside, whose meaning disturbs and changes, his poetry becomes a profound interrogation, an operation of language, because it is a meeting.

You flicker,
If I move my finger through a
    candleflame, I know that there
    is nothing there. But if I hold my
    finger there a few minutes longer,
It blisters.
This is an act of will and the flame is
    is not really there for the candle, I
Am writing my own will
Or does the flame cast shadows?
    At Hiroshima, I hear, the shadows
    of the victims were as if photographed
    into concrete building blocks.
Or does it flicker? Or are we both
    candles and fingers?
Or do they both point us to the
    grapheme on the concrete wall—
The space between it
Where the shadow and the flame are one?

(*Graphemics 6, Language*)

Morphemics, Phonemics, Graphemics, as his book *Language* follows them through, will be "words" and "loves" in a composing real.

This is an extraordinary poetry for us to take on. It was, of course, for the most part not taken on at all, though it opened language again and again to the young who drifted across the country to meet Jack at his table in the bar. San Francisco became a loved habit of friends, bars, streets, the Broadway Tunnel, and Aquatic Park. His hours were pretty much set. If it became too quiet, Jack would disturb it and "make things happen." San Francisco is an odd place. With all the beauty and comfort of its landscape, it is the end of the land. It seems to be at the edge of something, a gated place, an end which opens again. And so one finds it in Jack's poems where the imagery of the sea carries an openness, strangeness and endlessness. This edge becomes a literal quality of his work.

It is this edginess which leads me to speak of Jack's poetic argument. It involves the place and context of poetry in a composition of the real, which I have already touched upon and now wish to tie down. This argumentativeness about poetics, as it is widely reflected in contemporary poetry, has been dismissed by the criticism as the weakness of poetry talking about itself. The helplessness of poetry mirroring itself. On the contrary, it is indicative of a new consciousness of the power and violence of language, and in Jack's work, it becomes an insistent argument for the performance of the real by way of poetry. I am reminded of Vico's far away argument that all thought and experience begin in poetry and of Heidegger's that we end there too. I do not wish to be long-winded, slap-dash or pretentious here at the end of a distinguished work, but it is in this issue of the context of poetry that I find a way to tell you the cost of what Jack tried to do.

Wherever I go I hear the question—what killed Jack Spicer? Some offer the comfortable explanation that it was booze. But most who knew him well say poetry. This is the hidden issue of what I wish to say. It's interesting that the question always takes the same form, as in a detective story, except they ask what rather than who. Jack collapsed in an elevator. Two days later I found him in a hospital. No one had been notified. His body had given way and his speech become a garble—just the other side of what he meant to say. Listening to him, I thought of Artaud's special language, another language that seems to begin again. And I thought of the "Martian" Jack sometimes spoke with his friends—full of laughter, catching us

in what he was doing. One day I leaned over his bed and asked him to repeat the words or phrases he wanted to say because I would, I said, figure the pattern of the nonsense. The garble of his speech was the shadow of his sense and equally real. With extreme physical effort, he somehow retied his head and his speech to speak clearly. What he said, I've relegated to the end of this essay where I think it will be understood—just as I have had so much trouble understanding it. In between what I have already written and his last words, I wish to take on the context of the poetry. This is my way of explaining what he meant when he said language is "the furniture in the room" through which the world speaks. He was not in the final poetics speaking only of himself. The "disordered devotion towards the real" of the poem with which I opened is no naive realism, and what it leads to requires some meditation. Here, I return to the ignorance I spoke of. Jack did not, it seems, know how far he had to go. In that emptying out in order to free the language, which is part of his care, he found a discipline which suggests that we are free to think again.

The Collected Books of Jack Spicer draws together all the work *in books* of the years 1957-1965. My purpose in following this division between an earlier and a later poetry, which originates in Jack's own sense of his work, is to foreground the special value the poet gave to composition by book. In this, I am trying to account for the long run of twenty years of conversation with him on poetry—"there's no such thing as a single poem"—"a book isn't a collection of poems." The division emphasizes the long form of the poems and the movement of his thought which led to this discovery of a new narrative. Further, the collection presents what Jack thought of as his poetic task—complete. To be sure, there are marvelous letters, four lectures and a few separate poems from the same years. Some of these will be quoted here, but most of them are set apart for another occasion. The early work also is set apart, the poems, letters and plays of 1946-1956, following the instruction given me by letter in *Admonitions* (1957). The point is to keep intact the separation he made between his early poems and the poetry he wanted. I am guided by his reasons and by the work of another order printed here. His reasons are operative in the worlds of this poetry and in its voices. I am taking the occasion of Jack's

book to speak of the battle for the real of poetry in which all important contemporary poetry in America is engaged. It began with Pound and continues. For me, it moves West and becomes an imagination in the fateful meeting of three men—Jack Spicer, Robert Duncan and myself in 1946. That imagination is complex and the poetics of it is made out of the dissonant companionship in poetry. Jack's division of his work is precise to the difference he saw and earned in his own work between a peripheral and a directive poetics. One hears the vulgarization roundabout that poetry and life are the same thing. They are not, of course, but such a misreading may be taken from either Jack or Olson. Both insist upon the closeness and necessity of a poetic meaning. Jack in particular is clear on the part language plays in the composition of what we call real. Thus, the poetics becomes directive to perception and stance, a way rather than a fictive transcendence. From 1957, following the narrative of *After Lorca*, Jack tended to write in books. The propositions of his practice move us toward long and open forms. I call this openness worldly because it measures the I of the poetry and includes the poet in a world.

This is the public Jack Spicer. The best preface is his own *After Lorca*, which opens the book and begins the new poetry—a preparation beyond, as he said, the expression of his hatreds and desires. Where this poetry leads is one of my questions. The pieces of an answer draw me into a discussion of the oppositions and contraries, which are reflected in the poetry. I will be arguing that oppositions and polarities are basic to intelligence and that they reopen the entire range of the aesthetic as perception relating directly to the formation of public, political and social life. A heavy hand to lay on poetry, that delicate, pretty thing that has cost some poets their lives and sanity. The public, the political, the social are all forms of thought and experience, and according to Jack's argument, these forms must begin again because we are inside the death of these forms, the "fix" of them. Here, the operative, performing nature of poetic language comes into play. Jack's poetry takes on the experience, so exact to our present condition, that where we are is equally an experience of not being there at all—of disappearing and destroyed men—of fallen hierarchies and broken honesties, like towers, that once were governments. The men themselves, when one could see them in their acts, were horizons. Their acts remain in language where we join them. When the language breaks up into disbelief, their images

disappear and we are, as now, invisible to one another. Left alone inside our needs and desires. We may all be the same there, but it is a levelling and a disappearance into an invisibility called necessity. The curious thing about language is that it holds and makes visible. It performs one's manhood. But it is so much older than oneself, so much a speaking beyond and outside oneself, that a man's entrance to it becomes at once new and old, spoken and speaking, a self and some other. The hierarchies of thought were found in combat and became quietnesses. They proposed, whatever our vocabulary for them, an interplay of earth, men, and world. "They sort of drifted up like clouds—what we're getting now is the rain—like fallout," a friend said. Disbelief and invisibility are as real to experience as belief and visibility. They are technical issues of our method of moving along. The increasing invisibility of where a man is brings forward every question of what is prior to him. This priorness is sometimes called god, as in Jack's work, or meaning, an assumed complete intelligence, as in philosophy. The extraordinary nature of language is that it attaches to the prior, to the before one, and to the after one. It is determinedly polar to one's presence in it. If our visibility falls out of language, the language comes back to talk by itself. For such extravagance, see Mallarmé's *Un Coup de Dés* and Jack's *Language*—"Sable arrested a fine comb," a computer language, a language speaking by itself. Such language may seem obscure because it is double—that is, holds a duplicity—it is a language bound to the breadth and distance of what it perceives. On the one hand, a belief is met by a disbelief, on the other, a visibility, a piece of ourselves, by an invisibility. In the doubling, there is an unreason that is half the form of reason—its reason—and a non-sense in conjunction with sense. Among these interchangeable contents of experience, the sublime returns to a public place—the terror, the uncanny, the bestial and the beautiful—Jack's ghosts and the shimmering of his thought.

The duplicity. We have been taught to dislike any suggestion of a dualism, essential as it is to our experience of the inward and outward pieces of the real, of a man and a world, that it composes wherever we are—in fact, composes the visibility we have called manhood. We are busy studying the synthesis, the lie that belief has become. The "subjective aim" of most men is an escape from the thought of something so alive they can't stop it. The worldly models of our sciences read a marvelous duplicity in the world, but we are absent from it.

Contemporary poetics has repeatedly moved toward field theory, the physics of energy and process, to find the real where manhood takes place or is contained. Some have done this by a system of analogies and wind up in an allegory of divine manhood, a resolution that makes a man the same as everything else. It was at least a religion or a binding. Others have said it is the stretch of our perception and wind up inside that from which we are separated. The duplicity is especially the business of poetry because it is a primary aspect of thought and poetry is primary thought before it is vision, fiction or transcendence. Poetry is also perhaps at the end of thought or reason, where a finite manhood doubles back, reverses and is invisible or silent, except for his part in language. The modern stance becomes increasingly poetic, but it is a poetic which is a disclosure, a ceremony, a performance, rather than an imposition.

I am here entering that combat for language which was Jack's. And I'm having a hell of a time with the description of the process which he performed. I feel my language thicken and become more abstract. I lean on the linguistic necessity of invisibility to give meaning to visibility or vice-versa, entangled in the oppositions which are natural in our words. Jack knew we were inside a performance of language. This issue here is *discourse*. A discourse is the language system in which one lives—the use of language each of us agrees to. During all the years I knew him, Jack liked to disturb this agreement. His repeated instruction to young poets that they should read "far-out stuff," the strangest they could find, comes to mind here. His purpose had affinities with Rimbaud's *dérèglement* and it was a continuous interrogation. For us, outside the strangeness of poetry, discourse has been accepted as an act of language between ourselves, an agreement of logical structure that turns out to be our imposition of an order. This amounts to a closure of language, which brings it into our own limit, and ultimately that discourse will die as a man does. It does not entangle us with the world. The death at the center of such discourse is extraordinary and begins to let us see the extremity of our condition. This brings forward the combat for the "real" in contemporary poetry—Pound's "I have brought the great ball of crystal; / who can lift it?"—Olson's "my drum fell / where the dead are, who / will bring it up, my lute / who will bring it up"—Jack's "We shall clear the trees back, the lumber of our / pasts and futures back, because we are on / a diamond."

Where the poēsis reopens the real and follows its contents, the presuming discourse imposes form and closes it, leaving us at the mercy of our own limit. The already-formed discourse has disappeared and become a reversal of its order into a disorder and disbelief, though it does remain official, where it protects the worst social forms or what Jack called "the fix." Jack notices both the extremity and the necessity:

> . . . the kind of thing which you have in modern poetry, the fact that most poets from say 19 to 27, that I know, who are good in San Francisco, are really against education because they can't resist—that if they have all of these benches and chairs in the room—not to arrange them themselves, instead of letting them be arranged by whatever is the source of the poem.
>
> . . . Creeley talks about poems following the dictation of language. It seems to me that's nonsense—language is part of the furniture in the room. Language isn't anything of itself—it's something which is in the mind of the host, the parasite that the poem is invading—five languages just make the room structure more difficult and also possibly more usable. It certainly doesn't have anything to do with any mystique of English or anything else. Duncan's business of words and their shadows, and sounds and their shadows seems to me again, taking things which are in the room, rather than things which are coming into the room, and it seems to me essentially that you arrange—when you get a beautiful thing which uses the words and shadows of words, and the fact silly once meant blessed instead of silly as it now does—you ought to be distrustful—although at the same time, the thing which invades you from outside can use it. Now, the other kind of thing, other than Olson's "energy," which, I think, Olson looks on as a sort of—energy to him—it's something you plug in the wall—and it's really the machine which is the convertor of the electricity which makes another machine work, and so forth. And I don't agree with that either, but I'd go nearer to that. And then there's finally Williams who sees in objects, essentially, a kind of energy which radiates from them, the fact that this chair has a chairness, a nimbus around it, a kind of electrical thing, which gives energy enough so that it can be transformed almost directly, if the thing that chair in its chairness radiates—into poetry—and all of these things I think are perfectly useful explanations of it. I prefer the unknown.
>
> (Vancouver Lecture I)

The extremity of our condition and experience is apparent in the use of the word parasite and in the insistence upon the unknown, which is invisible and imageless. As it enters the poetic language, it is piecemeal, disturbing, strange and unsettled. The emphasis upon an invasion from outside is striking and exact to the experience of the world's absence, which suddenly, frighteningly, nonsensically, becomes a presence. I shall return to the darkness of this experience apace. The use of it takes us back to the poēsis which includes a direct, disclosed knowledge of a doubling.

In order to establish the context of this argument and fuss about language, it's useful to remember Charles Olson's long-standing effort alongside Jack's. "One wants therefore," he says, writing in 1964, "to enter this ring on a different footing: it isn't true, and has left the universe out, substituting for it a prune or wrinkled grape, the social." In this essay, his attack is on the dialectical and, not unlike Foucault, he watches the large movement of method in language, in order to say that the key to our social forms is in the use we make of language. He argues that "an immediate discharge of mental engagement in which the will and the mind are like aggressive motor actions" is the direct inheritance of Socratic, Platonic and Aristotelian discourse.

> . . . we don't even know what it does mean to change society comparable to how they did engage to do it, so much of our own discourse is in fact theirs. There is a discourse. There is a grammar. There is a sentence you do have. It happens also to be a motive of things that you are not, but which you do . . . attend to. You are not free than otherwise to perceive.
>
> This, then, would be the conversation.[9]

It may be argued that the push of contemporary poetics towards locus, ground, and particularity is a remaking of where we are. In this sense, the poem becomes an extraordinary field of forces which measure and contain the I of men and poets. From Pound's hierophanies and Williams's ground to Olson's cosmology and Spicer's narrative of the unknown, a remaking of the real is at stake. One needs only to notice how much of it is a common experience and also something regained, rather than an invention. The vocabulary to talk about it slips and slides. In the old discourse, the real as it is claimed for poetry becomes a pretentious word or it denotes an ideality without the field out of which it was drawn. This is the peripheral and utopian poetry I've already noted. It amounts to a thought which gives up the actual to needs, materiality, and immediacy of the skin without enjoinment. We are now in a curious downward journey of ideas, which brings every man into their forming. I am reminded of Octavio Paz's complaint in his essay on Duchamp that "Our only idea, in the proper sense of that term, is criticism." The danger is, he points out, that we will become "obsessed by sensation"—that we will be unable to join it to anything other than ourselves. Other phrases from that

fine essay suggest the predicament: "Vision is not only what we see; it is a stance taken, an idea, a geometry . . ."—"a beauty free at last from the notion of beauty"—and, drinking up a whole range of contemporary concern with our method in language, he notes "the conception of language as a structure in movement."[10] This last is challenge enough, if thought about, to the dead discourse. It is also our experience as well as our conception. In the wreckage of our discourse, as Jack's work draws my attention to it here, I notice first how alive the language is, how new and messaged. And in it are the presences and absences with which our thought tries to deal. I notice the love-hate thematics of our writing as it meets the public space. It is an absent America whose presence is at stake.

The doubling is where the public space begins. Where our words become uneasy as to meaning and designation, it is just there that a life in language begins again. The uneasiest of all in this context is imagination, and I shall return to it. I also notice that the word intellect is in as much trouble. I take seriously the enraged intelligence of such phrases as "Fuck the verbal shit"—(when it was thrown at that most public messenger, Allen Ginsberg). Its anger is an expression of the acceptance of an absent discourse—of being unbound and unnarrated. Words which once contained a cosmology or at least implied a worldly stance—god, soul, spirit, angel, ghost—now bring forward disbelief and have for a long time. They belong to religious forms, which have become peripheral, or they are tolerated in the unreality of imagination. They are used with embarrassment. There is a sloppiness around the public use of the words "soul" and "spirit" which is evidence of their disappearance. These words are odd now and it is perhaps only their oddness that charges them. They draw attention to the angelology which once confronted anthropology as a world view. They are words, like "world," which propose an essential dualism or polarity. That is, their vitality is precise in the degree to which they point to an other than the manhood. We need not return to them, and cannot in any sense that we now understand, but they haunt us. And they are, so to speak, tossed up by our task in language. They propose a binding and an entangling with the essential unknown that is part of the life of the known. Since I mean nothing here that is not common to experience, that is, open experience, I bring to mind Merleau-Ponty's term, chiasma—a crossing, an "intertwining." It is necessary, I know, to stop over the known, which, like one's body, closes form,

but then I move again to the edge of it. It is this entangling—out of poetics—that is the source of public love.

The loss of the entangling—art's job—has become a broken structure in the public realm. It is what Michel Foucault in his book, *The Order of Things*, calls the "disappearance of discourse." I choose a passage near the end of his argument, which is both a dedication and a defiance:

> To all those who still wish to talk about man, about his reign or his liberation, to all those who still ask themselves questions about what man is in his essence, to all those who wish to take him as their starting-point in their attempts to reach the truth, to all those who, on the other hand, refer all knowledge back to the truths of man himself, to all those who refuse to formalize without anthropologizing, who refuse to mythologize without demystifying, who refuse to think without immediately thinking that it is man who is thinking, to all these warped and twisted forms of reflection we can answer only with a philosophical laugh—which means, to a certain extent, a silent one.[11]

I think we can answer as well with the laughter of poetry.

Foucault's description of the "disappearance of discourse" moves us from the density of one kind of language to the representational clarity and dichotomy of another, which he designates as neo-classical. The words of the latter sort fit exactly as we throw them onto a table or into a picture. The trouble is that poetry under such criticism or reading exists only by reference to that picture, that completion. This is the language with which literature is talked about, and it leaves the mass of it unread in its density. It is by way of the transparency of this reference that the poetic density and enactment, what I have called the performance in language, are lost. For a vast readership, poetry becomes a bore, a soft philosophy, a feeling. Just here, I remember Jack's often repeated phrase, "Nobody listens to poetry." The present "dispersion of language," Foucault argues, is linked to the "disappearance of discourse." Where the language exists only ". . . in the form of natural discourse, the accumulation of truth, description of things, a body of exact knowledge, or an encyclopedic dictionary,"

> It exists, therefore, only in order to be transparent: it has lost that secret consistency which, in the sixteenth century, inspissated it into a word to be deciphered, and interwove it with all the things of the world.[12]

Again a key to my having placed Jack's work in this broad context and inside the dilemma his poetry so brilliantly performs: from the time I first knew him, 1945, he was fascinated by Renaissance thought. Among the few books he owned, characteristic of the way he seemed to perch among us, mixed with paperback mystery stories, a Skeat, a volume or two on chess and bridge, was Cassirer's *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*. His sense of language and his magical use of it move us back there. "A wonderful book," he said to me, when he brought it over and presented it as a real discovery: Petrarca, Valla, Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, Pomponazzi, Vives. I would have to add to this his special interest in John Dee. Perhaps from these, one could reconstruct the beginning of his contrary sense of language and its task. This is fundamental to Jack's sense of magic as form and entrance, as he taught it in the Magic Workshop, 1957. Language is always tied to magic with its renaming, secret names and powers which translate in and out of language to become a blasphemy or something found or disclosed. This edge of language always enters the peculiar experience that the real is not what it seems and yet is there in the language.

Foucault's thought meets mine and aids me in this delineation of Jack's importance to poetic thought. With the disappearance of that discourse—(students at the universities, where poetry is guarded over, may smile that in their experience that discourse has not disappeared or rage that it is madly imposed upon them)—there is discovered a new figuration—a manhood that is entirely tied to his finitude. In ordinary thought, the presence of the outward begins to totter. One is, so to speak, within his own skin. The nexus of inward and outward is now tied to the specific and the particular and we get a "motive of a new presence" and a "new relation between words, things and their order."[13] We are thrown into "an order that now belongs to the things themselves and to their interior law."[14] Man is then governed by "labor, life and language," not god, soul, or angels, and these are all of them also an "exteriority," larger than any one man or many men, unmastered and unclosed. The finitude we are drawn to is "marked by the spatiality of the body," "the yawning of desire," "the time of language," yet these constitute "a finitude which is radically other."[15]

> Far from leading back . . . toward a peak of identity, far from indicating the moment of the same at which the dispersion of the other has not yet come into play, the original in man is that which articulates him from the very outset upon something other than himself.[16]

In this, which is so clearly a part of Jack's sense of the Unknown, there is a terrible consequence for our understanding if the other is left out or reduced to a kind of embodiment. Among other consequences, there is a despair of language, if we are led to a "psychologism" of all knowledge or to a "sociologism" which defines the "real" as simply consequent to the experience of large numbers. This is not to say one turns from the socialism that discovers the constant growth of poverty and proposes its solutions, but rather that the "real" of need, however worldwide and covered up by Western fixed political forms, articulates only a first visibility. Witness the lonely voices of Jack's revolutionaries in *The Holy Grail*, imprisoned and singing of the absent Heimat. The imprisonment of needs is the antithesis of world. My purpose in drawing the polarity and experience of poetry forward is to oppose a giving up to that terrible simplicity.

Foucault has noticed, outside the dead discourse, the discovery of a double manhood:

> Man and the unthought are, at the archaeological level, contemporaries. Man has not been able to describe himself as a configuration in the *episteme* without thought at the same time discovering, both in itself and outside itself, at its borders yet also in its very warp and woof, an element of darkness, an apparently inert density in which it is embedded, an unthought which it contains entirely, yet in which it is also caught. The unthought (whatever name we give it) is not lodged in man like a shrivelled-up nature or a stratified history; it is, in relation to man, the Other: the Other that is not only a brother but a twin, born, not of man, nor in man, but beside him and at the same time, in an identical newness, in an unavoidable duality.[17]

To this duality, duplicity, polarity, we again direct our attention. It has always been the issue of poetry involved in the "exhibition of a world" (Heidegger's phrase). Its newness is perhaps due to a different consciousness of our mortality and finitude. That I think of poetry as an interrogation, rooted in the experience that any true question must be, particularly as I find such care and unease in Jack's work, leads me to make a

claim for poetry as the deepest involvement in life. Its positioning as a thought tied to a manhood gives it special responsibility in the long-run of the thought we enter by habit and training. Foucault traces this long-run. "Where," he says,

> at the end of the eighteenth century, it was a matter of fixing the frontiers of knowledge, it will now be one of seeking to destroy syntax, to shatter tyrannical modes of speech . . . . God is perhaps not so much a region beyond knowledge as something prior to the sentences we speak, and if Western man is inseparable from him, it is not because of some invisible propensity to go beyond the frontiers of experience, but because his language ceaselessly foments him in the shadow of his laws . . . .[18]

I have already cited Jack's image of God as a big white baseball, somehow other than, but entering the game our lives are. I notice the laughter at the edge of the image, but also its harshness. The cutting thought of it. At the dead-end, at the in-ourselves, the words collect strangely. To this unease, Foucault has brought the question I have wished to ask: *who is speaking?* He cites the overwhelming experience of Mallarmé, who, in the effort of the question, "was constantly offering himself in his own language, to the point of not wishing to figure in it except as an executant in a pure ceremony of the Book in which the discourse would compose itself."[19] Here, I am reminded first of Mallarmé's "The sky is dead" (*L'Azur*) and then of another passage: the "terrible fight with that old and perverse plumage—brought down, fortunately, God! But as the struggle took place on his bony wing, which, in a death-agony more vigorous than I would have expected of him, transported me into the shadows, I fell, victorious—abandonedly and infinite . . . ."[20] "Nothingness," he found, "was not an end but a point of departure."[21] It is this profound sense of departure I wish to call attention to. It informs the whole of Jack's work. It is fundamental to our thought and experience and Jack's effort is a performance and interrogation of it. By it, we head directly into the ghosts and deaths of his work. Foucault has called this a freed sense of origin and a "ceaseless rending open."[22]

It comes as an extremity of experience that the image of man himself has become invisible. As public manhood goes, one either covers his eyes or disbelieves. I'm told that there is too much grief here for thought to handle. But I have already spoken of a new and different courage, which I believe Jack's work reflects. If a truer discourse, re-forming in our hearts, does not so simply belong to our poet or to the man in the street, perhaps it composes another to which he is tied:

> . . . rejecting not only psychologism and historicism, but all concrete forms of the anthropological prejudice, we attempt to question afresh the limits of thought . . . . Perhaps we should see the first attempt at this uprooting of anthropology—in the Nietzschean experience: by means of a philological critique, by means of a certain form of biologism, Nietzsche rediscovered the point at which man and God belong to one another, at which the death of the second is synonymous with the disappearance of the first, and at which the promise of the superman signifies first and foremost the imminence of the death of man . . . . It is no longer possible to think in our day other than in the void left by man's disappearance. For this void does not create a deficiency; it does not constitute a lacuna that must be filled. It is nothing more, and nothing less, than the unfolding of a space in which it is once more possible to think.[23]

In this effort to follow the pattern of Jack's concern and to throw it out there, so to speak, among the thinkers and writers of our time, as Jack ultimately wanted it in his last years, after the San Francisco scene no longer nourished his work, the passage above helps me articulate the qualities of independence, separateness and renewed thought, which belong to this work. It also brings me to think over the importance of Nietzsche to his thoughtfulness. Jack pored over Nietzsche during his first years in Berkeley and referred to him often in conversation. He was amused by it and drawn to it, though it was not his way to become theoretical. There he found the fundamental description of the lyric voice, which had defined the extent of the poem's concern, and his dissatisfaction with it, and he also found the extreme question, who or what is speaking? I think it was Yeats' interest that first drew him to Nietzsche. Certainly the duplicity of *A Vision* holds a special place in his poetic learning. Or it was part of that natural erudition which Jack used without wearing it like too much jewelry. Or there was something in Nietzsche that met his recognitions—that the apocalyptic in modern thought has already happened. In this sense, we have been spoken and begin to speak again. The insistence of Jack's work that the closed "real" of our thought is invaded draws all my attention. Another passage from Foucault lets us see the extremity, the extraordinary, the strangeness and ghostliness of it:

> . . . it becomes apparent, then, that the death of God and the last man are engaged in a contest with more than one round: is it not the last man who announces that he has killed God, thus situating his language, his thought, his laughter in the space of that already dead God, yet positing himself also as he who has killed God and where existence includes the freedom and the decision of that murder?
> . . . it is the death of God that he speaks, thinks, and exists . . . .[24]

This is most particularly difficult when, as Foucault has been at pains to show, it is also the death of himself, where he stops. This is an edge of thought and it is perilous—just where Jack worked. How odd! No American poet, as a friend said, was more at home with America—its laughter, its baseball, its ordinariness, its quick, turning language. If we follow the whole of Jack's narrative through, we are led to the last poem he wrote at the end of *Book of Magazine Verse*. Addressed to Allen Ginsberg, it ends in the image of a combining heart followed by a line of multiple meanings—"People are starving." The North Beach story of the meeting behind the poem is this: Allen arrived at Jack's table in Gino & Carlo's Bar and said he'd come to save Jack's soul. Jack replied that he'd better watch it or he'd become a cult leader rather than a poet. This is a very limited view of Allen, doubtless. But the key to it is given in the poem—"One hundred thousand university students marching with you. Toward / A necessity which is not love but is a name." The final aspect of Jack's work is in this—that the reader participates in the meaning of the poem—that the poet is only one voice alongside another—that the poetic reopens words into an action. As readers we may move back into the work to find the structure of paradise in *Heads of the Town up to the Aether*, the noise of the god-language in *The Holy Grail* with some sense of a reopened language. It is curious that the contents of the word god, whatever they were, come alive in an unmediated way—the place and power of evil, the shit of the world, the manliness perched in it, and finally the universe as an aspect of that which is so other than oneself, unknown and entering the heart.

At the center of a poetry of this order, there is a *perilous act*, which is of the nature of thought itself.[25] The man in the poem becomes an incident in his own narrative—an image within the action. Poetry, as a beginner's thought, is elemental to this by modes of image. Poetry is also at the end of thought as description and logical structure, where it proposes a dynamism of thought and experience, which I can only place in the largest terms as a commotion between the visible and the invisible. I have looked everywhere for a description of this dynamism and found little outside the philosophers I've used here and the texts of a few poets. Yet, I don't think I'm wrong in saying that our time has brought many into the necessary watchfulness. An affirmation of what I wish to say is going on comes oddly, against the grain, out of the 18th century with

Vico. It is in Vico that I found an argument for the relation of poetry to "the qualitative and dynamic structure of the primordial moment," to which we inevitably return.[26] It is Vico who points to the "unemployment of aesthetics" and to language as a focus of inner and outer experience. One scholar of his thought summarizes it for us neatly. Vico attaches a dialectic or dynamic of language to the indefinite and indeterminate, which shadow our sense of the definite and determinate. The "finite spirit" becomes "only as it generates concrete and specified forms of presence."[27]

> This open or indeterminate presence, the indefinite nature of man, in Vico's words, is not to be thought of as in any way actual or pre-existent with reference to the concrete process of the life of the finite spirit; it is wholly immanent to that process and, in itself, without form. Under this aspect, it bears the character of absence rather than presence, but absence which is pregnant with presence . . . . Thought is the active generation of presence; it is speech . . . .[28]

Vico bases an entire theory of poetry and myth upon this, and in so doing, brings us back into the density and commotion of our words. Words are the curious foundation of all nameless, active possibilities—friendship, love, and public space. It was Vico's proposition to recover logos by considering it fable or myth and he defined this logos as "true narrative."[29] This issue is basic to contemporary poetics and within our troubled sense of what a narration is, Jack's serial form is a major contribution. At the edge of the map.

As a poetry of this order had to face the displacement of poetry and imagination from the "real" in everyday thought, the peril of it reties the heart and the mind and this begins in strangeness and a near madness. I do not mean to say that Jack was mad, one could depend on his intellectual reasonableness to the end, but he did know a dynamism of thought and feeling that is at the edge. It is worth reminding ourselves of the job every poet faces to replace imagination in public thought where it means the invented, the made-up, the idealized, the untrue. "You just made that up!" Perhaps this context can best be summarized by a passage from a leading critic, so that by contrast the crisis in Jack's work and its closeness to life may sit there to challenge us. I take this passage from a good book on Jack's favorite master, Yeats. (Jack repeatedly said during his last year that nobody read Yeats right.)

Think of modern aesthetics, with politics half in mind. The single article of faith which goes undisputed in the Babel of modern criticism is the primacy of the creative imagination. It bloweth where it listeth, indisputable and imperious, it gives no quarter. In extreme versions, it concedes no rights to nature, history, other people, the world of natural forms is grist to its mill. It is strange that we have accepted such an authoritarian notion in aesthetics while professing to be scandalized by its equivalent in politics. The poet is free to deal with nature as he wishes, whatever form the imposition takes. The point is not answered by saying that a political act has immediate consequences in the lives of ordinary people, while an aesthetic act is merely virtual, and affects nobody. What is in question is an attitude to life, whatever we wish to say further about the relation between attitude and act. The freedom conceded to the poet's imagination is fundamental in European Romanticism, represented accurately enough by Coleridge. The modern understanding of imagination assumes that order is imposed upon experience by those exceptional men, the few, capable of doing so: that it is natural for such men to do so, as an act issues from prior capacity. It would be possible, I suppose, to devise an aesthetic which would consort with a democratic politics, but no such aesthetic has flourished in modern literature. If you start with the imagination, you propose an élite of exceptional men; their special quality is power of vision. The relation between this élite and the masses is bound to be a critical relation, and it is likely to proceed by authority.[30]

I won't stop to express my amazement. I recognize it as the common teaching and it is reflected in some contemporary poetics. It has not been true since Coleridge, rather than because of him. It is not true to the imaginative structures of those poets, Pound, Yeats and Lawrence, whose social authoritarianism does trouble us. For criticism, it is a kind of counter to that discourse which made a peripherality of the poetic act. A let's-make-up-for-it routine. The notion goes something like this. The poetic can only be a persuasive dressing-up of a system or a grid of meanings. It is then only a disguised discourse. The poetic, where it breaks out of the ordinary discourse and is either too elemental or too visionary, will have a life of its own and be true to itself. This transcendentalism has not been built out of a "coexistence of man and world." The aesthetic, which has everything to do with the consciousness of perception, then becomes an untied beauty. We're up there! On the contrary, Coleridge in *On Poesy or Art* is clear that the poem is a "proceeding." And, to name only one other from the "guilty" period, Keats' negative capability is suggestive of a discipline which contradicts such imposition.

The view that Coleridge sits behind this mess must be reconsidered and we can better do it now with Owen Barfield's

brilliant book, *What Coleridge Thought*, in hand. He makes it clear that Coleridge argued two forces which "took the place of the exclusively physical base presumed by the educated opinion of his day, and of our own, to lie at the foundation of the world." These "contrary forces . . . are real and not mere logical opposites . . . . They are 'two conflicting principles of the Free Life and the Confining Form.' " They can be "grounded neither in a thing nor in an abstraction."[31]

> Every power in nature and in spirit must evolve an opposite
>
> as the sole means and condition of its manifestation; and all opposition is a tendency to reunion. This is the universal law of polarity or essential dualism promulgated by Heraclitus, 2000 years afterwards re-published and made the foundation of both logic, of physics and of metaphysics by Giordano Bruno.[32]

To which I add the passage from *On Poesy or Art*:

> Remember that there is a difference between form as proceeding, and shape as superinduced; —the latter is either the death or the imprisonment of the thing; —the former is its self-witnessing and self-effected sphere of agency.

Coleridge's tracing backward is not unlike the contemporary poetic effort. Blake in his practice can take us further than Coleridge, but my point is nearly made. Coleridge's argument then in a few phrases: "polarity is dynamic, not abstract"—"a living and generative interpenetration"—"where logical opposites are contradictory, polar opposites are generative of each other"—"the apprehension of polarity is itself the *basic act of imagination*"—it is not a matter of "a picture of bodies already formed."[33] Out of this polar structure comes Coleridge's argument for the imagination. The dynamic or process of it contrasts sharply with the authoritarian imagination credited to him. In fact, that authoritarian imagination is a fabrication of a discourse that doesn't believe a word poetry has spoken. There is, however, a true authority in the handling of the process and the performance of the intelligence of it in public space. One finds Coleridge extending the dynamic to argue the conditional aspect of nature and spirit, that they are antitheses and so tied in thought and experience. In such a dynamic, neither nature nor spirit is consumed in one's needs, but they do act into another manhood or courage. This "lost Dynameis"[34] turns, as Barfield notices, toward modern field theory and a physics of energy.[35] The poetic practice in these terms opposes

the view that the life one leads is "a mere ens rationis or creature of discourse.' "[36] It is more likely that Jack came upon this "flowing boundary" in Poe rather than in Coleridge, but the state of American reading of Poe is so bad, except for the breakthroughs of William Carlos Williams and Richard Wilbur, that it is easier to establish the point in Coleridge, where Poe found it.

With this discussion of the displacement and replacement of poetry in the public space, I have meant to draw attention to the political aspect of Jack's work and to its cost.

In the modern age, literature is that which compensates for (and not that which confirms) the signifying function of language. Through literature, the being of language shines once more on the frontiers of Western culture—and at its center—for it is what has been most foreign to that culture since the sixteenth century; but it has also, since this same century, been at the center of what western culture has overlain. This is why literature is appearing more and more as that which must be thought . . . .[37]

As Jack worked to build the poetic, he found no rest. Nothing held firm. The flowing life of that work drank him up and left us with the text to face. This, I think, is the key to our care. The work without the author. We cannot turn back to the author, but to his work which is full of care and nearly overwhelmed.

At least we both know how shitty the
world is.

I find his work rends something open. A coexistence begins again. This is the work of a "new morphology," a new consciousness of form, our own included. It is close to the chiasma, the entwining I have already borrowed from Merleau-Ponty, which, he says, "must subtilize the sense of polarity," "of western dualism" and "of revolutionary contraries."[38] This is part of his view that the "sense of bipolarity" does not return us to an anthropomorphism, which has clothed the real. And I suppose it is only the clothing that is worn out. This accounts for his "anti-psychologism," which translates the "coexistence of man and world" into only a "psychic reality." "And the Jungians and the Freudians and the Social Reformers all leave satisfied. Knowing how the trick was played." (Jack) Nothing, Merleau-Ponty's friend and editor points out, will "deliver us from the necessity of thinking the world as if it had to be thought for the first time."[39] As I read

Jack, the presence and absence of this coexistence haunt my thought. His care is stunning and stands against the aesthetics of only-feeling or ideality. Here, Merleau-Ponty's suggestion of a *wild-logos* is useful. I have already called attention to the wildness in Jack. This wildness is "not opacity, but dimensionality." We study the operative in language which "opens upon the things."[40] The imaginary in this philosopher's admonition and recovery of its place is "not simply the production of mental images, but the 'baroque' proliferation of generating axes for visibility in the duplicity of the real."[41]

> Perception is not first a perception of *things*, but a perception of *elements* (water, air . . .) of *rays of the world*, of things which are dimensions, which are worlds, I slip on these "elements" and here I am in the *world*, I slip from the "subjective" to Being.[42]

Alongside this realism of the world and its presence, I place a passage from another of Jack's key authors, Rilke:

> We are bees of the invisible. Nous butinons éperdument le miel du visible, pour l'accumuler dans la grande ruche d'or de l'Invisible . . . . At the work of these continual conversions of the beloved visible and tangible into the invisible vibrations and excitations of our own nature, which introduces new vibration-frequencies into the vibration-spheres of the universe. Hence different elements in the cosmos are only different vibration-exponents. We prepare for ourselves in this way not only intensities of a spiritual nature but also, who knows, new bodies, metals, nebulae and constellations.[43]

Which returns us to the invisible interchange of *After Lorca*. This book is, as I have said, the preface to the whole of the final work. The details of it propose a special relationship with Garcia Lorca and then move 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, dependent upon a sense of the game. The challenge may be accepted to search through Lorca to know what is Lorca's, what is Jack's, what is translated or changed, which is which. I've done this and wind up in the joining. The book proposes, instead, the lack of separation, that one poet is the other. These poems and this poet continue the recognitions of the other poet and his poems. The game may be reopened and played 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 by 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 his book. What I have called the "flowing boundary." The active, vital order of the poems is directive to 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 sentimentalities or dogmas. These first terms are concomitants of that necessary loneliness Jack points to late in the narrative of *After Lorca.* It is not simply his loneliness. 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 re-enactment. If it is a game, that is because games like chess and 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? It's 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 ecstasy is. It has to do with consciousness and skill, a board and pieces, a beginning and an end." In the conversation a few weeks before his death, when he was accused of being more interested in truth than in poetry and replied, "I'm more interested in messages," he then 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 in the sounding of the cosmos, which poets have called the music of the spheres, which becomes in this work: "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 this poetry with courage—face into the intelligence of their action, as we act into and are acted upon.

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 special 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 emphasizes 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 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 as a translation of sanctus spiritus. And the part of the usage of the word in Jack's work reflects the battle of the highest contemporary poetry to recognize 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 Jack's words, until he is finally gone at the end of 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 afterlife, which draws out part of the significance of the title *After Lorca.* This life is somehow perched in the disturbance of language without giving it up to language. This significance, which is taken up again in a different way in *Heads of the Town up to the Aether* 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 of meaning. 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. I think of that careful use of the word in Donne's poems, which early on drew Jack's attention. It is curious that nothing, not even 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 is the turn of meaning, where meaning does not rise above us, but is alive:

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

Jack's dictation, which develops from a "spiritual discipline," as I have noted, or from what he described as an emptying out in order to let something speak through his language is not difficult to follow. It is at times frightening. The possibility of it, he derives from Yeats, who derived his from Blake. It is not the derivation that makes it alive, but the

practice. His language appears to speak by itself or it is used by another order. The poet's voice reappears in a polarity that forwards the entire range of what is not exactly himself. The landscape is not then a picture postcard, but the narration of an action in which the poet and reader are imaged. The visibility of it is measured against the vast other that language also holds. As the "perilous act" begins at the gates of existence, the measuring is all important. The result is to push the reader to undertake another order of interpretation in which the double is caught and a measurement of that doubleness followed: so

> In art the construction of a work out of earth creates a world; "the work grasps and holds earth itself in the openness of a world." The building up of earth and the exhibition of world are . . . the two basic tendencies of a work of art. [44]

The openness then is the problem. It is near a madness as we learn to live in it, renewed and changed. Contemporary poetics has called this open-form and it has meant by this the necessity of world and the re-opening of discourse. The openness may well be a joy or a terror. It has cost a few poets their lives. Jack argues this in *After Lorca* before he knew where he was going: "A really perfect poem has an infinitely small vocabulary," rather than a discourse:

> It is very difficult. We want to transfer the immediate object, the immediate emotion to the poem—and yet the immediate always has hundreds of its own words clinging to it, short-lived and tenacious as barnacles. And it is wrong to scrape them off and substitute others. A poet is a time mechanic not an embalmer. The words around the immediate shrivel and decay like flesh around the body. No mummy-sheet of tradition can be used to stop the process. Objects, words must be led across time not preserved against it.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Most of my friends like words too well. They set them under the blinding light of the poem and try to extract every possible connotation from each of them, every temporary pun, every direct or indirect connection—as if a word could become an object by mere addition of consequences. Others pick up words from the streets, from their bars, from their offices and display them proudly in their poems as if they were shouting, "See what I have collected from the American language. Look at my butterflies, my stamps, my old shoes!" What does one do with all this crap?
>
> Words are what sticks to the real . . . . They are what we hold on with, nothing else. They are as valuable in themselves as rope with nothing to be tied to.

Nothing could be clearer or more tensed. The principle of translation in *After Lorca* proposes that one must reenact life again, that it is the same as it was, but with a difference. Lorca's poetry corresponds to and with Jack's. When the poems are translations, there are subtle shifts—as in the first poem in the book, where Lorca's "infinity" is translated to endlessness and his "spikenard" to seaweed. The extraordinary issue of that first poem, that the imagination wounds or cuts holes in a white and endless invisibility, that the image is a piece, but not the whole of it, begins the large dimension of *The Collected Books*. The doubleness. A friend has noted that the book ends with a Postscript, rather than a translation, a radar which signals appearance and disappearance. I note that the death in these poems is an imageless point at which the acted visibility meets and enters the other which articulated it. It is part of an extreme ghostliness in language itself. It includes the sublime, the terrible and the uncanny, as these enter the work to measure and guide the work's real. This dimension is an aspect of *the where* of this work, which I have tried to follow—where the body will not and cannot stop, even in its desires—where the false manhood of the old discourse does not hold the conversation. There is here an experience of *dictation*, now opening to all of us, beginning where the manhood leaves off—at the open end of what we are. This is, I think, a beloved that may begin in sexuality, but it will end in the world—a vocabulary for it, a task, and a chemical necessity. The dictation or emptying out allows the unknown, as it is experientially and technically present to what we know, to enter and use the words, where it has been all along—strangely. The dictation resides not in the shambles of a life, or in a pathology, or even in an unhappiness, but in the heart. It is as if the old mythologies were right that said the mind resided in the heart because it is so tied to speech and breath. An opening of the mouth. It is also true that the heart will *unwind off the spool*. That is part of our openness and our invisibility. The curiosity will remain, and in one sense, the Work is always incomplete, because it contains the double men once again have met. The context I have drawn was meant to show this as *a task* and *a reparation*. How difficult and costly that the double should have been forwarded in just this way—the discovery of a finitude, where a man or a poet thought he found only himself, the displacement of language to a dead picture that turned out to be only his discourse—and there, just there, in the

double of his disappearance and appearance, the form opened again. I don't think we know exactly what is there. The form is in this sense ghostly—a past that moves to a point and reopens. But then our sense of form will perhaps never close again, but rather a discourse compose itself to hold a disclosure.

There is a madness at the center of it. It is not a mental illness, that inability to get through and to last in the midst of the shit. It is not a biographical defeat, where a man gives up or makes the wrong choice.

> . . . a work that seems to drown in the world, to reveal there its non-sense, and to transfigure itself with features of pathology alone, actually engages within itself the world's time, masters it, and leads it; by the madness which interrupts it, a work of art opens a void, a moment of silence, a question without an answer, provokes a breach without reconciliation where the world is forced to question itself . . . . The madness in which the work of art is engulfed is the space of our enterprise, it is the endless path of fulfillment, it is our vocation of apostle and exegete.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Henceforth and through the mediation of madness, it is the world that becomes culpable (for the first time in the Western world) in relation to the work of art; it is now arraigned by the work of art, obliged to order itself by its language, compelled by it to a task of recognition, of reparation, to the task of restoring reason *from* that unreason and *to* that unreason. [45]

Here I have tried to speak of a poetry at the gates of existence, like Nerval leaning over the silence of the young soldier, so that "suddenly the mouth is simply a capability, as well as words are a capability, they are not the ultimate back of it all."[46] Olson comes to mind in his little book which argues that poetry and truth flow together—I suppose because both are alive—"the life that one lives is practically the condition of the poetry, rather than the poetic life being a thing in itself."

> an actual earth of value to
> construct one, from rhythm to
> image, and image is knowing, and
> knowing, Confucius says, brings one
> to the goal: nothing is possible without
> doing it. [47]

In Whitehead's sense, we have only the *Event* of the real.

Jack's work so carefully brings us into time—an appearance and a disappearance, as in *Billy the Kid* or *Fifteen*

False Propositions Against God, where one finds the terrible, joyful mysteries—where we enter into dissolutions and propositions of their meaning in order to reopen the real. I think the rage of it drank him up. The beautiful book *Language* opens with an argument which I've already noticed: "No one listens to poetry." A few weeks before he died, in a lecture entitled *Poetry and Politics,* he argued that no poem had ever influenced the political realm. This was an old subject with him and was the title of the course he wished to give in the college he planned with Robert Duncan and myself—White Rabbit College to counter all other colleges. We didn't. There was a kind of despair in his voice that day, which expressed the truth of our condition. Suddenly, I remember a conversation following a reading. A young man commented, "It's beautiful, Jack." And Jack replied sharply, "I know it's beautiful, what does it mean?" Here, at the end of an argument for his context and for the size of the reparation in his work, I notice the fundamental "transformation" he proposes—it is reflected in the simple love of his final poems and the warning of them in *Language*:

> We make up a different language for poetry
> And for the heart—ungrammatical.

We may, I think, take from his work what he gave his heart to.

> But dream is not enough. We waking
> hear the call of the
> In-
> Visible world
> Not seen. Hinted at only. By some
> vorpals, some sea-lions, some scraggs.
> Almost too big to get used to, its
> dimensions amaze us, who are blind to
> Whatever
> Is rising and falling with us.

(*Language*)

This suggestion of the constellated forms in his work comes forward again and again. I have tried to situate it in the conditions of contemporary thought, where Jack was proudly at work. Thus, I have thrown the balance to the conditions of his poetics. Whatever my purpose, his language is re-situated in the being of language. It is the primary language and in this sense ungrammatical. Here I am reminded of what seem useful

phrases from a source I do not remember—his proud sense and restless thought are "mosaics of the same elemental particles that compose the dark, drifting clouds of interstellar space"—a "conformation of the primordial space-time field." I have not forgotten the interplay or game of the temporary and the permanent with which Jack's book opens (*After Lorca*). And I move to his sense of a "perfect poem" in that same initial book:

> A really perfect poem (no one yet has written one) could be perfectly translated by a person who did not know one world of the language it was written in. A really perfect poem has an infinitely small vocabulary.

This is a statement of a re-situated language. And I recall one of Jack's favorite poems, Lewis Carroll's *The Hunting of the Snark*. In that exaggeration used when one means it, he said it was the greatest metaphysical poem in the language and so pointed to its laughter, its wariness and scariness, the language always at the edge of a meaning.

> In the midst of the word he was trying to say,
> In the midst of his laughter and glee,
> He had softly and suddenly vanished away—
> For the snark *was* a Boojum, you see.

Jack "no longer speaks of identity but of correspondence." I may take this backward into his by no means haphazard erudition—to his love of Virgil's 4th *Georgic* (Orpheus and bee-keeping) which he willfully confused with Ovid's *Art of Love*, book I, on the basis of a single phrase, "et e medio flumine mella petat," and let him seek honey in the middle of a river, turned by Jack in an early poem, which plays on the name of a young man, into "Mela, Mela peto in medio flumine," I seek honey in the middle of a river—or to his fascination with St. Augustine's definition of a sacrament as a "verbum visibile" or the early time he spent over Calvin's *Institutes* in which God is entirely Other, or to his general reading in the Renaissance, his notice of Poe's *Eureka* and Baudelaire, his care for Rimbaud and Cocteau. This only suggests his reading and will not help much. The positioning of his language, however full of strangeness, is at home where he was. The "spiritual discipline" he proposed as part of the practice of poetry is involved in the "purely spiritual world of images." Jack's funny instruction to the young, "read the far-out stuff," has been true since the crisis

in Shelley's work. It is rereading meant to resituate. In this meandering paragraph, I am reminded of a scientist's remarks in a similar range.

> . . . it is a definite religious attitude toward the universe that finds expression in reserving for the earth, the dwelling place of mankind, an absolute prerogative among all other bodies of reference. It is the attempt to uphold within the realm of objective reality the idealistic position, according to which I am the center of the world disclosed to me. But here where the recognition of the thou is required of the ego and the ego has to be extended to include the whole of mankind, the idealistic position of necessity takes on a historical and cosmo-theo-logical character. This is the reason why the book of Copernicus became a turning point of world conception; and in this direction Bruno drew the conclusions with stormy enthusiasm. The supreme act of redemption by the Son of God, crucifixion and resurrection, no longer the unique pivot of world history but the hurried smalltown performance of a road show repeated from star to star—this blasphemy displays perhaps in the most pregnant manner the religiously precarious aspect of a theory which dislodges the earth from the center of the world. (Bruno had to pay for it at the stake.) "The statement, found equally with Kepler, Galileo, and Descartes, that it be foolish to think of the purpose of the universe as lying in man," says Dilthey . . . "consummates a complete change in the interpretation of the world. As these thinkers were led to an immanent teleology finding its expression in the harmony and beauty of the universe, the character of the hitherto prevailing Christian religiosity was changed." And Goethe . . . "Perhaps never before has a greater demand on mankind been made; for what did not go up in smoke with this acknowledgment: a second paradise, a world of innocence, of poetry and piety, the testimony of the senses, the conviction of a poetical-religious faith. Small wonder then that one did not want to let go of all this, that one opposed in every conceivable manner a theory which involved for him who accepted it the right and the challenge of a hitherto unknown, now undreamed-of, freedom of thought and elevation of mind."[48]

This, if I may ask a reader to play it back among the considerations of a context in this essay, will go far to explain why I have simultaneously quarrelled with a naive realism, the reduction of experience, and the idealism of a certain poetics. And it will, perhaps, help clarify the reason I have not fallen back on the history of mysticism, however much we are reminded of it, or on such explanations of the tradition of dictation as Gwendolyn Bays' *The Orphic Vision*. I do not mean that Jack knew Bruno—the translations and the obvious scholarly sources are too recent. But certainly he had followed through the challenge and disturbance of the others. He had a poet's entrance to science, professional in the computer methods of studying language (see his article published with David Reed, *Language*, July-Sept., 1952, which becomes the

cover of Jack's *Language*) and otherwise broad and taken in terms of its implications for experience. One of his last projects, of which there is no record, involved a fascination with Pythagorean numbers. I have wished to establish the context of the polarity in his work.

I wanted to go at the size of Jack's work rather than leave it to the simple statement that this is a high poetry. I also wanted to go against the grain of what we have usually meant by aesthetic concern. In so doing, I have departed from Jack's simple, marvelous language.

Dear Lorca,

These letters are to be as temporary as our poetry is to be permanent. They will establish the bulk, the wastage that my sour-stomached contemporaries demand to help them swallow and digest the pure word. We will use up our rhetoric here so that it will not appear in our poems. Let it be consumed paragraph by paragraph, day by day, until nothing of it is left in our poetry and nothing of our poetry is left in it. It is precisely because these letters are unnecessary that they must be written.

It is difficult to insist upon the truth of poetry. There are simpler reasons perhaps. He was always sitting in the midst of poetry. An ungrammatical disturbance. At his table in the bar—night after night—predictable only in that. Most of us noticed the way he wove poetry in and out of what we were. In The Place on Grant Street, 1957, he set up a "blabbermouth night." It was, when I heard it, a kind of wonderful, funny jabberwocky that was spoken, full of a language alive to the tongue of anyone ready to stand up there. Later, at Gino & Carlo's on Green Street, things changed. George Stanley once commented that it was the Beatles that did him in. There is some truth in this. Another sound entered. You could not be heard at the table. The language game that was played was partly destroyed. Even in Vancouver, B.C., which had given him a brief sense of beginning again,

The Beatles devoid of form and color,
but full of images play outside in
the living room.
Vancouver parties. Too late
Too late
For a nice exit.

(*Poems for the Vancouver Festival*)

And what of the heart? Returning to my point earlier of the fallen words, that word too is part of the ruin. It is only-feeling, a need, a privacy, a hole in the earth without volcanoes. It is also that broken thing at the center of our poetry, where it discovers courage or some other shape of its acts.

It then becomes a matter of not
Only not knowing but not feeling.

(*Poems for the Vancouver Festival*)

The body, as a friend said, is continually mistaken for the heart. My friend called this the "occultation of the heart." There is a struggle to pull the words back out of definitions and sentiments that stop them. One has the peculiar sense that the body is neither material nor spiritual. That it is the alembic itself. Any unity or disunity takes place there. For now, one may take the curious entangling I've argued apart and make it elemental. The issue then is a meeting of the elementals and intelligence. I borrow a Blakean word to say they fold. I seek here to draw attention to a poetry at the gates of existence because it is there that the polarity begins, elemental and inescapable. This is the necessary laying of oneself alongside another content, which brings form and keeps it alive—the double of language, where it holds to both reason and unreason, thought and unthought. Jack seems so important here among the poets who have moved to find what is also there at the gates—a discourse, recomposing, which also happens to be a "motive of things that we are not." And that begins a retying of intelligence, the folding, which is not an imposition of a discourse, fixed or silent. The folding contains that constellation which commands us. The ceremony or composition of it is the disclosure of a new discourse, and it is the public poem.

I place here the visionary range in Jack's work. It is so tied or caught in the web, there is a chance some might forget or miss it. He never quite allows it to float out of his hands, or rather he keeps it so tied to the doubles out of which it was formed that it is more expected than there. There is a long preparation for its possibility, which the reader may follow in the *ceremony* of these books, from *After Lorca*,

The universe falls apart and discloses a diamond
Two words called seagull are peacefully floating
out where the waves are
The dog is dead there with the moon, with the
branches, with my nakedness
And there is nothing in the universe like diamond
Nothing in the whole mind.

to the *Book of Magazine Verse*:

Start with a baseball diamond high
In the Runcible Mountain wilderness.

This is one of that last run of poems, written in the spring of 1965. The diamond has come to be part of the skill of the game. It relates to Jack's view that neither baseball nor poetry are for amusement. They disclose something—perhaps only a virtuality. The rules are invisible, the players a visibility. They are commitments to that "disordered devotion to the real," with which I began. Here the heart comes into play. It may be lost there, given up to the disorder, or it may lift. The traditional word for this lifting, this first outward, is love. It is a reason that physical love and its opposite repeatedly suggest to us another fold of what we know. It may indeed take the intricate structure of books like Jack's *Language* to remind us that love is a function of knowledge, a word we have used for its process, and never simply a designation of an acceptance or convention of seeing one another or of looking privately out at the world. The structure of *Language* is an interleaving of his life with a belovèd and a world. The hold or discovery of meaning is a tension of the alphabet from the opening section, "Thing Language" to the closing "Graphemics." These enclose the "Love Poems."

But that the syntax changes. This
is older than towns.
Troy was a baby when Greek sentence
structure emerged. This was the real
Trojan Horse.
The order changes. The Trojans
Having no idea of true and false syntax
and having no recorded language
Never knew what hit them.

The deadness of the discourse haunts that book and the indefiniteness of a missing discourse begins a partial definition of the ghosts in the poetry:

> Two consonants (floating in the sea
> of some truth together)
> Immediately preceded and / or followed
> by a vowel.

One notices the voice of the poet in that book is promissory of a composition:

> For you I would build a whole new
> universe but you obviously find it
> cheaper to rent one. Eurydice did
> too. She went back to hell unsure
> of what kind of other house Orpheus
> would build. "I call it death-in-
> life and life-in-death."

The cost of a language. Perhaps the clearest expression of this may be found in the angry words from *Language*, unfairly addressed to Robert Duncan and George Stanley. Now, these words leave the personalities of that occasion behind and are addressed to our constantly retreating sense of the origin of our language means:

> "If you don't believe in god, don't quote
> him," Valery once said when he was
> about ready to give up poetry. The
> purposefull suspension of disbelief
> has about the chance of a snowball in hell.
> Lamias maybe, or succubi but they are
> about as real in California as night-crawlers
> Gods or stars or totems are not game-
> animals. Snark-hunting is not like
> discussing baseball.
> Against wisdom as such. Such
> Tired wisdoms as the game-hunters develop
> Shooting Zeus, Alpha Centauri, wolf with
> the same toy gun.
> It is deadly hard to worship god, star,
> and totem. Deadly easy
> To use them like worn-out condoms
> spattered by your own gleeful, crass,
> and unworshiping
> Wisdom

"Which," he then says, "explains poetry." "Distances / Impossible to be measured or walked / over." The "toy gun" suggests the dead discourse and the "distance" an experience in the depths of a discourse which recomposes and is not behind us in the complex metaphor of a god-language of original wisdom. The poetry at the gates of existence is then a poetry involved in the composition of the real. Following this suggestion of a folding real, one does not stop the love of the final poems. That would too easily turn back to the test of the physical event, its success or frustration, and become either an attribution of oneself or of the desired belovèd, a relation and a behavior, just where this love involves us in the profound interdependence of visibility and invisibility. For Jack's work, as for all others in which love is a commotion of the real, love includes an anticipation of "something that is still absent."[49]

At the end of *Language*, we wind up in "the dark forest of words" and finally in what is left—"Words, loves." At the end of *Book of Magazine Verse*, the final poem takes issue with love—that it is not oneself—that it is a commotion and information of the real, and an enlargement that has political consequences. The poems often, and I leave the detailed recognition to the reader, question and play out the distance between divine and human love. The word love, which may be taken softly and personally or as the difficult understanding that it is in Jack's work, proposes an entangling that is the mode of the real. This is curiously reflected, for example, in *The Holy Grail*.

> The grail is the opposite of poetry
> Fills us up instead of using us as a cup
> The dead drink from.

This is perhaps Jack's harshest statement of the poetic issue—that the poetic is fundamental to our sense of meaning and to our recognition as we perform the real with which this essay began in the poem of the broken heart. In that book, the storied imprisonment of Merlin for a foolish love is jammed with the voices of the prisoners of our own time, as the words of *Die Moorsoldaten*, which Jack remembers with a mistake in the German, rise out of the text.[50] At the end of the "Book of Merlin," the magician is called to the phone: "Carefully now will there be a Grail or a Bomb which tears / the heart out of things?" Merlin is followed by Galahad, who, as Jack said in

conversation, when he found the Grail in all his purity, took it away with him. In Jack's book, he "casually, ghostlessly" leaves the story. The book opens with the fool and the fool killer, a figure Jack claimed was present in the folklore of Southern California, but as he used it, the figure is also informed by the sharp fear of Helen Eustis' mystery story, *The Fool Killer*. The double nature of the fool fascinated Jack and one could hear it when he talked about the nature of the Fool in the Tarot pack—the man at center of the commotion of the higher arcana and yet also outside it. *The Holy Grail* ends with the "Book of Arthur":

> A noise in the head of the prince. Something
> in God-language. In spite of all this
> horseshit, this uncomfortable music.

In the poem, even a word doubles to move from one meaning to another: "A noise. / It annoys me to look at this country." The voice of the golden head there strikes one—it is as if we had come to the edge of something—"Time future," the golden head says, "Time present. Time past." The movement of all time into a past draws attention, stops there and then reopens. It is useful, but not necessary in the way Jack uses and renews his sources, to recognize the original mixture of laughter and the uncanny which goes with the story of the magical head. In Robert Greene's play, the alchemist, Friar Bacon, has labored seven years to make the brazen head that will give him impossible knowledge—notice that each of the sections of *The Holy Grail* has seven parts, whatever you wish to do with that. On the day the head is ready to speak, the Friar, worn-out, has to rest and he asks his apprentice, Miles, to wake him if anything, anything at all, happens. Miles does not wake him in time, thus in some sense becoming every one of us:

> [*A great noise is heard*]
>
> *The Brazen Head:* Time is!
>
> *Miles:* "Time is"! Why, Master Brazen-head, have you such a capital nose, and answer you with syllables, "Time is"? Is this all my master's cunning, to spend seven years' study about "Time is"? Well, sir, it may be we shall have some better orations of it anon. Well, I'll watch you as narrowly as ever you were watched, and I'll play with you as the nightingale with the slow-worm; I'll set a prick against my breast . . . . ("Nightingales were supposed to lean against a thorn when they sang.")
>
> [*Again a great noise*]

The Brazen Head: Time was!

Miles: Well, Friar Bacon, you spent your seven years' study well, that can make your head speak but two words at once. "Time was." Yea, marry time was when my master was a wise man, but that was before he began to make the Brazen Head. You shall lie while your arse ache, an your head speak no better. Well, I will watch, and walk up and down, and be a peripatetian and a philosopher of Aristotle's stamp. What, a fresh noise. Take thy pistols in hand, Miles.

The Brazen Head: Time is past!

[*Lightning flashes, and a hand appears that breaks down the Head with a hammer*]

This destruction of what we might have seen informs the whole of Jack's book.

But there is at the edge of this work, as I have already suggested, another folding of the intelligence of the real. It is, where it occurs, the public performance in words of the composition and disclosure of what is traditionally called paradise. It is not without tension because it is a fold of the known and the unknown, and has the sense that in thought and experience hell is only the outside of heaven. I think of Pound's paradise which is not artificial. Heaven and paradise—more words among the ruins. Jack's suggestion that he is dealing with paradise comes from his long standing description of *Heads of the Town up to the Aether,* the book in which the principle of dictation is first fully and consciously articulated. The parts of it, he said, have the structure Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. "Homage to Creeley" becomes a hell of meanings, everything slips or slides into nonsense and is haunted by meaning and laughter. "A Fake Novel about the Life of Arthur Rimbaud" becomes a book about visibility or time and its messages issue from a strange post-office, the dead letter and the dead letter officer. "A Textbook of Poetry" is, he said, a kind of paradiso. This will strike any reader as odd unless he catches the point that Paradise is always held in the presence and absence of paradise. That is to say it is alive and virtual.

St. Elmo's Fire. Or why this will be a textbook concerning poetry for 20,999 years. Almost a lifetime.

I chicken out at the edges of it and what doesn't come through to me at the edges of it isn't as if angels met singing or any of that business.

We are all alone and we do not need poetry to tell us how alone we are. Time's winged chariot is as near as the next landmark or busstation. We need a lamp (a lump, spoken or unspoken) that is even above love.

St. Elmo's Fire was what was above the ships as they sailed the unspoken seas. It was a fire that was neither a glow or a direction. But the business of it was fire.

That book closes with the voice that will be a ghost and with the voices of ghosts—at the deep-end that is the outward of paradise. The "I" becomes a "we" among ghostly voices:

What I am, I want, asks everything of everyone, is by degrees a ghost. Steps down to the first metaphor they invented in the underworld (pure and clear like a river) the in-sight. As a place to step further.

It was the first metaphor they invented when they were too tired to invent a universe. The steps. The way down. The source of a river.

. . . . . .

We do not hate the human beings that listen to it, read it, make comments on it. They are like you.

I know no poet who more clearly brings the doubleness forward and at great cost because it is experienced as a simultaneity of life and death. It is seen not as his alone, but as a large and cultural extremity in which meanings fall to be remade again. I have described this as the disappearance of manhood and wish to draw attention to Jack's concern for a flowing, incomplete sense of form. The basic question—who is speaking?—turns of the gossip, the baseball forecasts and the meannesses—turns into a world.

There are aspects of memoir and problems of exegesis in this work, which have not been the concern of this essay. Indeed, they suggest another occasion. For example, the first reading of the completed *Heads of the Town up to the Aether* began with Johnny Horton's rendition of "The Battle of New Orleans," Jack seated forward with a chair directly behind him. Jack in a baseball cap. And from the chair behind him, I read the "Explanatory Notes." Jack's erudition was very great, but it is so tied to the life of his language and experience one hardly notices. The title, *Heads of the Town up to the Aether*, becomes a direct image, but it is taken from a book on the Egyptian

gnostics and is the title of a Gnostic work.[51] The words found or discovered in a book are one level of a dictation. Here they rang a bell, though there is no systematic relation in Jack's poem to what we know about the contents of that mysterious book. However, the source and the title open for us Jack's concern with the extremity of thought common to all gnosticism, an opposition of light and dark and extensions of these in metaphor and experience. Jack's *Heads of the Town* also draws attention to what he called the surrealism of the poet, the under-the-real which comes forward when the fixed-real dissolves. In Jack's work, this is, of course, the mode of an operational language distinct from a language which stops the world. And it is attached to an Orphic methodology of great complexity, which the book keys by way of dedications to the figures of Cocteau's *Orpheus*, which Jack knew from the film and from the Poet's Theater production of the play in Cambridge. These are subjects in themselves. They could be made academic, but they do involve the reader. I think also of Jack's use of the phrase attributed to Tertullian and of his interest in St. Anselm's ontology in *Book of Magazine Verse*—Credo quia absurdum (I believe because it is absurd, drawn from the long tradition of Tertullian's thought in *De Carne Christi*, Certum est quia impossibile est, it is certain because it is impossible) and Cur Deus homo? (why God became man?) in which Anselm's credo ut intelligam (I believe in order to understand) is hidden. In Jack's terms, I might play with this last phrase and say, I disbelieve in order to understand. Belief and disbelief. They are aspects of the narrative of a composition of the real which begins in the presence-absence and known-unknown flowing around us in a basic duplicity of the real. "Take a step back / and view the sentence."

It is as if Jack too had said,

> I don't want to eat my poem but I want to give my heart to my poem. And what is my heart to my poem? My heart is what isn't my ego. To give one's self to one's poem is also to risk being violated by it.[52]

Thus, I have gone to the ranging of this work. I have also put aside for now the beginning of it all in Berkeley, 1945/46. What I called the fateful meeting of Jack, Robert Duncan and myself. That fatefulness is not simply a reading from my own desk. Jack sometimes gave his birthdate as 1946. In order to

speak of this I would have to go at the respect and distance between Jack and Robert. It still seems to me important that, having met Duncan at an anarchists' meeting, Jack brought three typescripts of Duncan's poems, a present of something really found. Then we all met. For both Jack and me, Duncan was a man of knowledge in poetry. He was older and certainly surer. He offered information, ground, and belief. Out there, as Duncan once said, we made a poetry up out of wholecloth. I would have to account for the ground of Duncan's poetics in the idea of the poet as hero and in Emerson's *Representative Men*. Jack is closer to Poe. I think of *Eureka* where the universe is an invisible heart that is also your heart, where you begin again each time. Jack knew Poe's work well: I notice the one piece of direct evidence in *A Book of Music* in which the opening poem picks up a line from Poe's *Marginalia* on the indefinite. McLuhan has noticed the importance of Poe, who, in contrast to Emerson, "first worked out the rationale of this ultimate awareness of the poetic process and who saw that instead of directing the work to the reader, it was necessary to incorporate the reader in the work."[53] It is Poe "who solves crimes by a method of artistic perception."[54] When the distance and dissonance between Duncan and Jack appears, it involves what I have described here as the context and purpose of language. I don't think the debt to Duncan for the ground of poetic belief he gave ever disappears in the work of either Jack or myself. But that is another occasion. Once years ago, full of laughter, Jack said we were three immortals. I think he had Tu Fu's wonderful poem, "Eight Immortals of the Wine Cup," in mind:

Ho Chih-chang rides his horse as though he were sculling a boat, And is quite willing to tumble into a well asleep.

The Prince of Ju-yang had his three gallons before going to Court; Yet a passing brewer's cart makes his mouth water And his heart long for a transfer as Prince of Wine Spring.

Ten thousand coins a day our Second Minister spends On the drinks he takes as a whale the waters of the sea; Yet says he, "I like the unmingled and avoid the split."

Ts'ui Tsung-chih—a young man handsome and carefree—With bland eyes lifts his cup to the blue skies And stands like a sparkling jade tree in the wind.

Honoring an embroidered Buddha, Su Chin is a vowed vegetarian; But how he enjoys his lapses whenever he is drunk with wine!

A hundred poems Li Po will write for a gallon And will sleep in a wine shop in the market of Ch'ang-an. Disobeying the Imperial command to board the barge, He says, "Your Majesty's servant is an immortal of the cup."

Give three cupfuls to Calligrapher Chang Hsü, Even before dignitaries he will throw off his cap And draw clouds on paper with his brush.

Chiao Sui will need at least five gallons to be awake—To startle the company with eloquence in discussion or debate. [55]

Jack was so West a man. Whatever we may say of the wise, symbolic East, it is from this shore West of us.

I have left in suspense, hoping to lead my reader through to this point, Jack's last words. I return to the scene in the hospital, the alcoholic ward of the San Francisco General Hospital one afternoon during the two weeks he was there before he died. I have already said his speech was a garble. He could manage a name once in a while. Otherwise there were long-runs of nonsense sounds. No words, no sentences. That afternoon, there were something like a dozen friends around his bed, when it became clear that he wished to say something to me. By some magic I can't explain, everyone left to let it be between us. It was odd because I didn't ask them to leave and Jack couldn't be understood. Their affection simply accounted for something inexplicable. Jack struggled to tie his speech to words. I leaned over and asked him to repeat a word at a time. I would, I said, discover the pattern. Suddenly, he wrenched his body up from the pillow and said,

My vocabulary did this to me. Your love will let you go on.

The strain was so great that he shat into the plastic bag they'd wrapped him in. He blushed and I saw the shock on his face. That funny apology he always made for his body. "(When I saw you in the morning / My arms were full of paper.)" What he wished to say seemed incomplete. He tried again, frowned, and failed to put his head and his words together again. He saw something in the empty corner. I suppose I will never stop going over those two sentences. I dream about them and grind my teeth. The first is so succinct to what I've said in all these pages

at the end of his work. The second is not, as has been said, a recantation, but rather, I think, an admonition and a notice of danger. It is true that one could just go on in a love that rides over the consequences of this art. I have not.

At the end of a twenty-year friendship, it is endless. That is how I wind up here. If you ask me why I loved him—

Si on me presse de dire pourquoy je l'aymois, je sens que cela ne se peut exprimer, qu'en respondant: Par ce que c'estoit luy; par ce que c'estoit moy.

There is a continuing recognition here that I share with others.

11:20 A 6/12/13
Cowichan ferry
to Horseshoe Bay
from NANAIMO
(Departure Bay)

1. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, XII.
2. Vancouver Lecture I, tape, transcribed and published in *Caterpillar* XII, July, 1970.
3. The possibility of this analogy was drawn to my attention in A. Lingis's preface to Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible* (Northwestern, 1968), pp. xlix-l: "serial music, Merleau-Ponty points out . . . , discovers the ability of any tone in a series to function as an individual sounded in a field and as the dominant, the field tone, the level at which the melody plays."
4. M. Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 175.
5. C. Lefort in his "Foreword" to Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. xxviii-xxix.
6. Here, I am informed by Henry Corbin's discussion of the stranger and the guide in *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital* (Pantheon, 1960), p. 16 ff.
7. Lingis, op. cit., p. liii.
8. See Merleau-Ponty's sense of visibility as it is discussed by Lingis, op. cit., p. 1 ff.
9. Charles Olson, "Review" of Eric Havelock's *Preface to Plato*, (*Niagara Frontier Review*, Summer, 1964, pp. 43-44).
10. O. Paz, *Marcel Duchamp or The Castle of Purity* (Cape Goliard, 1970).
11. M. Foucault, *The Order of Things* (Pantheon, 1970), pp. 342-343.
12. The same, p. 311.
13. The same, p. 310.
14. The same, p. 313.
15. The same, p. 313 ff.
16. The same, p. 331.
17. The same, p. 326.
18. The same, p. 298.
19. The same, p. 306.
20. Cited in G. Michaud, *Mallarmé* (New York University Press, 1965), p. 47.
21. The same, p. 53.
22. Foucault, *op. cit.*, p. 334.
23. The same, p. 342.
24. The same, p. 385.
25. The same, p. 328: ". . . thought, at the level of its existence, in its very dawning, is in itself an action—a perilous act."
26. A. R. Caponigri, *Time and Idea* (University of Notre Dame, 1968), p. 164.
27. The same, p. 151.
28. The same, pp. 150-151.
29. The same, p. 178.
30. D. Donoghue, *Yeats* (Fontana, 1971), pp. 121-2.
31. O. Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought* (Wesleyan, 1971), pp. 30-31.
32. Cited by Barfield: Coleridge in *The Friend*.
33. Barfield, *op. cit.*, pp. 36 and 43.

34. The same, p. 11.
35. The same, p. 138.
36. The same, p. 41, citing C. S. Lewis's *Studies in Words.*
37. Foucault, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
38. See Lefort's discussion of this in his "Foreword" to Merleau-Ponty, *op. cit.*, p. xvii.
39. The same, p. xviii.
40. The same, p. liii.
41. The same, p. liii.
42. Merleau-Ponty, *op. cit.*, p. 218.
43. Rainer Maria Rilke, letter to Witold von Julewicz, Nov. 13, 1925, *Letters*, vol. 2 (Norton, 1948), p. 374.
44. R. E. Palmer citing Heidegger in his *Hermeneutics* (Northwestern, 1969), p. 138.
45. M. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* (Pantheon, 1965), pp. 288 and 289.
46. C. Olson, *Poetry and Truth* (Four Seasons Foundation, 1971), p. 47.
47. The same, p. 12.
48. H. Weyl, *Philosophy of Mathematics and Natural Science* (Princeton, 1949), pp. 98-99.
49. H. Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi* (Princeton, 1969), p. 155 ff.
50. *Die Moorsoldaten*

Wohin auf das Auge Blicket*
Moor und Heide rings herum
Vogelsang uns nicht erquicket*
Eichen stehen kahl und krum*

Wir sind die Moorsoldaten
Und ziehen mit dem Spaten
Ins Moor

Auf und nieder gehen die Posten
Keiner, keiner kann hindurch
Flucht wird nur das Leben kosten
Vielfach ist umsäunt die Burg

Chorus: (same)

Doch für uns gibt es keine Klage
Ewig kann nicht Winter sein
Einmal werden wir froh sagen
Heimat du bist wieder mein*

Dann ziehen die Moorsoldaten
Nicht mehr mit dem Spaten
Ins Moor

(Lines marked with asterisks are those picked up in *The Holy Grail*)

Wherever the eye looks
Moor and heath all around
No bird-song quickens us
Oak-trees stand bare and crooked.

We are the Moor-soldiers
And dig with spades
Into the Moor

Back and forth the guards go
No one, no one, can get thru
Flight would only cost one's life
Many times is the fortress surrounded

Chorus

Yet we do not complain
Winter cannot be forever
One day we will joyfully say
Homeland you are mine again

Then the Moor-soldiers will dig
No more with spades
Into the Moor.

(Jim Herndon's version and translation of the song as Jack would have learned it.)

51. J. Doresse, *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics* (Hollis, 1960), p. 50.
52. A. Artaud, "Revolt against Poetry" in J. Hirschman, ed., *Artaud Anthology*, (City Lights Books, 1965), p. 101.
53. M. McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (University of Toronto Press, 1962), p. 276.
54. The same, p. 277.
55. Translated by William Hung in his *Tu Fu* (Harvard, 1952), pp. 51-52.