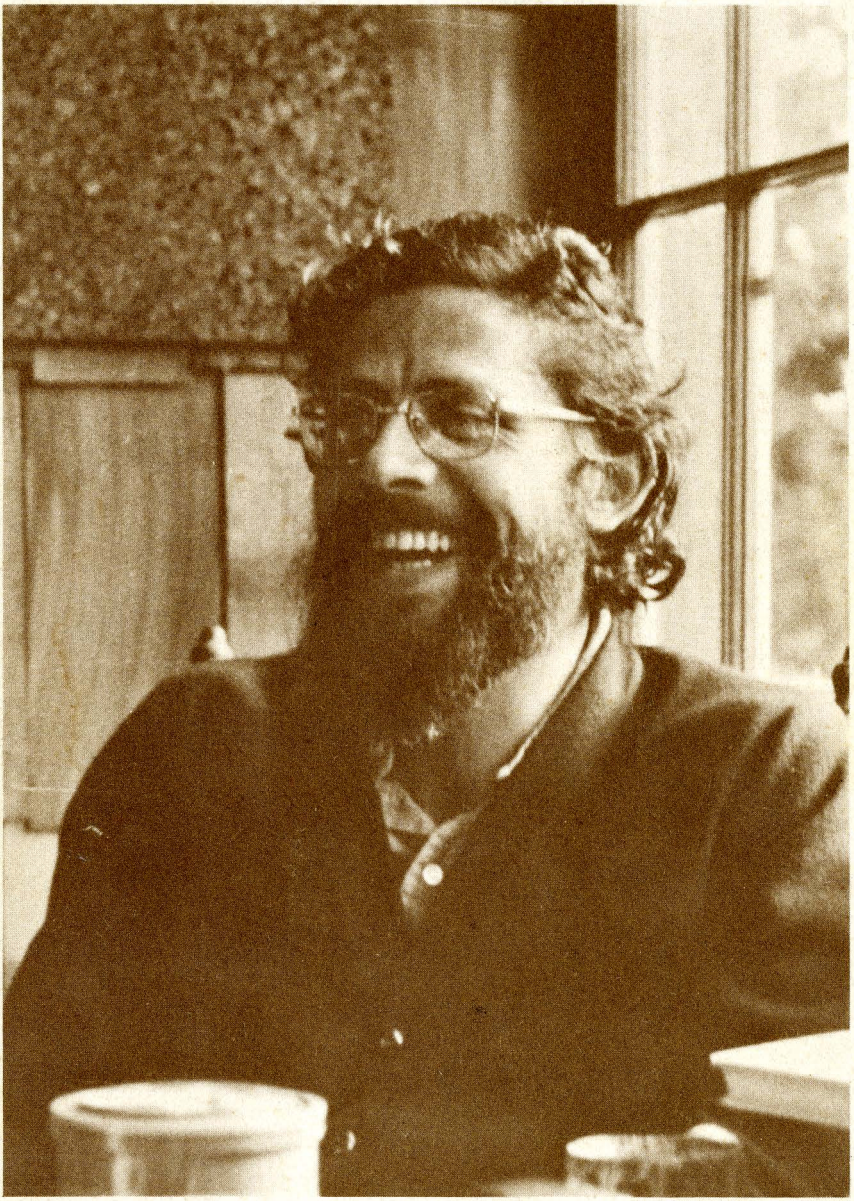
THE CAPILANO REVIEW



I like to think that this is not a full stop at all, it's a point at which you almost circumambulate. You have to circumambulate that point before you can go on.

— VICTOR COLEMAN

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THE CAPILANO REVIEW

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always i am saying i will remember always there is forgetting & a glimpse of the truth always the i says always knowing death is near more & more certain things become clear more & more i begin like this

i

wish once a long time ago i said to myself i wish nothing more this is where it all gets stored up gets released i tell tales

i sing songs i listen to the wind to what goes on

each day begins the same each day i see a little more of the truth i go back again i stand by the stage where the band had stood she is waiting for me i ask her to dance she leads me in towards the centre she leads us all around the rim we dance to the tune the band had played

the dance hall stood where the roads came together we travelled down them somewhere we were there she had tied her hair away from her face she was graceful i held her hand remember the band the tune it was too soon she spoke to me from somewhere saying there is nothing to remember i remembered there was nothing there

i smiled at her she cried i gazed up at the sky laughing & walked away

if we danced i don't remember

if we danced i wasn't there i am sick or tired or laughing all the time if it was night there was no moon i thot i remembered sunshine i smile & look away she raises her voice

everything's fine my daughter brings me the paper i sit up in bed & begin i cannot stand or walk toward the door she stands in the doorway her red dress stirring in the wind

i

am always forgetting now now remembering is easy or hard i am far afield he is like that i am like him

i wanted to

begin at the beginning somehow its all the same or so different it doesn't matter some days i can't begin some days the anxiety is too great i push the pen away saying not today gazing out the window i want to cry or scream or sit by myself quietly dreaming that is not quite true i don't know what to do the anxious feeling is too large inside me i try to fix it with a name the same feeling as today a man brought me my pen & looked at me i looked away murmuring not today no letting my eyes close praying

now i am tired my

eyes close for awhile i'll open them again i'll pick up my pen the anxious feeling will be a little less i'll begin

i wish

often i don't wish at all any more once i wished all of the time now there is wishing from time to time soon i will never wish again

every morning i begin sometimes i don't begin at all not today i say & will not pick up my pen my father points his finger at me he calls me a bad boy i am sad or angry or full of joy i hit the table with my tiny spoon my mother brings me the red bib & the pen i pick up the paper & begin

once it was

all different once i danced with ease around the room the crowds thinned as we moved watching us we danced all night to the same tune i asked the band to play it again finally there was noone left in the room but me & her dancing i threw them money & they played i threw them money till finally there

was no more money & no more band & no more tune i whistled in the empty room we danced around to the tune i whistled it is all so strange it will never be the same

every evening i walk down the road toward the dance hall every evening i approach the young boy digging there his hair is blonde he wears a sailor cap upon his head i ask him who he is he does not answer i ask him for his name he turns away

every night i enter the dance hall every night i listen to the band she is there she isn't there i tell her i love her i tell her i don't care every night i try to memorize the tune every morning it slips away i say that but i say it wrong every morning it is gone there is no knowledge of its passing or sense that i had known it before every night is the first time every night strikes me for the first time i come walking down the road whistling the sky is a constant shade of blue or purple or there are clouds there a fog has fallen i wander in

once it was all so clear once i held her near as we danced across the floor she had stood in the doorway watching as i passed her i walked around the room listening watching the dancers as they moved later we danced in the centre then i asked her & we danced around the rim

every evening i leave my room to walk down the road every evening he is there digging in the dry earth one night she was not there or i met her earlier she came walking out of the wood she slapped me in the face i cannot remember this i think it happened someone told me later this is how it was i could not remember

once it was all so clear every morning i took out my pen & began again i would write the story as i remembered it her dress was red she wore a sailor's cap upon her head she took the toy shovel from the old man's hand & gave it to me thank you i said

thank you they said nothing would you like to walk with me i'm not going far she looked away the day was hot & still will you come with me the old man took hold of her hand i walked away

some days it is like this some days nothing comes clear i hold my tiny pen very near or dig holes in the earth with it everything seems very far away everything seems vague i think she enters my room i think she stands behind me as he names me

every evening i get up to leave or try to i cry out to her or whisper her name she forgives me she forgave i say her name over & over i write it down my fingers cramp i cannot hold the pen then i could've written it easily then everything was clear later everything became vague now i have forgotten i want to hold her near i can't remember her name

i wish i wish i could wish & believe it if only if made sense if only i could believe in maybe probably maybe will make sense maybe if will come clear maybe if i wish probably will become believable i'll get up cheerful i'll step thru the window onto the road i'll walk away i'll meet someone maybe

once it was too cold once it was so cold i couldn't leave i stayed in the room i watched the snow she lay beside me not speaking if we talked i don't remember if we talked it isn't clear it could've been winter or summer she could've been near me or far away i don't remember that day i don't remember the time later she was a line i crossed out of a bad poem later she was grown away from me later she left later she was a memory came into the mind unbidden i thot of her face it smiled later it did not smile this all

happened later some of it happened then now it is happening again

always i am wishing i could remember always i wish & the wish becomes vague if only she were here if only the road would lead there it leads there she places the shovel on the ground & looks at me

every morning i awake frightened every morning my sister brings me the pen good morning love i say she smiles good morning love she says & then

every morning i awake frightened every morning my sister brings me the pen good morning love i say she smiles good morning love she says & then

every morning i feel so anxious every morning there is a fear i am tense or unable to begin i think of words they don't make sense i write them down then cross them out i begin again

i went back one day i went back i walked up to the door of the house & went in a man was standing there his face blank i can't remember what happened then

each day begins the same every night ends the same way i begin by picking up my pen when the day ends i am dancing by myself in the middle of the room i know the next day will be the same i'll open my eyes i'll pick up my pen & then

once upon a time this story began differently once i saw everything with clarity there was no anxious feeling then there was me & her & that was all then later some things became vague i tried to make them clear this made me anxious or angry i was never sure now everything begins the same me picking up my pen & my daughter bringing me the paper again

some days things are different or seem that way i walk past the dance

hall into the town i see the house where we once lived i walk up the steps to go inside i go away i go away frowning or laughing or trying to say goodbye

so often i get up tired so often there is nothing to say sometimes she's here sometimes we make love that was all so long ago long ago she left long ago i died long ago i grew up & left her behind she is dead or old she'll never be back again i keep talking i explain

she was waiting for me at the dance hall door i took off my hat as i came in i bowed & smiled hello she said i took her hand & lead her onto the floor i signalled for the band to begin all night we danced i told her of my life of where i lived i told her everything i remembered she was quiet once or twice she smiled i remember well it all seems so clear i held her very near we made love it is all so plain i will explain again

there was a time this story began differently then there was only me & her or we later there was him then them now nothing is clear when i began first there was noone now everyone is here i cry or shout or keep my mouth shut we are too loud they are quiet he lies about his age about his name i pick up my pen & begin the explanation

long ago everything changed long ago i began a different way i me or we him grey clouds blue sky is anything the matter no blue road grey leaves please

long ago the whole song was singable now there are only words or fragments of a tune sometimes at night i dance in my room awkwardly alone i pick up the pen the broken tip my foot slips i stumble

Jack Hodgins / THE TRENCH DWELLERS

"Why the hell should I waste my life riding ferries to weddings and reunions? Aren't there already enough things in this world you're forced to do whether you like them or not? I've always hated those things, hated every last one of them, ever since I was a kid."

The problem was that Gerry's Aunt Nora Macken really did believe family was important. She used to tell how the Mackens first settled on the north slope of the valley more than fifty years ago when Black Alex her father brought the whole dozen of his children onto the Island in his touring car and started hacking a farm out of what had for centuries been pure timber land. And would tell, too, that by now there was hardly a household left in all the valley that wasn't related to them in one way or another. What Aunt Nora called The Immediate Family had grown to include more than four hundred people, three quarters of whom were named Smith or O'Brien or Laitenen though she called them all the Mackens.

There wasn't any real substitute for having a lot of relatives, she said. And the people who knew her best, this tall big-footed old maid living out on that useless farm, said that yes, she was right, there was no substitute for family.

And because Nora Macken lived on those three hundred acres of farmland which had gone back already in two generations to second-growth timber, she thought it her duty every time there was a wedding or a funeral to call a reunion of The Immediate Family the day after the ceremony. More than three hundred relatives gathered. The older people, her own generation, spent the day in the house telling each other stories about Black Alex, reassuring one another that he really was as mean and miserable as they remembered but that it couldn't be denied he was a bit of a character too all the same.

The young adults drank beer outside in the grassy yard or on the verandah and talked about their jobs and their houses and tried to find out how much money each other was earning. The children chased each other between the dead orchard trees and climbed the rickety ladders to the barn mow and fought over the sticky slices of cake Nora Macken put outside on a folding card table in the sun.

As for someone like Gerry Mack, her nephew, who was the only member of The Immediate Family ever to move off Vancouver Island, these events were more than he could bear.

When Gerry was twenty years old he very nearly married Karen O'Brien, a pretty blonde he'd gone all the way through school with. They went to movies together on Saturday nights and sometimes to dances, and afterwards they parked up the gravel road to the city dump to kiss each other until their mouths were raw. But Karen was already a member of The Immediate Family and had half a dozen brothers eager to increase the population. Gerry balked at marriage. He was the son of one of Nora's older brothers and had wished since the time he was six years old that he'd been an orphan.

Soon after dumping Karen O'Brien he met a stoop-shouldered secretary named April Klamp, who was plain-looking and very dull and wore clothes that looked as if they were bought for someone else, perhaps her mother. But she was an only child and had no relatives at all, only a pair of doddering parents who didn't care very much what happened to her. Gerry asked her to marry him a week after their first meeting and of course she accepted. No one before had even given her so much as a second look.

Some members of The Immediate Family had a few words to say about it. It seemed odd, they said, that a young man as vibrant as Gerry couldn't find himself a wife who was more of a match. Aunt Nora, too, thought it was unusual, but she'd given Gerry up long ago as not a real Macken at heart. And besides, she said, it could have been worse. He could have married a churchgoer (something no

Macken had ever done) or worse still remained a bachelor (something three of her brothers had done and become cranky old grouches as a result). "Just watch him," she said. "He'll cut off his nose to spite his face."

Gerry didn't particularly care what any of them thought. Before his wedding he took two letters off his name and became Gerry Mack. He got no argument from April, of course. She was quick to agree that having too much family was worse than having none at all. She didn't even mind that he insisted on getting married seventy miles down-island by a minister she'd never met so that it would be impossible to have a reception afterwards. And when he told her they would live on the mainland she merely nodded and said it was about time one of the Mackens showed a little spunk. Personally, she said, she'd always hated living on an island. She agreed with everything that Gerry Mack said and never took her eyes off his face while he spoke. It was clear to everyone that when Gerry married her what he got was not a separate person to live with but an extension of himself. Aunt Nora said he could have gone out and bought a wooden leg if that was all he wanted.

Though she added, "At least they won't ever get into a fight. An extra limb doesn't talk back."

Their intention was to move far inland but Gerry hadn't driven a hundred miles up the Fraser Valley before he realized he couldn't stand to be away from the coast. They turned back and settled in a little town on the edge of the strait, facing across to the Island, directly across to the valley where he had grown up. They bought a house fifty feet from the beach, with huge plate glass windows facing west, and began saving their money to buy a small boat of their own so they could fish in the evenings.

Because he was a young man with a good rich voice and many opinions, Gerry had no trouble getting a job as an open-line moderator for the new radio station. He spent the first week voicing as many outlandish ideas as he could think of and being as rude as he

dared to people who phoned in, so it didn't take long for him to draw most listeners away from the competing station. Within a month he had a large and faithful following on both sides of the strait. People didn't say they listened to CLCB, they said they listened to Gerry Mack's station.

What pleased him most was knowing that whether they liked it or not, most of The Immediate Family would be listening to him every day. He could imagine them in their houses, cringing whenever he was rude to callers, and hoping no one else realized where he'd come from, and saying Thank goodness he'd had the sense to change his name. He made a habit of saying "So long Nora" every day as a sign-off but didn't tell anyone what it meant. People in the mainland town guessed that Nora must have been his wife's middle name or else the name of a grandmother who'd died when he was a little boy. None of them ever guessed of course that Aunt Nora Macken over on the Island sat by her radio every morning for the whole time he was on and went red in the face when he signed off, and told herself maybe he was the only real Macken in the lot after all, though she could spank him for his cheek.

And that, he thought, will show you that here's one Macken who has no need for family.

Though he did not know then, of course, that even the most weak-minded and agreeable wife could suddenly find a backbone and will in herself when she became pregnant. He was sitting in the living room with his feet up on the walnut coffee table looking for good controversial topics in the newspaper when she handed him the wedding invitation that had arrived in the mail that morning. "I think we should go," she said.

"The hell you say," he said, and read through the silver script. "We hardly know them. Who's this Peter O'Brien to us?"

"A cousin," she said. "But that doesn't matter. I think we should be there for the reunion the next day."

Gerry put down the newspaper and looked at his wife. She was rubbing a hand over her round swollen belly. "What for?" he said. "I've been to a million of them. They're all the same. I thought we moved over here to get away from all that."

She sat down beside him on the sofa and put her head against his shoulder. "It's been a year since we've even put a foot on the Island. Let's go just for the fun."

He looked down into her plain mousey hair, her white scalp. She had never asked for a thing before. "We'll go," he said, "but only on the condition that we leave the minute I can't stand any more."

They took the two-hour ferry ride across the strait, and though he sat with a book in his lap and tried to read he found it hard to concentrate and spent a lot of time watching the Island get closer and bigger and more distinct. He hated sitting idle, he was a man who liked to be doing things, and right now he would have preferred to be at work in the radio station or digging in his garden.

Aunt Nora outdid herself. "Lord," she said. "This must be the best reunion ever. There are three hundred and fifty people here, at least, and listen to that racket! When the Mackens get together there's no such thing as a lull in the conversation, there's never a moment when tongues have ceased."

"They do seem to have the gift of the gab," April said.

"A Macken," Aunt Nora said, smiling, "is a sociable person. A Macken enjoys company and conversation."

Macken this Macken that, Gerry thought.

His cousin George Smith put a bottle of beer in his hand and steered him across the yard to lean up against someone's car. He said he couldn't understand why Gerry put up with all the bullshit he had to listen to on his show. He wanted to know why Gerry didn't just threaten to quit his job if people wouldn't smarten up.

Gerry noticed that the whole back yard and orchard were filled with parked cars and that against nearly every car there was at least one pair leaning and drinking beer and talking. Only the old ones were inside. April was standing straighter than he'd ever seen her, laughing with a bunch of women gathered beside a new Buick. "It doesn't matter a damn to me what they say," he told George Smith. "It's just part of my job to listen. Sometimes I tell them to go take a flying leap, but what the hell? Who cares?"

George told him he'd cleared over fifteen hundred dollars last month, working in the pulp and paper mill, most of it from overtime. He said he couldn't understand why most of the rest of them worked in the logging camp or in stores in town where there was hardly any overtime at all. It was overtime, he said, that made it possible for him to buy this here little baby they were leaning on. He pushed down on the front fender of the sports car and rocked it gently and with great fondness. Then he asked Gerry if a person working for a radio station got paid a salary or a wage, and what kind of car was he driving anyways? Gerry pointed vaguely across the yard and said as far as he was concerned it was just a way of getting places. But George told him if he got enough overtime in the next few months he intended to buy himself a truck and camper so he could take more weekends off to go fishing up in the lakes. "Everybody's got one," he said. "One time I went up to Gooseneck Lake with Jim and Harriet and there were sixteen truck-and-campers there already. Nine of them were Mackens. Even old Uncle Morris was there, driving a brand new Chev, and he only makes the minimum wage at *his* job. I told him, I said How could you afford a thing like that? and he said It pays to have a son in the car-selling business. The bastard. I said I bet you'll be paying for that god damn thing for the rest of your life."

"And he said?" Gerry said.

"Nothing," George said. "He just told me I was jealous. Ha!"

April came across the yard and led Gerry away towards a large group of people sitting in lawn chairs in a circle and doing a lot of laughing. But Aunt Nora, tall Aunt Nora with all her dyed-black hair piled up on top of her head, intercepted them and took them inside so that Uncle Morgan, who had been sick in the hospital the whole time they were engaged, could meet April. "It won't do," she said, "to have strangers in the same family." She pushed them right into her cluttered little living room and made someone get up so April could have a comfortable chair. Gerry leaned against the door frame and

wondered if old Black Alex realized when he was alive that the dozen kids he'd hauled onto the Island in his touring car would eventually become these aging wrinkled people.

And of course it was Black Alex they were talking about. Uncle Morris said "I mind the time he said to me Get off that roof boy or I'll stuff you down the chimney!" He laughed so hard at that he had to haul out a handkerchief to wipe the tears off his big red face.

Aunt Nora, too, shrieked. "Oh, that was his favourite! He was always threatening to stuff one of us down the chimney." Though she was careful to explain to April that never in his life did he do any such thing to any of them, that in fact the worst he ever did was apply the toe of his boot to their backsides. "He was a noisy man," she said, "But some of us learned how to handle him."

Then she drew everybody's attention to April and said, "As you can easily see, there's one more little Macken waiting to be born. Boy or girl we wish it luck."

"D'you know?" Uncle Morgan said. "Not one person in the family has ever named a child after Dad."

"No wonder!" Aunt Nora cried. "There could only be one Alex Macken. No one else would dare try to match him."

"Or want to," Aunt Katherine said. "Suppose they got his temper too, along with his name."

"One thing for sure," Aunt Nora said. "He'll have plenty of cousins to play with. He'll never run out of playmates or friends." Then, remembering, she added, "Of course, as long as they keep him isolated over there on the mainland I suppose he'll miss out on everything."

"It's terrible having no one to play with," April said. "Especially if you're too shy to go out making friends on your own. Just ask me, I know. At least with cousins you don't have to start from scratch. Nobody needs to be scared of a relative."

"Right!" Aunt Nora said, and looked right at Gerry. "Though there are some people who think loneliness is a prize to be sought after."

Gerry Mack knew, of course, that something had happened to the wife he thought was a sure bet to remain constant. It came as something of a surprise. After all, who expected an adult's foot to

suddenly turn into a hand or start growing off in a new direction? He brooded about it all the way home on the ferry and wouldn't speak to her even while she got ready for bed. He sat in his living room until he was sure she'd go to sleep, then he tiptoed in to the bedroom and undressed without turning on the light.

The next day he held off the phone calls that came into the station and kept the air waves to himself. From his little sound-booth he could look out across the strait. "From over here," he told his listeners, "from here on the mainland, Vancouver Island is just a pale blue chain of mountains stretched right across your whole range of vision. A jagged-backed wall between us and the open sea. Go have a look. Stop what you're doing for a minute and go to your window." He waited for a while, and thought not of the housewives who were moving to the ocean side of their houses, but of the islanders who were over there listening and wondering what he was up to.

"There it is," he said. "Twenty miles away. I bet you hardly ever notice it there, like a fence that borders the back yard." He drank a mouthful of the coffee he kept with him throughout the show. "Now those of you who've been across on the ferry know that as you get closer those mountains begin to take on shapes and change from blue to green and show big chunks of logged-off sections and zig-zag logging roads like knife-scars up their sides. And closer still, of course, you see that along the edge of the Island, stretched out along the shelf of flatter land, is a chain of farms and fishing villages and towns and tourist resorts and bays full of log booms and peninsulas dotted with summer cabins. All of it, ladies and gentlemen, facing over to us as if those people too think these mountains are nothing but a wall at their backs, holding off the Pacific."

He gulped coffee again and glanced at his watch. He thought of the mainlanders looking across. He thought of the islanders wondering what the hell he was talking about. Then he said, "But the funny thing is this: to those people over there on that island this mainland they spend most of their lives facing is nothing but a blue chain of

jagged mountains stretched across their vision like a wall separating them from the rest of North America. That continent behind us doesn't even exist for some of them. To them we look just the same as they do to us."

Then, just before opening the telephone lines to callers, he said, "What we live in is a trench. Do you suppose trench-dwellers think any different from the rest of the world?"

His line was busy for the rest of the morning. Most wanted to talk about why they liked living in a place like this, some asked him couldn't he think of a more pleasant comparison to make, and a few tried to change the subject to the recent tax increase. One long-distance call came in from the Island, an old man who told him he was jabbering nonsense and ought to be locked up, some place where all he could see would be bars and padded walls. "If you want to live in a trench," he said, "I'll dig you one. Six feet long by six feet deep." Gerry Mack hung up on his cackling laughter and vowed he would never cross that strait again.

But April told him that didn't mean *she* couldn't go across just whenever she felt like it.

So that when the next wedding invitation arrived he was ready for her announcement. Even if he didn't want to go, she said, she was heading across and taking Jimmy with her. He couldn't deprive her forever of the pleasure of showing off her son to his family. And Jimmy, too, had a right to meet his cousins. She was pregnant again and there was a new hard glint in her eye. Gerry Mack, when she talked like that to him, felt very old and wondered what life would have been like if he'd married Karen O'Brien. If that's what happened to women, he thought, you might as well marry your own sister.

When she came back she told him the reunion of course was a huge success and everybody asked where he was. She'd stayed right at Aunt Nora's, she said, and it was amazing how much room there was in that old farm house when everyone else had gone home. She'd felt

right at home there. Jimmy had had a wonderful time, had made friends with hundreds of cousins, and could hardly wait for the next time they went over. And oh yes, Aunt Nora sent him a message.

"What is it?" he said, weary.

"She says there's a wonderful new man on *their* radio station. She says she doesn't know of a single Macken who still listens to you. This new fellow plays softer music and isn't nearly so rude to his callers. She says people do appreciate good manners after all and she can't think of one good reason for you not to be at the next wedding."

"At the rate they're marrying," he said, "The Immediate Family will soon swallow up the whole Island."

"The Mackens believe in marriage," she said. "And in sticking together."

Mackens this Mackens that, Gerry Mack thought.

"Nora told me her father used to say being a Macken was like being part of a club. Or a religion."

"Do you know why they call him Black Alex?"

"Why?"

"When he was alive people used to call him Nigger Alex because his hair was so black and you never saw him without dirt on his hands and face. People on the Island never saw a real black man in those days. But the 'children' decided after his death that Black Alex was politer and what people would've called him if they'd only stopped to think."

"Well at least they called him something," she said. "It shows he was liked. It shows people noticed him. I never heard anyone call you anything but Gerry, an insipid name if I ever heard one. Pretty soon those people over there will forget you even exist."

"That's fine with me," Gerry Mack said, and went outside to sprinkle powder on his rose leaves.

But she followed him. "Sometimes I don't think it's family you're trying to get away from at all. I think it's humanity itself."

"Don't be ridiculous," he said. "If that was what I wanted I'd have become a hermit."

"What else are we?" She was on the verge of tears. "You don't let Jimmy play with anyone else's kids, none of them are good enough for you. And we've hardly any friends ourselves."

"Don't harp," he said. "Don't nag at me."

It passed through his mind to tell her she had no business going against his wishes when it came to bringing up the boy. But he was a strange kid anyway, and Gerry had always been uncomfortable with children. It was easier to let her do what she wanted with him.

When April went across to George Smith's wedding (his second) and took Jimmy and the baby with her he knew she would not be coming back. He wasn't surprised when she didn't get off the Sunday evening ferry. He didn't even bother watching the ferries coming in during the next week. The only surprise was the sight of Aunt Nora getting out of a taxi the following weekend and throwing herself into the leather arm chair in Gerry's living room.

"My God," she said. "It looks as if you could walk across in fifteen minutes but that damn ferry takes forever."

"Where's April?" he said.

The wedding, she told him, was lovely. Because it was George's second the girl didn't try to make it into too much of a thing but just as many people turned out for it as for his first. "He's got a real dandy this time," she said. "He's not going to want to spend so much time at his precious pulp mill when he's got this one waiting at home. She's got outdoor teeth of course, but still she's darned pretty!"

Gerry said George's first wife hadn't been much to look at but then George was no prize himself.

Then, suddenly, Aunt Nora said, "I think she'll be asking you for a legal separation."

"Who?" he said, stupidly.

"I told her she could live with me. There's too much room in that old house for one person. I'll enjoy the company. I remember Dad saying if a Macken couldn't count on one of his own relatives in times of trouble, who could he count on? That little boy of yours is going to look just like him." She stood up and took off her coat and laid it over the back of her chair. Then she took a cigarette out of her purse and lit it and sat down again.

"If you want to come back with me and try to patch it up, that's all right."

"Patch what up?" he said. "We haven't even had a fight."

But she acted as if she hadn't heard. "I'll tell you something, Gerry, you've got spunk. Maybe you're the only real Macken in the whole kaboodle."

"Ha."

"And if you and April patch it up, if you want to live on the farm, that's all right with me too."

"Why should I want to live there?"

"It's the family homestead," she said, as if it was something he might have forgotten. "It's where your grandfather started out. Where the family began."

Gerry grunted and went to the refrigerator to get himself a bottle of beer.

"Well somebody will have to take it over some day," she said. "You can see what's happened to the farm with just an old maid living on it. He never should have left it to me in the first place. Except, of course, it's the best place for holding family get-togethers and I know if it was left to anyone else they'd never get done."

"Look," he said. "You got her and my two kids. Three for one. That sounds like a pretty good trade to me."

"I just can't believe you don't care about those children," Aunt Nora said. "Those two little boys. No Macken has ever abandoned his own children. It doesn't seem natural."

"Natural," Gerry Mack said, and tilted up his bottle of beer.

But when she caught the morning ferry home he did not go with her. In fact, he was to make only one more visit to the Island, and that would not be until two years later when he attended his son's funeral. Aunt Nora phoned him in the middle of the day to say the boy had drowned in a swimming accident. The Immediate Family was at the funeral, four hundred or so of them, standing all over the graveyard where Mackens were buried. He'd sat beside April in the

chapel but when they got to the graveside she seemed to be surrounded by relatives and he was left alone, on the far side of the ugly hole they were putting his son in. Aunts and cousins were weeping openly but April in their midst stared straight ahead with her jaw set like stone. She appeared then to have lost all of the slump that was once in her back. Even her mousey brown hair seemed to have taken on more life. When their eyes met she nodded in a way that might have been saying "Thank you" or might have been only a dismissal, or could perhaps have been simply acknowledging she had noticed his, a stranger's, presence.

Aunt Nora, afterwards, cornered him in her little living room. She seemed smaller now, slightly stooped, getting old. There were deep lines in her face. "Now," she said. "Now do you see where your place is? Now do you see where you belong?"

He turned, tried to find someone to rescue him.

"This whole farm, Gerry, it's yours. Just move here, stay here where you belong."

And it was April who rescued him after all. She came into the room swiftly, her eyes darting with the quick concern of a hostess making sure everything was going well. "Oh Nora!" she said. "Uncle Morris was asking for you. I promised I'd take you to him."

When the old woman stood up to leave, April let her gaze flicker momentarily over him. Her complexion against the black dress looked nearly ivory. Beautiful skin. She would be a beautiful woman yet. "George Smith was wondering where you were," she said. "I told him I thought you'd already gone home."

For several years after that Aunt Nora visited the mainland every summer to report to Gerry on his wife and remaining son and to tell him all about the weddings and reunions he'd missed. April, she told him, had taken over the last reunion completely, did all the planning and most of the work. And some people on the Island were listening to him again she said, now that he was only reading the news, once a day.

But she stopped coming altogether years later when he sold the seaside house and moved in with a woman far up a gravel road behind town, in a junky unpainted house beside a swamp. She had nearly a

dozen children from various fathers, some Scandinavian, two Indian, and one Chinese, and her name was Netty Conroy. Which meant, Aunt Nora Macken was soon able to discover after a little investigation, that she was related to more than half the people who lived in that mainland town, not to mention most who lived in the countryside around it. It was a strange thing, she told The Immediate Family, but she still felt closer to Gerry Mack than to any of the rest of them. Perhaps it was because she, too, had had a tendency to cut off her nose to spite her face. Everyone laughed at the notion because of course, they said, Aunt Nora had always had everything just the way she wanted it in this world.

Nancy Thayer / THE GENIUS

She has given herself three long red welts down each side of her face. She didn't mean to give herself those welts, she didn't even know she had, it wasn't until now, brushing her hair because her husband is coming home, that she sees them in the mirror, long narrow puffs of red. At first she thinks "what on earth!" Then, remembering, earlier in the day, another fit, dragging her fingernails down her face with fierce shaking hands. It hadn't really hurt, it had been almost pleasant, a *sensation*, something getting through.

Now, though, the welts are tender to the slightest touch, like open burns. She thinks that somewhere she has a jar of face cream, or maybe hand lotion — oh, but she can't find anything. She rubs bright rouge into her face, tears popping into her eyes with the stinging pain, but when she is through she thinks the welts are not so noticeable. She lets her hair loose from its rubber band so that it hangs down on either side of her face, that will cover part of it. She will have dinner ready, she decides, she will say she wants to see something on the television, and they can sit in the dark and he will not be able to see her clearly.

And if he does see her, she will tell him — she will tell him — she will tell him she has been wrestling with the dog and the dog did it with its long nails, playing.

But no, the dog is gone, isn't she? Her husband has taken her away, hasn't he? She stands in the centre of the room, calls, "Dog?" Nothing comes.

I have a plan to murder Joyce Carol Oates and Barbara Walters. Undoubtedly they are vain, I will tell them I am writing a thesis on them, of course they will believe me, they will let me into their studies: Joyce Carol Oates' room will be book-lined, paneled in knotty

pine, dusty, there will be words lying everywhere and I'll have to brush them off a chair before I can sit down or they'll stick me in my legs. Barbara Walters will have a nicer study, with a pink and silver persian rug on the floor and little linen chairs by a clean picture window; she'll offer me sherry from a cutglass decanter. I'll sit down in their studies, and take out a pen and pad just like an eager little thing, and they'll sit down and start talking about how wonderful they are, and then suddenly I'll JUMP ON THEM! Very strong hands, I have very strong hands, I'll strangle them, Barbara Walters will be easy because she's little and she won't believe it's happening to her, Joyce Carol Oates will be harder because she knows about violence, she'll fight back, oh undoubtedly she'll fight back but I'll win. Then, when they're dead, I'll wrap a bright chiffon scarf around their necks so that the strangle marks won't show, and prop them up in their chairs so that if their secretaries peek in at them they'll seem occupied at their desks, and I'll slip out the window and run away. I'll use a false name to get the interview of course, and anyway I'm very small so no one will suspect me.

Also I will murder, in the same way, Sue Kaufman, Judith Viorst, Judith Crist. I would like to murder Happy Rockefeller but I'm sure she has guards. I won't bother with any of those movie stars, their stupidity can be their own punishment. Oh, and of course I won't touch Pat Nixon. Maybe Ethel Kennedy.

She fixes dinner but it's very difficult for her hair hangs in her eyes and she can't see. She is very clever, very clever. She has concocted a new recipe, who is her husband that he should say she's not a good homemaker, he's a bum! Very carefully she mixes: one package of instant mashed potatoes, one package of instant beef gravy with one cup of hot water, one package of thawed frozen peas, and two cups of Purina Dog Chow. Hee hee hee. Difficult to chew now, but after it's baked a bit and the gravy has softened the chunks it will be just fine. He *said* they had to save money, that she was spending too much money, well take that! He took the dog away and she had almost a full ten-pound bag of Purina Dog Chow under the sink. It has to be nutritious or the government would not let them sell it but it doesn't smell very good in the oven, maybe some Lawry's Seasoning Salt will help. She covers the top of the casserole with the orange-coloured salt.

That doesn't seem to help much either. Maybe an onion? Some tomato sauce? Cheese? Olives?

Well he'll just have to eat it anyway, she decides. She will dish it up for him and leave it sitting on the kitchen table, then she'll go sit in the living room, in the dark, watch her television program. She'll say she's already eaten some of it. Fine. But she had better eat something now or she'll get hungry and then he'll wonder why she's eating something else instead of the casserole. She goes to her closet, opens a shoebox, takes out one of the fifty-cent bars of Hershey's Chocolate with Almonds which she has hidden there. She sits on the edge of her bed and eats the chocolate. It is *so* delicious. Her husband had said to her that she is going crazy, but she's read plenty of books, she knows that when you go crazy you stop eating and you get skinny and run-down looking. Well, she's hungry all the time, and eats lots of stuff, stuff her husband doesn't even know about, she's even gained weight in the last few weeks, so there!

I don't really mind about men, they're supposed to succeed in life. It's the natural thing to do, succeed in life, for every man except my husband, that is. But for women it's not natural, so it's not fair. Why should Luck just come along and sweep Nancy Dickerson, Germaine Greer, Shirley Chisholm, Margaret Mead to success? Why should it ignore me? I'm every bit as good, I know I am, just listen to this poem I composed:

zshdhbithecirodp
zshdhthruekcope
maketheisothisodt;
mememememememememe!!!

My husband stopped the newspapers and my subscriptions to *Time* and *Life* and *Vogue* and *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Newsweek* and *Redbook* and *The Atlantic* and *Saturday Review*. I was angry at first, but now I know he did the right thing, I don't get so angry now. It used to be a mess, those pictures torn up all over the floor and of course when I would come down the next morning and see them still there, a piece of Gloria Steinem's eye sticking here, a piece of her dress over there, of course I'd get angry all over again.

But let me just tell you this: I was president of the French Club in high school, and my senior year there I played the lead, Mrs. Savage, in "The Curious Savage," and for four years in college I made straight A's, straight A's, now who do you know that can beat that? That's a pretty wonderful record if you ask me. Since then I've been waiting for the right thing to come along, but it hasn't come along, and let me tell you this: I'M GETTING TIRED OF WAITING!

She hears him drive in the garage, come in the back door. She is in the living room watching her television program, the special one that is on all of the channels at all hours of the day or night, constantly re-running.

She calls out, "Hi, Honey!" in her most cheerful voice so he will know that everything's okay.

He comes in to the living room, bringing a wave of cold fresh air with him. He leans over, kisses her on her forehead. "How have you been today?"

"Oh fine, just fine. Your dinner is on the kitchen table. You go on and eat it, I've already eaten and I just want to sit here and watch this good tv show."

He says quietly, "you know the tv set is broken." She does not answer. He gives her a long look, sighs, then goes back into the kitchen, takes his coat off, and throws it over a chair (she can see him through the doorway). He picks up his plate, looks at the food on it, brings it up to his nose, sniffs at it like a dog.

I am watching this good television show, my favourite. It is about a very wonderful woman who is practicing: she JUMPS on her big collie dog and strangles it. Her husband takes the dog away to put it in a hole; but that doesn't matter; now I know. If I can strangle a fighting collie dog, I can strangle a woman. Or a man. Or anything. My hands quiver and twitch with their strength.

Janice Harris / THE CAPRICE HOTEL

At 8:15 or so, Sal, the neighbour across the dog trails gave me a lift to work, as she did every morning. She is small in height, massive in everything else: stomach, arms, rims. I don't know what she really thought of me; I cared then. With Talkative Enigma at my waist, we'd trot into the hotel lobby, Sal at once to call for attention and "good morning" from Rita stalking the front desk. While signing in, she would then occupy Rita with the weather — in vain, Red Coiffure was disinterested. Sal's chagrin at having to work, interspersed the conversation. "What would we do without rent, Rita ha ha." "Don't come to me with your problems, I've got enough of my own," smirked the reply. Sal and I climbed the stairs to the linen room. " . . . 43 years old and behaving like that." "What do you mean Sal?" "Should be ashamed of herself . . . " "Don't worry," I tried to be attentive, "at least we live the gospel life."

"I guess Anne is in." We looked down the candelabra-lit hall to a door that was ajar. "You know Jan," subterranean now, "I'm thinking of taking two weeks off and going to Prince George with Steve." (So it would be just another day, full of intrigue, contraposto; but how to reconcile this fact in the dense morning air still trapped from the week before.) Sal swung her handbag for a bit. We both became lost in the revery beneath our feet: green, yellow star, orange blob, splash, green, yellow ish, threadbare, loose lino squares — the linen room. "Hi girls." "Gooood morning Anne." "And how are you both today?" "Just fine." "You know it's damn chilly out there, how am I ever going to get into the garden when this cold weather is coming on?" Prerequisite "hmmmm" and "isn't it awful Sal," then the "went out with Johnny and Violet the other night" blah blah. The climate warmed, working at Anne perched before the desk. There were the

last slips to fill out, as well as the flush to fill the soft, white cheeks. Sal lit a cigarette. Eight thirty. I hung up my cardigan, searched for comfortable sandals and glanced over to see Anne's white hair falling out of its upward brushes; one, two, Sal's shifting on her shoes.

Private things, thoughts, curled up with the smoke, (Prince George by Monday, the next 12 days to visit the kids, relax), sometimes just colours, (Violet's moo moo she is making for her Hawaiian party). I jacked my elbows beside Sal's on the vinyl counter and made 'still lifes' all over the place: Plastic Detergent Bottle and Dried Grey Whip Mop; Folded Red Cloths in Wooden Shelves . . . These smokey indulgences were invaded as Madge, Birgit and Dotty filed in. The routine rally of "Hi everyone, how are you this morning . . . Jan, you look tired . . . Have a good two days off Dot? . . . " scaled the room back into a long shallow receptacle. A communal eight thirty eight. "Oh, and here's Jeanne," her green coat buttoned and holding a straw bag. Woven Berries and Leaves. Lips. Sal levered her elbow every so slow often to flick the ash. I looked at the reach around Birgit's waist and wondered about her equally fat German husband. Beside her, like a token Ionic column, Dot — classic, peaked, still half asleep.

With toast crumbs around her mouth, Madge shoved in between Sal and me, lit up one, and began to talk about Donna's house in a new subdivision. "So she likes it then, out there in Pitt Meadows?" volunteered Sal. "Sure, it's a nice split level and they're the only ones in the block with a tree." "I wouldn't mind giving her some of the shrubs from my yard ha." "She and Art fought for that lot, just because of the crazy tree." Anne, who had left earlier, came back to find us with keys already chained to the centre button hole and counting the rooms on our lists. "Sorry that there are 17 rooms girls but Sheila rang me up last night and said she was awful sick. Left me in a proper mess again she has." "Poor Sheila," loudly tutted Dot, Her Best Friend, "Sick!" Anne's next pitch was: "And Mr. Mason says he wants the chandeliers in the bathrooms cleaned. Now, I don't expect you to do them all today. Yes Madge, I know you've been doing the balcony windows." White Tufted Sparrow Hawk added, "ah, girls, we're a bit short of pillow slips and facecloths, so go easy until Ray comes around with the linen."

Jeanne was the first into the quiet hall; she hastened to the storage room to secure her well-stocked buggy. Even in times of drought, Jeanne would trundle through without being affected. Sal said there was something fishy about her eyes, always darting. Birgit and Madge followed her quick figure over the crawling yellow and orange stars; lingered by the glass door before climbing the stairs. Dot, Sal and I filled our buggies on the main floor. D's section had the bridal suite. In it, she would take a nap everysooften on the couch (the hallway door closed) and listen to the bodies fling themselves into the water poolside before dozing off. "Anne, could I have some more stationery please." (I was almost ready to push out.) Dotty was folding her facecloths with an elsewhere look that occupied her whole face, her nutted eyes . . . o i got nothing to do but look at you, nothing no nothin to do 'cept ('member) nutting in may, all that day just nuttin to doo oo o. Anne poked some envelopes and postcards into my hand — confidentially — because we are running short and you know Jan, with the change of management . . . "OK Anne, sure thing." (That's what I always said to her perpetual dilemmas.) "OK Anne, sure thing." As I stuffed the square glossies onto my buggy, I could hear above me buggies being jostled down the hall; now I was rolling my one beneath them — except for Dot, who began at her own leisure.

They were already stationed around the table on fold-out chairs when I came into the linen room for lunch — Dot nearest the sugar, Sal and Madge smoking by the stacks of towels. Birgit came in with the kettle. "Hi Janitz, you feal lak a goot cup of tea?" "Sure Birgit, that sounds really nice." I set up my chair by Sal and Madge, while Jeanne watched us from her end of the table. It was then that I heard about it, everyone else knew.

"You see Jan," Madge drew on her cigarette then stared past Sal, inwardly. "Yes," I urged. "I don't think this kid will take it like us who have been through it before." She had abruptly reclaimed Sal's eye and only smoke was between them. "Well, it was this funny smell down at my end this morning. Because I didn't know what it was, I sprayed plenty of the lysol around. But it damned got stronger." Stirring her tea with one hand, Dot rested her head on her other and seemed not to listen. "I thought it was coming from 247, so I knocked on the door. No one answered." Madge picked up her lunch bag with a languid hand and opened it. "In fact, I knocked lots of times

but every time, nothing." Tuna and celery. Thick, very wide, she must lift one with two hands to get it into her mouth, opened, the mouthful became two hypnotic red lips. "So I went down to Anne to ask her if she would phone 247 and see whether the guest wanted his room done up or not. When she rang, there was no answer; then she came up with me and, boy, was the smell ever getting strong." Now I was aroused, with questions, feelings, under the surface, a tight eerieness. "And?" "She knocked and opened the door. This man was stretched out on the cot, dead, with a pile of vomit beside his head on the pillow. His feet and legs were white and she, well, she just turned white too." Sal muttered fiercely, "Anne shouldn't have gone in; it was a stupid thing to do." (But god, the vomit I kept on thinking.) "I just shiver to think of what I saw even from the door." And I hadn't known this man, known if he had been of the living flesh and not some cold, grey stuff, its smell which permeated the nostrils, that all the doors and windows had to be opened so that it could disappear into the flux of air chained to the parking lot at the back of the hotel, hemmed in between a few straggling trees and lincoln continentals. We heard steps measured into the linen room — George, with a can of paint and a brush. "Hiya George and what are you going to?" asked Madge. He grunted, "I gotta paint 247." Sal stabbed her cigarette out in a glass ashtray. Lunch was over.

"Oh! I must get going and finish my rooms. Sally, Dot, are you coming?" As they left to go down to their buggies, I followed George, the dangling can brush soft bristle held aloft, through the muted candelabralight. At the entrance to the room, George paused, then went in. Now I was passing the room, aware of the cold flooded autumn air and the faint smell of the completed ritual. As I went back down to my buggy I heard the noise of maids returning to theirs, we were rolling out . . .

Audrey Thomas / GREEN STAKES FOR THE GARDEN

His voice came first, by itself, propelled by the lazy afternoon which twitched like a sleeping dog and made a quick, spasmodic statement of how it felt about having the summer stillness interrupted; irritated, it flung his words out of the deserted street and over her garden gate — "Lady can I cut the grass?"

Long before, or what seemed long before his head and neck declared themselves over the top, tense and with as yet unexplained desperation, as owners or desperate keepers of the runaway voice which was saying again, perhaps had not paused at all except to take a breath — "Lady can I cut the grass?" Faded red plaid flannel shirt (and some part of her mind thinking flannel on an afternoon like this!) and faded skin, too, grey, sidewalk, city-coloured; but the eyes quite different, gas blue, flaming with desperation as the gate swung forward under his weight and a part of her mind thinking, even then, we really ought to have a latch, as he shot, stumbled, flung himself across the grass as though he, the keeper of the runaway voice needed no apology or warrant or by-your-leave in his precipitous rush to recapture such a desperate and dangerous thing. "Lady can I cut the grass?"

She was startled and not startled, said automatically "Mind the teacups" without raising her voice and hardly her eyes after that first, automatic, glance — behaved much as she would have behaved if one of the children had rushed in slightly off-balance with excitement, explosive with news of a dog-fight, a dead bird or the imminent possibility of an ice-cream cone, "Mind the teacups," in her professional mother's voice. So that for how long? five, ten, fifteen seconds they remained silent, their bodies confronting one another, but she not yet acknowledging his existence as stranger and intrusion, holding determinedly to the scene in the garden before his abrupt and apocalyptic entrance, thinking to herself if I don't look maybe he'll go away, while her companion who had been stretched out lazily in the other deck chair sat up with a "What the hell?" And at the sound of *that* voice, slurred, rough, as though wakened abruptly from a sleep,

she became aware, really aware, of the stranger's presence and regarded him dismayed, not because she was really afraid but because his precipitous entrance had indeed smashed something as delicate as her grandmother's flowered cups and saucers; and the thread she had been spinning so carefully between herself and the young man sprawled beside her dangled now forlornly from her fingers (and a part of her mind said isn't that just my luck!)

She adjusted the chair two notches forward so that she could sit up straight and with one hand reached forward, palms outwards, towards the stranger, warning him that he had come (gone) quite far enough. With the other she unconsciously pulled her skirt below her knees.

"Are you accustomed to come barging into other people's gardens uninvited?" (Yet even as she said it she knew she had adopted the wrong tone, could sense rather than see the young man look at her, puzzled as though she had picked up, somehow, the wrong script. This made her even more resentful; why should *she* be in the wrong! While the strange man simply stared at her as though she had replied to him with gibberish.)

"Listen," he said, "I gotta have work. This grass here," he made a wide proprietorial sweep with his arm, taking in the tiny garden. She noticed his nails had been bitten down so low the tips of his fingers extended, naked and greyish, a quarter of an inch; so that he looked deformed, spatulate — with those naked pinky-grey pads at the ends of his fingers instead of nails. Horrible. "This here grass, I could cut it real nice for a coupala dollars." He swayed back and forth a few feet from the end of her chair while she gave him another long, careful look, still taking him in as a visual fact — a drastic rearrangement of the landscape of her afternoon. (And why should she feel bothered when he said what the hell in that funny tone of voice? Because that too was out of place.) The back yard seemed to have contracted so that they were practically on top of one another — she, the young man and the stranger — were eyeing each other, panting, and would soon leap forward with a snarl, the three of them rolling over and over in the hot dry grass. Over and over, crashing into the border and crushing the flowers underneath them in their terrible animal-like resentment. Even the temperature seemed to have shot suddenly upwards ten degrees, although she and the young man had been saying to each other (only five minutes ago?) that this must be some kind of record.

The two chairs underneath the apple tree, the teacups, the plate of little cakes, the sprinkler moving slowly, gently across the border — it had all been so carefully thought out; had given her such *aesthetic* satisfaction. No one, she thought miserably, would ever understand that aspect of it. How, for instance, she had carefully selected just those little cakes and no others — and just that number — to go on just that plate. And even remembered to buy three over so there wouldn't be any trouble at lunch. And how the whole day had seemed, (until now) inspired, each little detail working itself out so beautifully that it was only natural to think in terms of plays and paintings. Even the green stakes had been a stroke of genius.

Yet now it was all animal-like, smouldering; she could smell the stranger's sweat from where she sat. What was she supposed to do? Get up and offer him a cup of tea? (She thought of those queer spatulate fingers curled around one of her grandmother's teacups and for the first time felt afraid.)

"There's no work for you here. Please go." He never moved, never changed his movement, stood swaying back and forth and back as though he had a pain, or was still recovering from his incredible journey through the garden gate.

Her companion spoke. "You heard the lady, didn't you?" He swung one lean brown leg over onto the grass, but she motioned him back.

"No," she said softly. "It will be all right." "(And a part of her mind thinking it's all very well for you to play Sir Galahad now! And again that slow smouldering resentment flickered between them.) She arranged her face in a smile.

"I'm afraid this isn't a very good neighbourhood for yard work. We all do our own. Why don't you try the church two blocks over? They might have something you could do." The smile hurt and she put her hand to her face in a desperate effort to keep it in place. What time was it?

The children would be back soon; the afternoon was nearly over. And it had all been so perfect after the first awkward moments, hers not his, for she had never seen him awkward, had thought of him to herself as somehow lacquered or varnished — always shining, always "ready for company" as it were. And there she was, her voice fluttering around him as though he were some lacquered brass lamp and she a moth impatient to embrace her doom. But the green stakes had saved her.

"How would you like to lend me a hand with the garden?" And he, amused, skeptical: "I'm not much of a gardener."

He had held out his lean brown hands and she had marvelled at the nails, so regular, a faint pencil line of white above the smooth shell-pink. But strong hands, golden brown of a colour that made her think of chickens roasting slowly on a spit. She had a sudden impulse to reach over and bite into one of his hands, was quite dizzy with the desire to simply take one up and bite it; they looked delicious.

"Oh, neither am I," she cried. "But I bought some stakes to prop up the snapdragons this morning. I feel terribly guilty about them, poor things. The children said they'd help but I really hate putting it off another minute." She had literally run into the garage for the stakes and garden shears and twine, cried gaily, busily, "I'll hold them if you'll tie," thrusting the ball of twine into his skeptical golden hands.

They had moved slowly up the narrow border, careful not to step on the other plants and flowers. The snapdragons were bent over or lying flat. They appealed to her: strange little puffs of colour, lemon, mauve, raspberry pink, like summer sweets or summer dresses. Cool. Reminiscent of childhood. And yet their paradoxical shape, labial, curiously exciting, swollen and stretched. She lifted the stalks carefully, holding them tight against the stakes as he snipped and tied, snipped and tied, the sun strong on his golden arms and hands.

"Look how twisted they are," she mourned, caressing the tip of a blossom with her finger. "I've been promising for weeks — and now I'm afraid they're crippled for life."

She really meant it, bent over her poor, pastel invalids, felt genuinely guilty about the thing. What was so beautiful was that he had understood, had kept silent and snipped and tied, looking quietly into her eyes as they reached the end and she took the garden things from his firm, brown, polished hands. "I'll get the tea."

"I'll wait under that nice apple tree of yours." Then it had all been understood between them, just like that; so that she had run up the back stairs like a girl and giggled when she nearly dropped the sugar bowl.

And she had lain back gratefully in the long chair, sipping lemon tea, surveying the border through half-shut eyes, her heart reaching out to those brave, brave snapdragons, so desperately erect — like old and wounded warriors on parade. While his firm brown fingers moved lazily up and down her leg and she had felt at any minute she might begin to purr.

So that she was actually smiling at him, lips parted, when the stranger started in again, holding onto the picnic table now, bent over as though over a basin and she became quite terrified as she used to be as a child in the midst of nightmare knowing she was dreaming, straining to wake herself up. He spewed forth words and cries, not looking at her — looking instead if looking at all down through the slats of the table at the grass below as though it were personally responsible for his fate.

"You never give a guy a chance you bastards think you're all so goddam smart she said and don't come back until you pay at last for what I've given out for free I must have been a nut and them in the corner laughin to beat hell you gotta give me what's a coupala dollars. I'll trim the hedge real nice for free your hedge needs trimmin too and she just layin there with nothin' underneath saying where'd you think the money came from? Why don't you listen to me lady why. . . . "

So that the silence was even worse when for a brief moment sound was shut off and all she could hear was a dull thud as though something overripe had fallen, quite near her, off the tree; and all she could see was a blur and thought my God I'm going even deeper. When her vision cleared and the stranger gave her one last pleading look out of the blood grotesquely red against his face, unreal, outrageous as though some spiteful child had crawled a crayoned obscenity across her pastel world.

And then her would-be lover's hands reached out and caught the stranger once, grasping his shoulders hard, the knuckles white, so that all she saw was the back of his head as he went back out the way he burst in, muttering and sobbing to himself out of the garden gate and up the outraged street.

And she, "My God, My God," giving the flowers one last despairing glance as she picked up the tray and headed for the stairs. All along a part of her saying isn't that just my luck!

Don Druick /
A SACRED MOLE, SACRIFICED

These pages provide the possibility of music for three musicians or three groups of musicians; read the treble clef, and pitch an octave or two higher than you read; play abruptly and loudly.

Each page is 15 seconds of music; the upperlefthand-corner numbers the page repetitions in a single event; the lowerlefthand-corner numbers the events to be drawn from each page; 10 seconds between events and repetitions; do the events in any order.

Don Druick Vancouver, 1973

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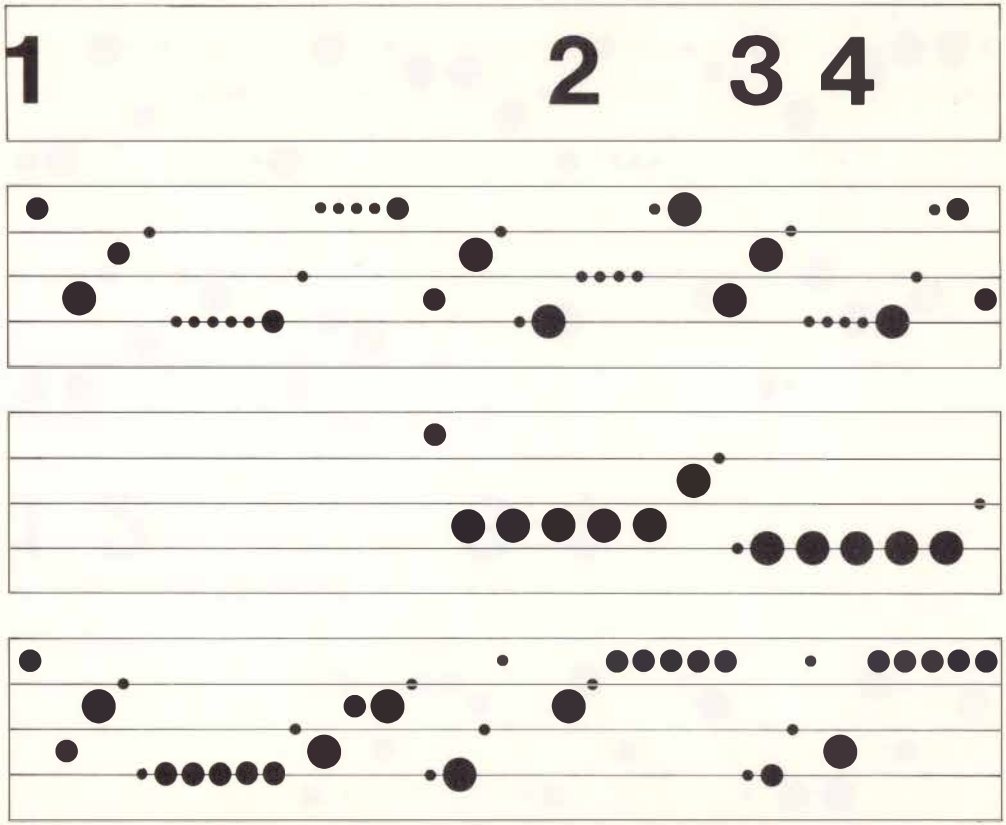


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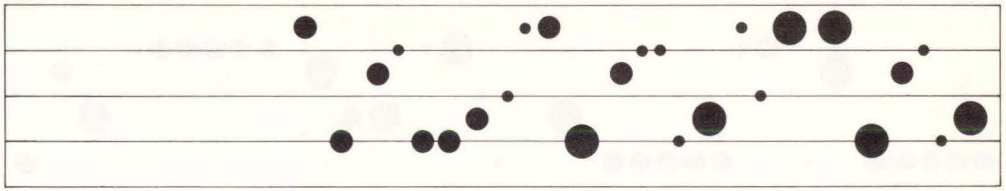


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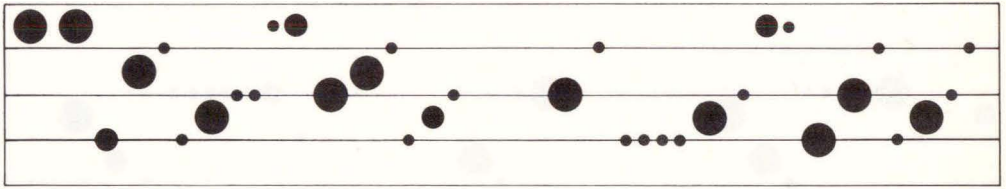
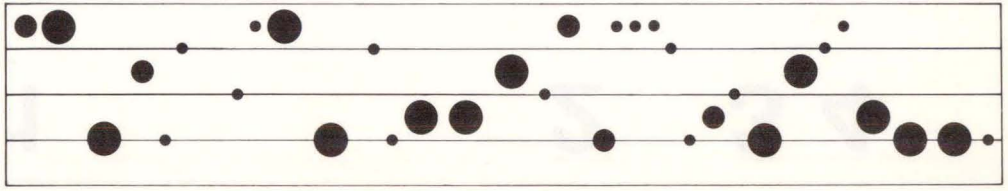




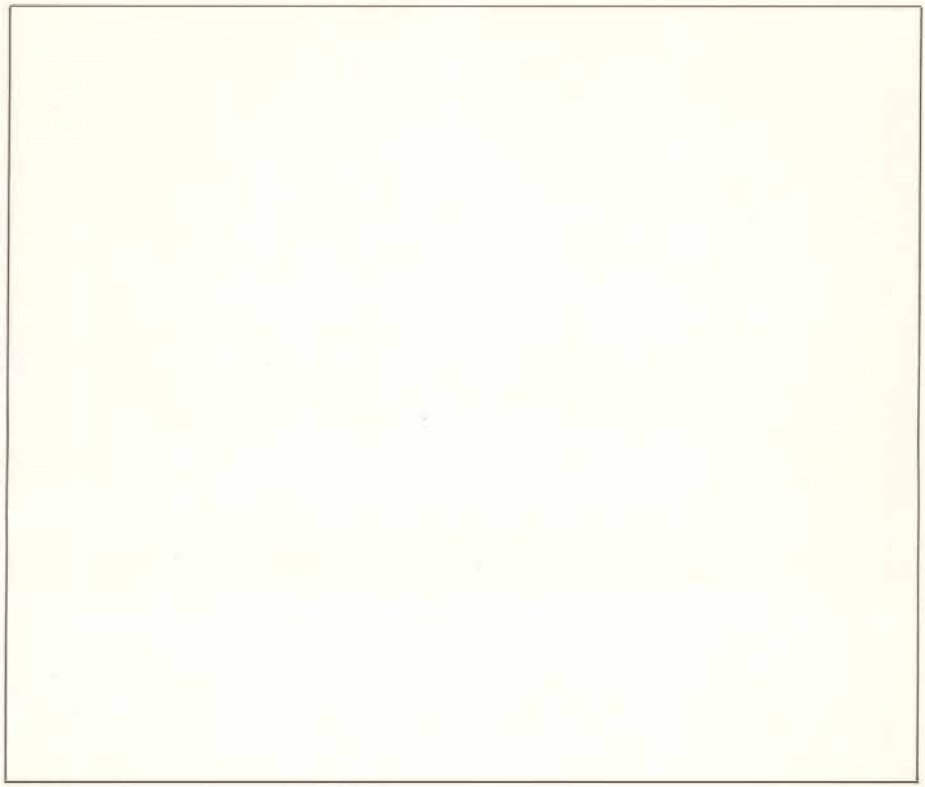
VICTOR COLEMAN

FROM THE REALMS OF THE UNSEEN FATHER

These are the eyes of the Unseen Father
they are clear and bright as balls of gold
the eyes of the Unseen Father are bright
they are gold in their centres and radiate the mind
acting in their seeing as if suddenly material
were warped beautifully from one condition to the next
as the wind, mindfully, wanting to boogie, gets twisted with the rhythm
that surrounds it in the foggy wisdom of truth and ideals
strangely included in a sonnet dead to those effects
eschewing the landscape of personal baggage, the junk
the junk collector collects as collateral
against the littoral hell of any sea

Ten tiny fingers play their 88 syllables
skimming attention from the cream of the mob

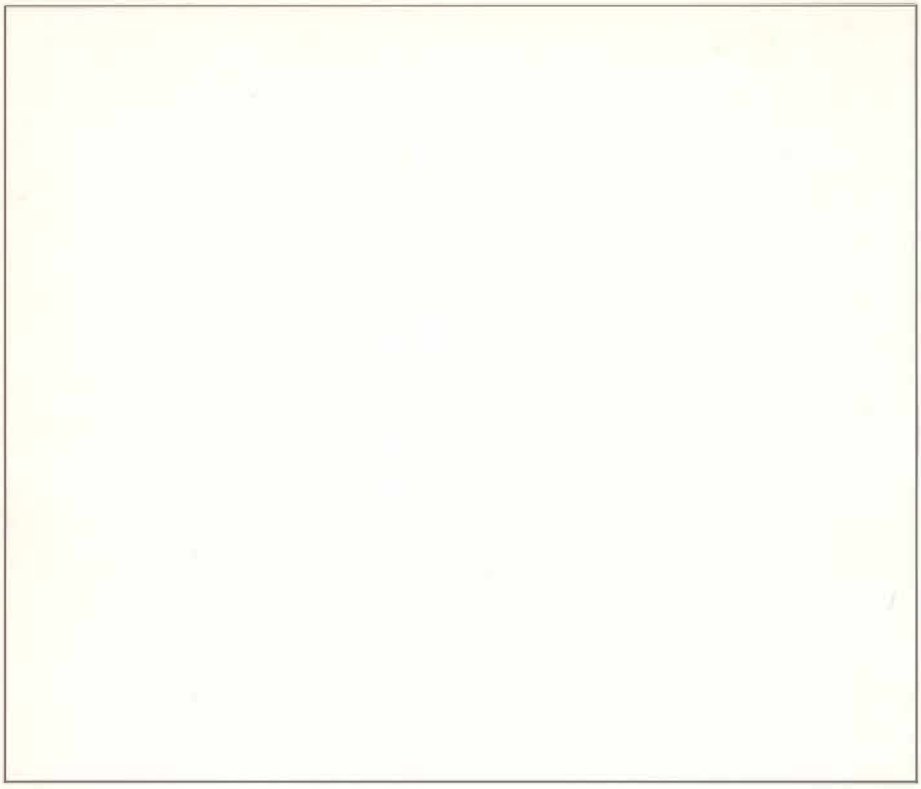
*



These are the ears of the Unseen Father
they are sensitive and capable of catching the resonance
of a far away bamboo flute two cars down
that speaks above the grinding of the engine
like the sensuous voice of a lover through the mob
pleading for that piece of attention given over
completely to the colours of a former lover's pen
which crept into the senses — an anaesthetized joke
on an all but sleeping patient hearing the doctor's remarks
through his unfeeling body as the small slit is made
in the scrotum to tie off the tube
through which his seed passes recklessly

into the womb of her smile
that great tomb's ear

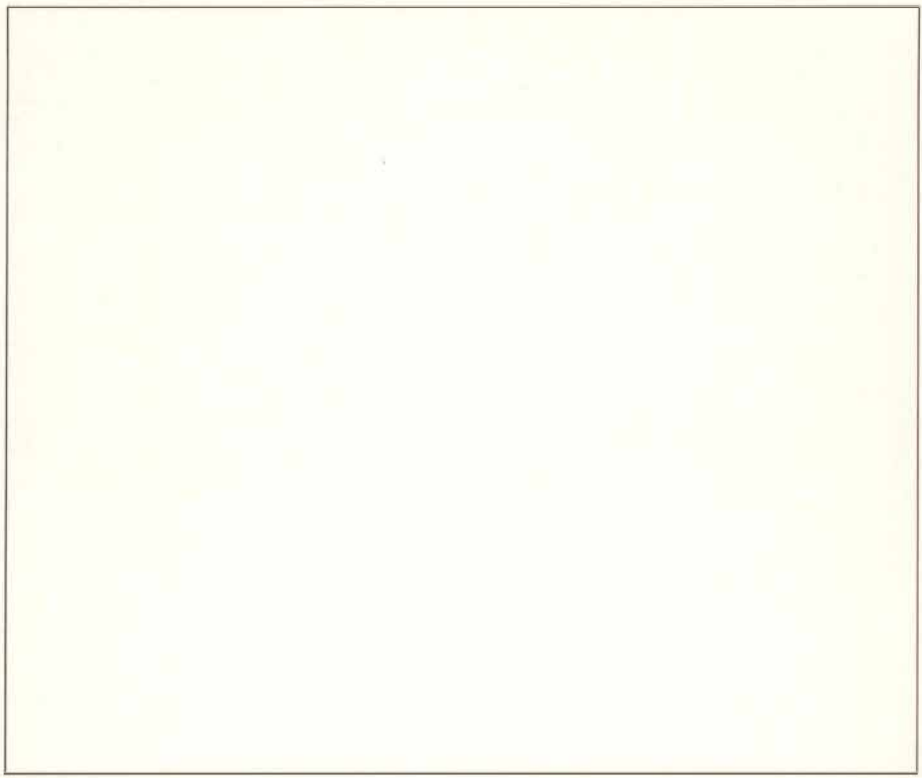
*



This is the mouth of the Unseen Father
chewing peanuts while worrying about his breath —
or is it the smell of their own
cunts on his moustache that revulses them
noting coarser hairs between his teeth —
there is nothing about our bodies we'd call pretty
clawing one another in a rage to own the feeling
fatally transmitted through the mouth of another —
the moaning of a lover being the same song
repeated each time at different levels of the energy
which puts us right back in the pocket of the sonnet
a twelve-bar blues and a two-line coda —

to convince us that the form is legitimate
a uniform is worn

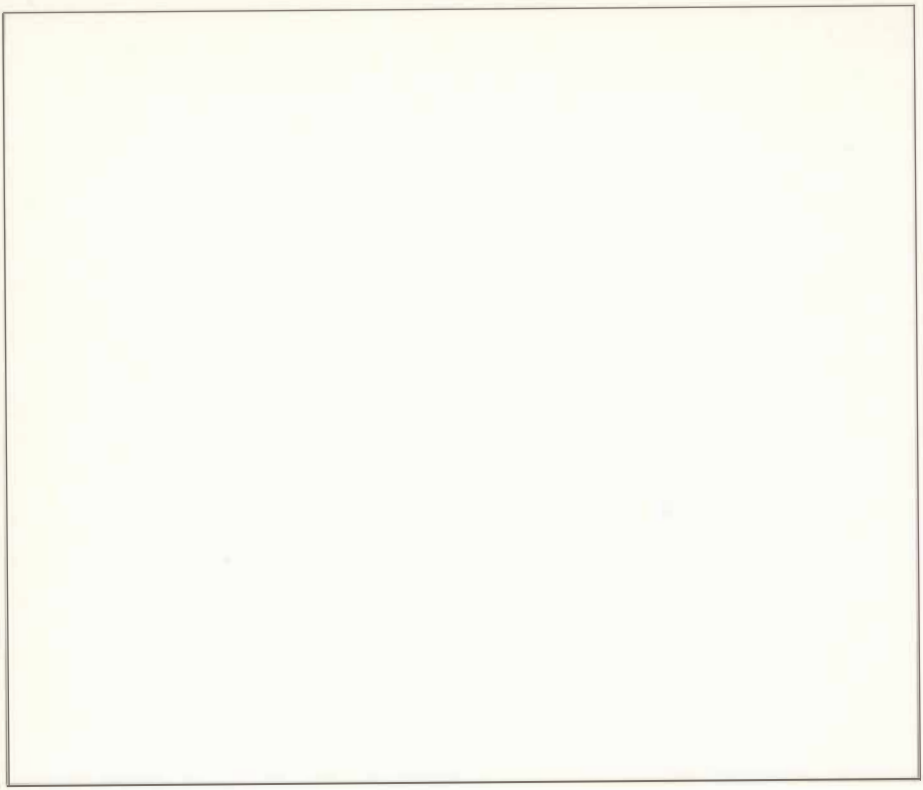
*



These are the hands of the Unseen Father
dishpan blue nails bitten to the quick
cuticles misshapen ugly grey teething for the unseen
little lead burns only he can recognize
sharp hot liquid one moment solid the next
peeled from the flesh like the flesh
from the bone like the bone from the filleted fish
dropping molten lead from the casements of tension
in small neat communities where dumb huts keep us in
looking out over water to the incredible plethora
watching the skyline limber and rear up
in a futile attempt to contain all our bodies

as, touching one another, we discorporate
leaving the afterglow of the civic principle

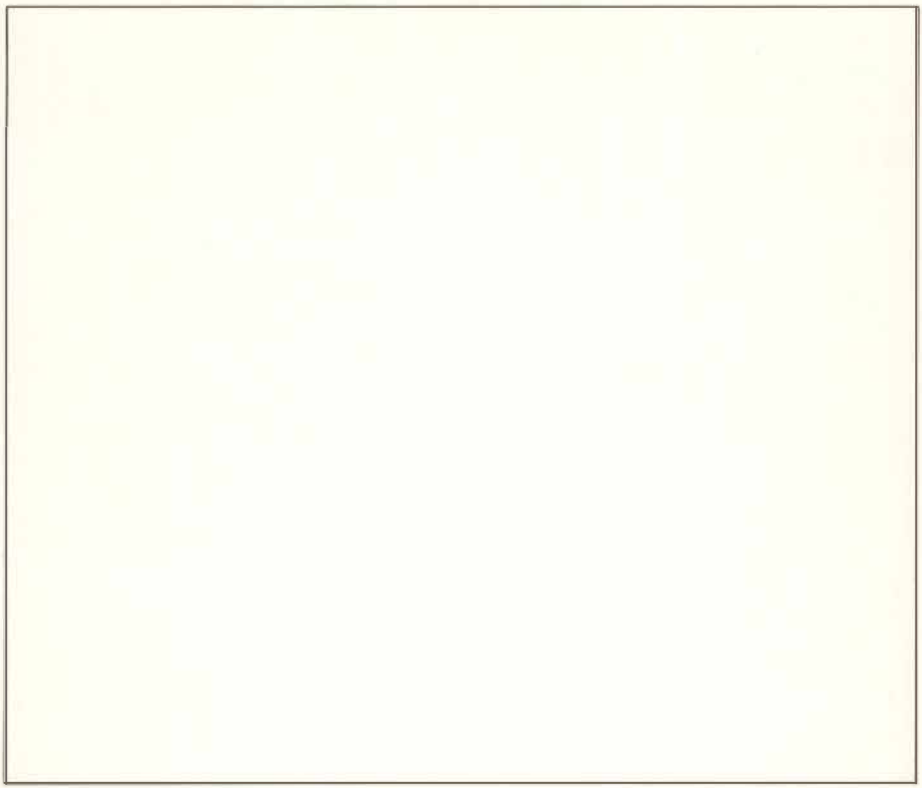
*



These are the files of the Unseen Father
where information overflows the tidy metal edge
of a reality that mercilessly cuts through the personal
to draw upon the hives full of blood in the centre
of a personality whose physiology is all one
organism taking in the cosmos and giving up
bad smells in return without returning
to a previous existence whether stranded in a boat
or palace guarded menacingly by safe thick men
with wives who weep at home like many taps
left running in the freezing so the pipes won't burst
all over the domus on this fading clump of sand

we all call it home no matter what
the numbers on the houses

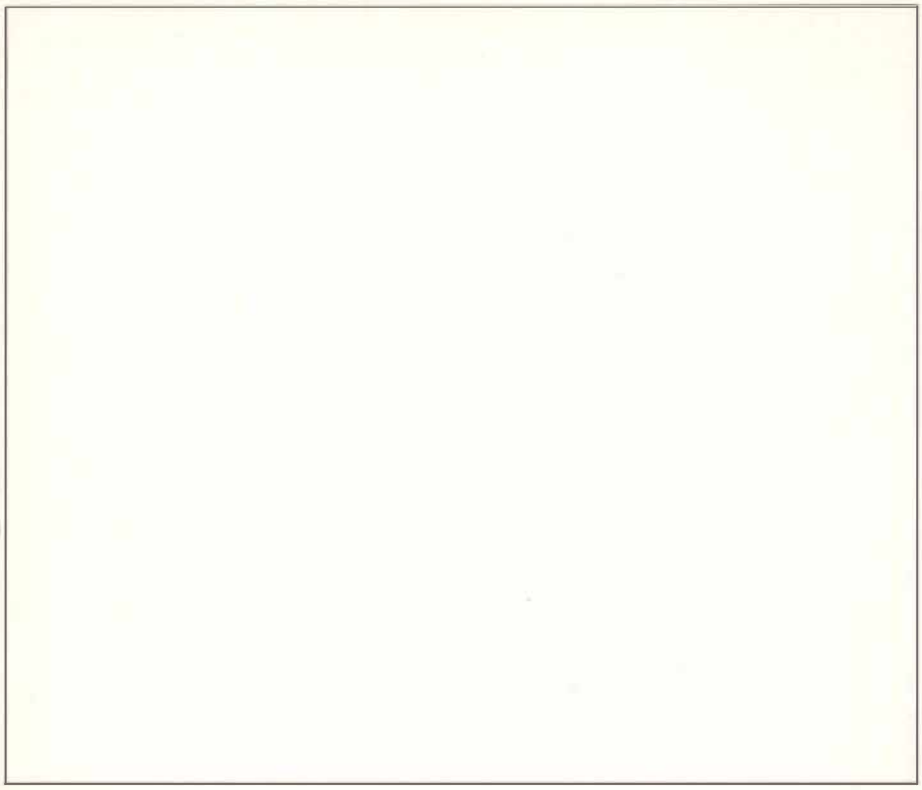
*



The heart of the Father is too unseemly
to break — too clean to be tragic
the Unseen Father will never awaken
in the arms of the same two eyes
two mornings in succession —
maelstrom of a domestic vortex —
the fingernails of his children are too soft to crack
in the wake of an impenetrable dream
it was so boring — I was the Father
loving every minute of it — even the TV once
even turning off 'the wife' and keeping all the kids
out of sight for exactly a gestation

my peculiar mammalian fix on the time
is attached to my body like the rings on the trunks

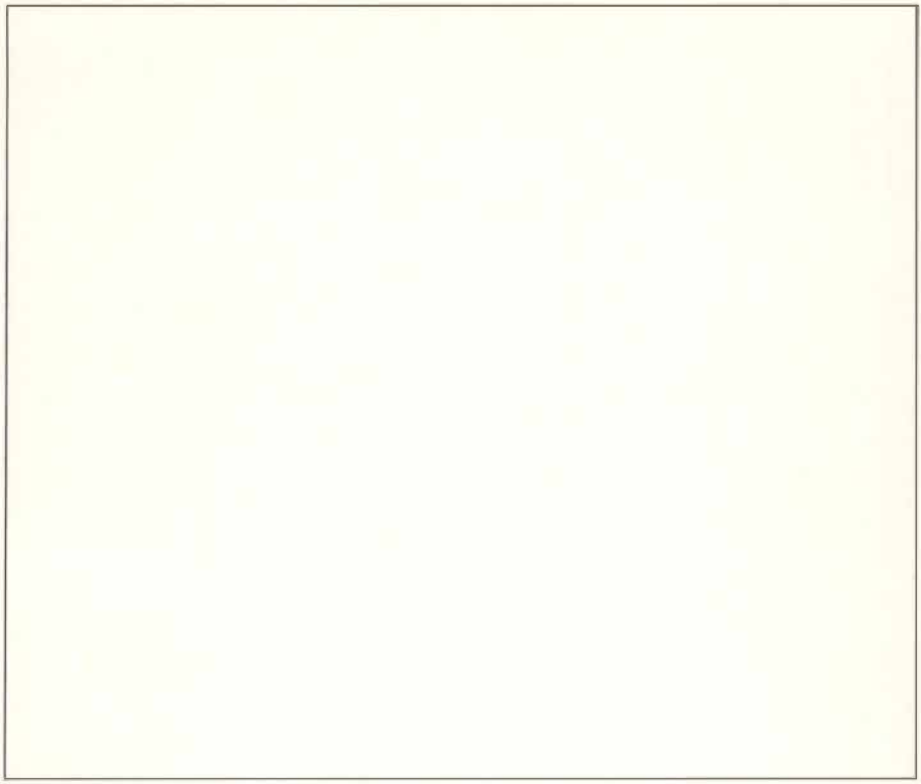
*



This is the chin of the Unseen Father
searching his memory for an unplayed violin
while Michael White bows his bass against the pizzicato
of a cello as to the flavour of a curry
you add yoghurt, maybe
a little Bud in the modality —
broken siblings fallen from the Tree
orphaned in acts of a classified death
worrying to keep the rhyme and reason clear
discreet amidst the mushy logic of encyclopederasts
forcing their aegis on that difficult squeeze
in ways your Granddad thought unimaginable

against the guarded power of tradition on the Right
is the knowledge my mark on a woman is indelible

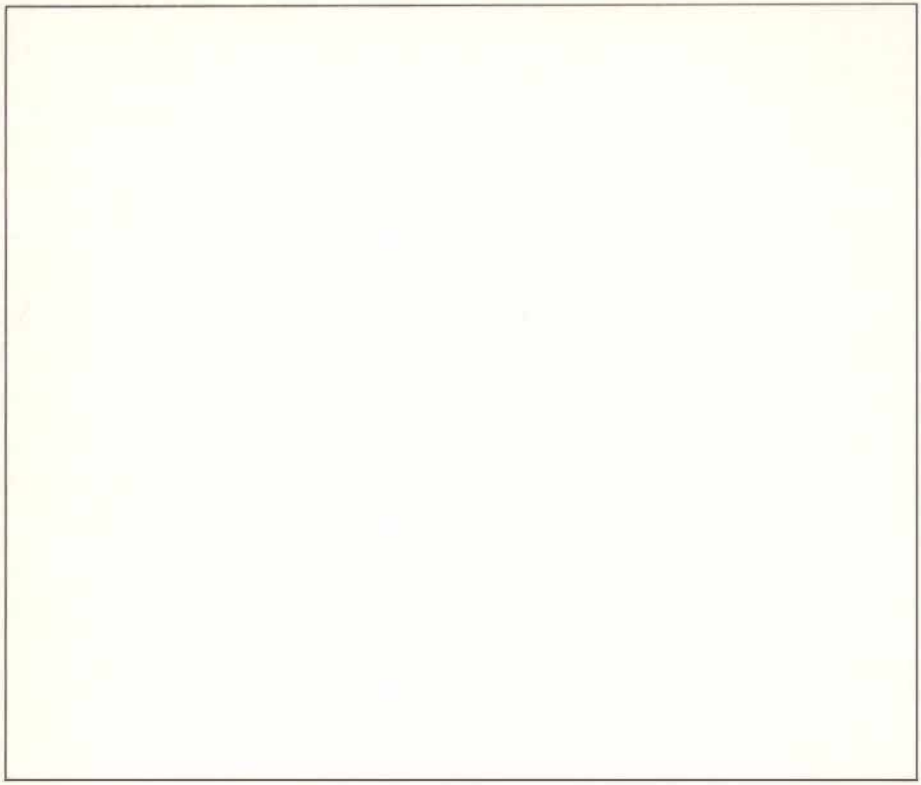
*



This is the business of the Unseen Father
it is more chaotic with each second of expansion
as success spills our guts into chemical pans
galvanized and orgone accumulated cameras
pan across an audience like butter on a biscuit
filtering through the big eye in the mob
that has ears for specific and a feeling for the blues
and mouths that will fit down over the shaft
as the watery eyes in the Crumb cartoon come
come the white gobs of seed from her nostrils
like honkers from a farmer's maw
accruing in the business as capital gain

against the bigger loss, or worse, misplacement
of dewily decimated artifacts amongst the screams of machination

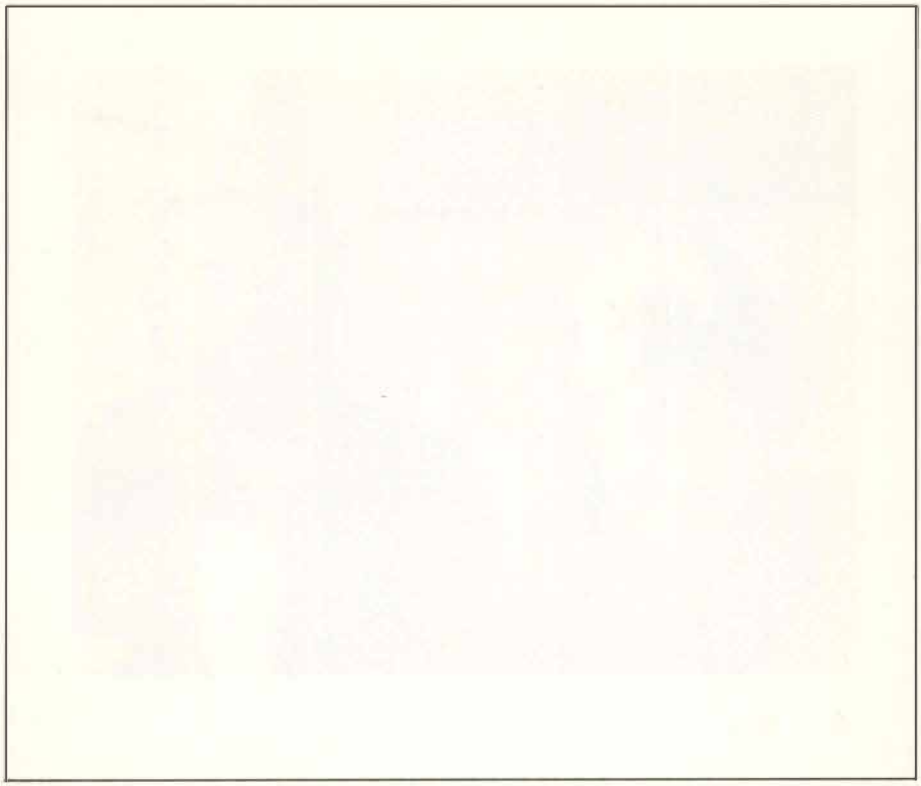
*



This is the guilt of the Unseen Father
that he'll never be anything but wheels and flesh
cluttering his fecund mind with lovers
calling on the telephone to arrange an assignation
sticking his tongue in the holey black receiver
longing for some distance from the surety
of a list of loves so great the stomach heaves
the heart like a suddenly out-of-control truck
lurching and marking the covers of a book
into which some donkey'd look bewildered
at the free flow of ostentatious thought therein
even through the static that divides us

and as we fall our thoughts of heaven spiral
into the still and stiffened eye of reason

*



This is the camera of the Unseen Father
it seems to be missing and I don't know what to do
suspended in the helplessness of this form of loss
suspicious of those close to me for not noting
the stasis of this obscure appendage, my camera —
an eye I had so carefully left shut for so long
in preparation, maybe, or out of lack of *techné* —
I wanted to discover the reliability of light
but had only just begun to understand the frame
of reference I'd needed to open up the shutter
fully taking over for the blinded viewing eye
shattering the visual continuum by placing it

one-sixteenth of a second on the celluloid
a burp in time made permanent by chemicals

*

A PROPOSAL

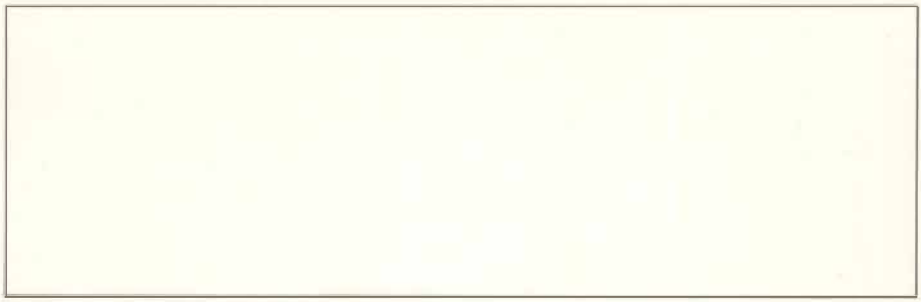
(for Judy

We have made a balloon
        with our arms
the shape of each moment

but one of the four
        felt discomfort
holding up the rest

the delicacy of a moist
        tongue on the tip of my mouth
becomes abrasive teeth

Our bodies are a constancy
        we'll never misplace
in the held spell of the instant



in light I see eyes
take in my gestures
like boarders signing leases

& I wonder
what would happen should we
both keep control

Is this my
your direction ?
Inseparable ?

I guess I dread the ultimate
diversion of an honest woman
loving me forever

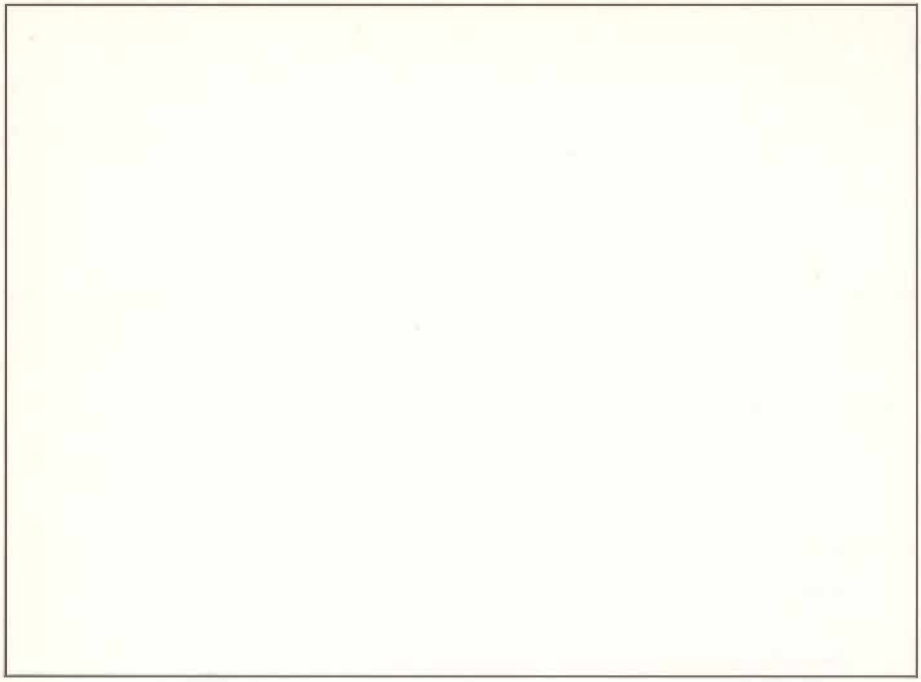
having measured sincerity
forever with the guage of youth
I watched the concept plummet

to a gulch
full of thieves
I'd not be ready to deceive

& the ritual
constancy implies
grows richer or poorer

as the possibility
of each
life is busted

left to gather lichens
decorative
by tree foot



scintillant in fantasy
        amidst the leaves
our leavings

moving
        overhead
between us & the moon

weaving a fabric
        constant cover of our auras
from the burning sight of others

Our meat will absorb no light
We must leave that to the plants

which is why
        I find myself
standing in this opening

of seed held
        light in the palm of my hand
looking for a constant place to sow

THREE COLLABORATIONS
(w/ David Young
FLYING

The Right Brothers invented flying which is not strictly true since they had watched birds first. Later they invented the stewardess and the vomit bag.

As they grew older, Orville would turn to his mother and say Now are you happy?

Billiard Right's left hand deftly removed a corncob from his brother's orifice. It was 'lighter than air.'

The Right's mother, the former Mary Loose Myth of Denver, abdicated her position in a sudden seizure of umbilical tug.

The two boys lugged their lolly to the lake and set it all afloat. "There's no way I'm acceptin' money for doin' this spiritual mission," spoke Bill, dropping fivers into the Bay.

A piano was drifting downstream past the big city where freshly-mugged people were standing by the banks with bloody noses. Coal Porter was a young guy working on the docks and all he wanted was to be free and earn a billion dollars so his Great-grandchildren could go to Yale.

"By golly!" he shrieked. "Look at those ivories! I think I just found me the elephant graveyard!"

Without further ado they all set out on an incredible journey which was destined to take them into the jukeboxes of the greatest Kosher Delicatessens in the land.

*

HITCH HYPE

How did all this blood get on the Silverwear? Who the hell has been bleedin' in here. Let's cut out the smalltalk and get down to it.

Actually Julian has exzema. He bleeds on his sheets. Actually I fucked her in the hammock; we were kind of 'breaking it in' and she was on her, you know, period; and, well, I. . .

We fucked the night before she split, the bloodstains she spilled lasted for weeks. I don't know how else to tell it. And now this one, in her rage, whips out a tampon and flings it against the wall. And I frame it.

This puke here — on the carpet — did that come from one of *your* mouths? It looks like corn to me. Who had corn?

Were those brain cells on the energy drain? I thought I told you not to get into that kind of shower!

But there's nothing else!

In the long view of history everything turns grey and starts walking all over your vision. The rods and cones become defined as delicately as the hairs on a rabbit's back.

"Hey, Marvin . . . the rabbit's back!"

The Cakra, the place where people meet, the soft place, the rabbit's back. Lie right here on this fur rug rabbit's back rabid backs. Our escape hatch from the rods and cones, this place where we do the sloppy Australian open-mouthed crawl on top of one another.

In the back room the smoke-filled card-players smacked queens on their backs. Edna 'The Rabbit' Milton pulled the ace of spades from his big toe and shouted "STONED!" and everybody fell on the floor in a heap.

*

HISTORY OF POETS: BENNY GOODMAN

Benny Goodman was too old to fight so they holographed him onto the front lines. Slides of cows on the slaughterhouse floor. This was one thousand years after the invention of the bottlecap.

Weebe Yeats had tobacco spittle all over his beard. It was Sunday morning and he knew he was going to be famous. Yesterday the Saturday Evening Post had called to commission a poem on Tuberculosis, and last week the mayor's wife had beat him off in a public washroom.

"Ooohh, Ahhhh," thought Weebe, "think I'll go to Florida with the TB money . . . "

Mrs. Yeats was crazy, crazier than a jaybird. She croaked like a leopard frog every morning upon rising and Weebe would write it all down, being careful always to note the frequency of her croaks.

Weebe was into systems. He was obsessive about the veins that showed in his forearms. Algae 'Swing' Burned, neighbourhood drug fiend, had finally turned Weebe on to cocaine, and there was even talk about a little Mary Jane among the rye. Everyone waited for the nod from Bert 'Pee' Russell before they harvested the crop.

Billy Breaker and his odd wife Ball sniffed the spines of old tomes and considered themselves pure. Billy quickly filled the reference books of the future with his sly remarks.

Meanwhile Hank Ballard was sweeping across the land singing the blues for the Candy Apple Reds. People sat in drive-ins pounding their foreheads against the dashboards. There was Revolution in the air and a lot of the boys were getting bare tit. They had bumper stickers on their Jeeps that said: When bare tit is possible can peace be far behind? Only Edward R. Murrow and Imperial Tobacco knew for sure.

It just so happened that Billy Bob Goldberg, the poor white Southern sharecropper who had clawed his way into control of this tobacco giant, frequently indulged his eccentric taste in a secret collection of antique poets once owned by Monte Ubetcha, the inventor of frozen food. Billy Bob had a huge underground refrigeration unit full of freeze-dried 'wordsmiths,' as he liked to call them. He had massive barbeques down in these vaults to which he invited his friends and political cronies. The cancer scare was on and Billy Bob was nervous.

One morning he turned to his assistant and said: "The ad campaign needs a shot in the arm. Warm up Sir Walter Scott and bring Henry James to room temperature. We'll show those sonsabitches!"

The list of guests at Billy Bob's barbeques was always staggering; as were the guests themselves, most of whom would have stopped on the way for a few tight licks in the back seat with a plate of chips and a MacDonald's.

"Put a little of that vinegar on my bare tit," interjected Mississauga Milly, "I like the way it makes them squeak."

Pete Stool put the saltshaker back on the window tray and reached for the transparent bottle. "I hope you know what you're doing," he offered, pulling down his fly to relieve some of the pressure. "The last time I did this the young lady I was with had just a few minutes before shaved the little hairs off her nipples and, boy, did it smart. She screamed so loud the fat old manager of the A&W came running out from behind a ziggurat of toasters to wave us away."

"Put a little of that Bar-B-Q Sauce in here too," whispered Milly, tugging at the elastic of her babyblue panties.

Pete and Milly were just two people, unfortunately; two blackheads on the big long face that was the modern world.

"A little more ketchup on these fries," Pete sputtered, "and then . . . Hey! You didn't tell me you were on your *per*iod!"

Milly wasn't listening, she was busily fiddling with the car radio dial. "Listen," she said under her breath; "poetry!"

The CBC was rerunning (for the seventeenth time that summer) John Rubber Carumba's bathtub tapes of Lascelles Abercrombie reading the Brighton Train Schedule. Carumba interrupted, pent up iambicly, every time Abercrombie mentioned the date, with a list as long as your arm of the least important events thereon recorded.

"July 14, 1917: The entire population of Kickeminnagroin, New South Wales, was wiped off the face of the earth by a mistake in addition at the Home Office.

All the Mexicans in Venezuala celebrated the sixth marriage of Jose Gonzalez Martinez'in as many months, this time to a pretty undertaker's daughter with an incurable eye infection."

Milly and Pete began to drift. Robert Frost licked an icycle from his chin and wondered about the Houston Astrodome.

*

Gerry Gilbert / VIC D'OR

he walks in thundering like a cloud
people are like him
he grows dangerously
he will live old

the poems are heavy
his weight of all there is to say
in the order
to continue

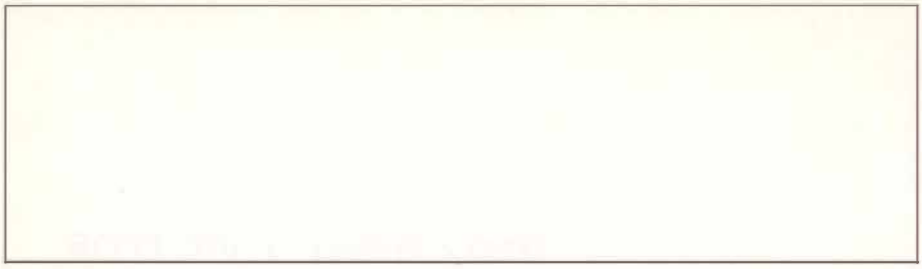
his books are light
after light
on his life
a story

his pages are time before
time the true mother
tongue the talking tail line
breaks lies open

consonants contract
ions charge
mouth widens
lite flies out

word on word
a pile
tough
like a rug

patter
a guy in bare fate walking
walking with care
on & on & on ice



his breath smells of teeth
he is looking
after every one
he sees

his me (a)
sure is
meant to
(b) ami

spikey poetry
it stabs rite thru my close
this is all thistle sticks
like a proverb should

cell
fish
nest
of up & down

bite the be
ar
& you get a taste of what is on his mind
sigh lens

his poetry is in a position to the rest of our writing
will
willow
native smart & lotsa heart

kitten mite well fool her shadow
is
the difference between night
& play

November 1972/March 1974

Warren Tallman / IN LIMBO

VICTOR COLEMAN as POLITICAL POET. A quick note on his January 28, 1974 Vancouver reading at The Western Front.

First the slides, how long did they last? The seen image, like the heard word, goes by psychological rather than clock time. Ten minutes of clock time can be two hours of psychological time and visa versa. In the psyche time is a very different thing, ask any child sitting on a chair in the corner because he swiped the cookies. There were a lot of images projected in a rhythmic flow, was the guy working the projection machine counting? But the overall impression was of a single image with variations. Drumming it into the viewer's consciousness. And in psychic time the first impression was, it went on too long, you see all the variations of THE IMAGE; then you see them all again; then you see them all again. Compulsive, a la Freud's insight into neurosis? the song you can't stop running through your head? the argument you can't let go? the puns you can't stop making once you've started? I think not. I think Coleman understands psychic time very well indeed, has an accurate measure of how he wants to relate to his audience, knows the use of the compulsive. As a poet he's a drummer, the motive is to drum it in, drum it in, drum it in, until it gets there: THE DISTURBANCE.

Cities disturb him. Society disturbs him. Sexuality disturbs him, does it ever! Creeley once caid, "perhaps my troubles are also yours," and Coleman is saying, "perhaps my disturbances are also yours." But Coleman has a secret, though it's a pretty open one, knowledge that we want no part of his disturbances because we want no part of our own. So he drums the image, drums it, drums it until it breaks through resistance and gets into the psyche of the listener in which case all hell breaks loose, climb the wall, curse the poet, leave the place — disturbed.

In the poems the visual images are replaced by wit images, the teaser being — to get the listener involved — "I'm a very funny fellow." In psychic time wit has definite limits, one joke is fine, the next can be very good indeed, the third is also very good . . . but come on now, time for joke-time to be over! But this is just the point at which Coleman goes to work, another and another and another and another and another. And as with the slide images, the joke images, the play of wit is centralized, the city disturbances, the social disturbances, the sexual disturbances. The long prose collaboration was a key. How mildly, how ingratiatingly, how APOLOGETICALLY he EMPHASIZED that it was unfortunately very long, at least 15 minutes he said, and click went all the psychic time clocks, 15 minutes, that's not so long! But comes the end of the 15 minutes, and just as the psyche is ready to get up from its chair in the corner, what a good boy am I, ON IT GOES, another 15 minutes, then another. One enters a time limbo in which there is no time, only the disturbances he is projecting. There is no time fence to keep the disturbances contained, so one wants to, say, climb the wall, curse the poet, walk out of the place because there is now no defense against the image flow.

Now all this is not perverse on Coleman's part, and is no more neurotic than we are, or anyone in our mad world. It is a form of political action. He was doing prose collaborations, knock on your next-door neighbour's door and say, let's write. The other side of that coin is to knock on your audience's door and say, let's get disturbed together. Perhaps my poetry is also yours just as my disturbances are also yours. The insistence on real relationships outside clock time and beyond psychic time, a form of direct measure, contact measure, community measure. A comerado to all. That is citizen of a human community rather than of some programmatic political community in which Mao, Trudeau, Nixon, Brezhnev are all simply business men. There never was a political community except of one and one and one. Programmatic poets are as boring as Mao, Trudeau, Nixon, Brezhnev are boring. You might want to ask your banker for a living

wage but you certainly don't want to talk to him. Coleman has no program to offer at all. The true key to political action is to resolve individual disturbance. The true political action is to resolve individual disturbance. Programmatic politics increase disturbance, displace, it, push it into the program. Everyone starts yelling. Or throwing bombs. Or starting demonstrations. Coleman lets the disturbances in; converts them to art; drums them through to the listener or viewer. And the message is: solve that one, solve that one, solve that one. The only political program worth any attention whatsoever is that which concerns individual disturbance. Your share in the state is YOU. Coleman is not after disturbance in the streets, let's march on the capitol, man the barricades. He is after the disturbance in the individual psyche of each listener.
Or so I heard it.

INTERVIEW / VICTOR COLEMAN

This interview was held at Pierre Coupey's house on the afternoon of January 29, 1974, immediately after Victor read at Capilano College. Those present (indicated by initials in the transcript) were Victor Coleman, Judy Holms, Pierre Coupey, Dwight Gardiner, and Daphne Marlatt.

The actual stops and starts of each person's speech have been left in as much as possible to indicate the character of individual speakers. Commas have been used to indicate pauses, rather than in any conventional grammatical way.

VC At what age did I first get into writing?

PC Yeah right.

VC I was in Grade Nine and I was, charged like everybody else in my high school class to write a piece and, I wrote a satire on school, and, handed it in — gotta, I don't know, a B+ or something like that, was asked to read it out loud, to the class. I read it out loud to the class and the hero's name was Cedric, and, I created a persona for myself through that satire which, really flipped me out, you know, I said, Wow. And ever since then, I mean subsequent to that, people in the class were calling me Cedric, and I was able to carry over the fantasy that was in the satire to, just the day to day life, classroom life. And I think that's how I picked up on the possibility of writing, and reading and all that. As far as getting into, so-called serious writing, it was much later.

PC Much later. How much later?

VC Well, I meant when I was sixteen I met Milton Acorn. He was the first poet that I ever met.

PC Ah, Milton shows up again.

VC And, he was living on the Island with Gwendolyn McEwan who he was married to then, and they were just on the bald edge of estrangement and so I saw him a fair amount for a summer and, you know, went various places with him and saw him in action, and one day I was talking to him about, you know, about poetry, and I was trying my hand a little bit, and he said, have you ever read Robert Creeley? And I said no and he said oh you should read Robert Creeley. So I picked up *The New American Poetry* which was the only thing available for Robert Creeley and I don't think I got off on Creeley as much as I got off on some other people. The person that I guess affected me most initially at that point, and I don't say this is particularly earth shattering, was Ebbe Borregaard, his Wapiti poems and I was just amazed by them. So at that point I, my aunt, my old aunt Alice gave me a typewriter and that was really the start. Then I really got into it and started to write poems and plays and stories.

PC Yes. Did you share any of Milton's political sense at that time, or did he talk about politics? Because I'm sort of surprised myself that Milton would get off on Creeley rather than anybody else.

VC I think it's a very surprising thing and simultaneously I was reading Kenneth Patchen and Michael McClure and I was into them more than anybody else, and I don't know why but I think because their books were available, basically, and until I discovered how to use a library that was about all I had. No, we never talked about politics. And we haven't since. I've seen him half a dozen times in the last few years. I don't think he recognizes me. I never talk to him.

PC Really?

VC Well, I would think that Milton would see me as the enemy these days.

PC You think so?

VC Oh yeah. Well, there's a magazine comes out of Vancouver called *Blackfish* which did a review of *America* and, sort of, I mean it wasn't a review of *America* at all it was, it was this big time publisher from the east it was,

DM I was going to ask you, when you were going from *New American Poetry* in which you didn't appear, when did you first start reading, getting into Zukofsky?

VC I made mail contact with Ron Caplan who was in Pittsburgh, who, he's the publisher of a little book *After Eyes* and, he was the one who turned me on to Zukofsky and I was very slow getting into Zukofsky because I couldn't understand a word of it. I mean I was thinking in terms of not being able to understand when I was at that age. I met Olson and Creeley and Robert Kelly and Leroi Jones, Ed Dorn in Buffalo. I was close enough, being in Toronto, to Buffalo so that I could just go down there. *Then* there was that incredible scene happening there.

DM What year would this be now?

VC Ah, sixty four. That's when I met all those people.

DM It really surprises me to hear you talk about not understanding Zukofsky when, what I think of immediately is, like, the music, the tightness of the music is similar.

VC That is all I could understand on sight. I mean, I could hear that and that is why I kept at it. I've read *A* at least fifteen times and each time I read it I've come to it with trepidation, am I in fact going to be able to comprehend what this man is trying to say? And each time I would go through it I'd comprehend it in a new way, I guess, and I read *A* before I read any of the shorter works and then when I got into the shorter works I began to understand how the music was carrying the content.

DM Which is very similar to what you do.

VC Yes. It is.

PC I don't understand Zukofsky either. I was going to ask you what is your understanding of Zukofsky now in terms of content. What is he dealing with?

VC I guess one equals eye equals love is my definition of Zukofsky. He's talking about sight being more than a recognition, like real sight is like an acceptance, and if you get caught up in recognition then you're lost. I mean if you have to recognize what's in the poem, then you get lost. In Zukofsky you get lost in the sound, in the enjambment of sounds. I've read stories of Zukofsky where they said that he was simple minded — you know that's somebody who is coming at it from a surrealist point of view, and not understanding how Zukofsky can use surrealism, he was *there,* then, when surrealism was happening, something like Jack Gilbert writes about Zukofsky and says oh, this is awful stuff. And I can sort of understand that point of view but, it's a blocked-off point of view.

PC So the difference *is* between recognition and acceptance.

VC Well, it's not a difference, I mean it's just another degree of recognition. I mean, to me, once you have the acceptance, if you've got it through the sound, then the recognition just comes en route.

DM It's almost a verb, it's an action, it's an act of seeing.

PC I was going to ask whether that relates to one of the lines that you read today: "the marginalia speaks more relevant than rhetoric," and how that relates to your whole sense of Zukofsky and what you're doing, because it seems to me that also links up

to a great extent with what Gerry Gilbert does, with what Dwight does, and with the serial form where you accept what occurs immediately and let it enter into the poem without a sense of direction, and, I guess in balder terms, the sense of open form rather than closed.

VC Although I'm obsessed with closed forms,

DM Sonnets,

VC Sonnets, *America* is a very closed form.

PC Based on the Tarot.

VC That's one of the things that is confusing about *America,* is that it's based on the Tarot; to me it's just the double acrostic thing that's important, that's the formal thing that is happening, the fact that there are Tarot images that I was writing off of, is, it's like looking at the landscape, and I'm looking at the Tarot card, and then defining the form of the poem by using those letters, that's all, I mean that was as closed a form as I could manage, I, you know, I tried sestinas and sonnets, etc. etc., and I didn't find them satisfying. I guess that's the word, satisfying, I couldn't get no satisfaction. But by the way at Berkeley, that was the song, the Berkeley Poetry Conference, the Rolling Stones "I can't get no Satisfaction," was the song that everybody was hearing, constantly, no matter where you went, that was the song that you heard. And, to me that's like the introduction to Olson's so-called reading at Berkeley, is the Rolling Stones singing "I can't get no Satisfaction," because you know that's what he was trying to say to everybody there.

PC I was just going to ask another thing, though. Your sense of the closed form, you just said you were obsessed with closed form, but it strikes me, that it's not so much closed form as a kind of a baseline of structure, which gives a kind of a movement for intent where it doesn't formulate what's going to be said but gives you somewhere to move from. Is that more, close to your sense of it or not?

VC Aaah, ideally, yeah, but *America* doesn't work that way. *America* is a, maintains a closed form in being that obscure, simply because I wanted to, I mean it's too consciously, avant garde or something, you know, so it doesn't really work as anything but a cataloguing of responses to whatever was going on.

DM There's another way it works though,

VC It works on the subliminal too, and I mean, to me that's the way it works for me now.

DM What's the subliminal?

VC The space between the lines, the space between the words.

DM Are you talking about a language subliminal?

VC Yeah.

DM Yeah, because that's what I felt, that on a funny level, sort of, *construct*, in the sense of construct, they were, well, you could sort of subsume them under the heading "readings of Tarot," ok, but what you were really doing were making readings in the language. And that's with that *form*, the readings become even more intense, because you're moving syllable by syllable.

VC Uhuh, and you end up having to end a line with a certain letter, in *America*, and that's a dictation on the words, *total* dictation.

PC I didn't understand the sense of the double acrostic, I thought you were talking in terms of paired poems but it is the *first* letter of each line, and the last letter of each line that forms the acrostic.

VC So there's the Eight of Swords, E.I.G.H.T.O.F.S.W.O.R.D.S.

PC Oh I see, but then, when you were reading out these poems, you were reading out zodiacal signs as well, right? Gemini,

VC That's in the heavens, I don't know where it is.

PC Aha, this tape is going to be punctuated with "aha!" ok Capricorn. Capricorn. So it really is closed then in that sense.

VC I'm not sure why I decided to write something like this. I mean there wasn't anything in my sense of prosody that made me want to write something like this, and it certainly wasn't anything that I learned from Zukofsky, to do a double acrostic, but I used his language, well "used his language" I mean well, I heard the sound of his language, in these poems, very much, and not so much *A* and not so much any of his other work, but in the Catullus translations. So I see these almost like translations.

DM There's a formal pacing to them that's unusual for you, your line is, often so tight, and the breaks come so naturally, like they coincide with breath breaks, and they're for emphasis, that's when I first saw those poems I *couldn't* understand what you were doing, the way you were breaking words, and this was before I understood the, acrostic thing.

VC Well, what happened was that I had to eschew the whole idea of projective verse, to write these poems, and it was extremely healthy, for me to have done it, because I felt really trapped in projective verse, from outside pressures, from other people on the literary scene back east, who were, you know, saying, "Oh, another projectionist," or whatever word they wanted to use, and it's still being done and it's really absurd, it just comes from ignorance of anyone's intention. The poems don't look like poems that these people have seen before, so it's projective verse, so anything that doesn't fit into the closed-form aspect, is projective verse. It's a very slowing down process.

DM How did you feel about the length of the lines in there? Was there any sense of wanting to write a longer line?

VC That's why I stuck these babies in, I put periods in with spaces on either side which is, a William Carlos Williams, Paul Blackburn punctuation thing which I, still use, and I think is very useful because you get a real sense of there being something between the words besides just that dot and the spaces, and you do that typographically by putting a space on either side of the dot, so the dot appears not only at the end of the line but at the beginning of the next line, there's equidistance happening, so there's a structural thing happening in that, which I like to use. I like to think that this is not a full stop at all, it's a point at which you almost circumambulate. You have to circumambulate that point before you can go on. So it's more than a pause, it's like a spin-around, and you get to the end of a, line, it's not a line, it's half a line or a third of a line, whatever, and then you spin around and you're into something else and then you spin around, so it's a very dizzying effect, which is why people have difficulty with this work.

DM When you were reading, I didn't have a copy in front of me, so I couldn't see it but,

VC No. No stops at the end of a line.

DM OK that's what I wondered, like "serious," "ser-" ends with a hyphen and then begins a new line "ious."

VC It's only that way because I have to end that. So what I had to do was find a word that could be broken that way, and more often than not I tried to stay within the strictures of grammar, and not break a word too strangely, but there were some times when I had to, and you know, if you really want to, hone in on the critical aspect of it maybe that's, maybe it falls apart there. But I, had a hard time *reading* these poems, for a long time, because of that, because I was still caught up in, you know, the breath unit and all that, and wasn't sure that, this was all right, is this the real thing? I thought to myself.

PC When you were reading I didn't have any sense at all of line breaks, in fact. I was trying to hear the acrostic at the beginning anyway. I didn't really realize the acrostic at the end of the lines, but I didn't get the sense of line breaks, I just felt, you know, breath units coming through.

VC Oh, orally the acrostic isn't visible.

DM You slowed down on certain words. You'd take a longer time to, pronounce certain words, and I didn't know whether that coincided with whether they were breaking on the line or not.

VC I think that's where, because of where I was, I mean I'll slow down on different words when I read them somewhere else. In some cases I *have* to slow down. Oh, in one of these poems, Eldon Garnet did a review for *Saturday Night* on *America* and there's a line, the line, quote "line" "Song is not thought/ Unlikely in a world of dirges," and he got off a whole polemical argument on the line "song is not thought." And, I thought, oh yeah, OK, it can be read that way. But then I immediately snapped back, and this is one of the reasons I'm not totally confident about this book, snapped back to Spicer's whole condemnation of poets who are milking the words of their, all their different connotations.

DM But you're a marvellous *punster*! How can you make that statement?

VC I can make that statement because I still feel new in the art. I don't feel I've gotten that far, I think that technically I've still got a lot of things to work out.

DM In *Light Verse* there were, there's a different use of rhyme, which you sometimes move back to, but I don't hear it nearly so often now, and that's a kind of, almost deliberate flat-footed rhyme with two very obvious words. And now that the music has become so much denser, that it's even unusual to *hear* that kind of, that particular kind of rhyme any more,

VC I think it's still happening, it's just happening in a, I mean, I'm getting more hold on the technique of that, so that I don't fall into it that easily. In *Light Verse* it happens all the time. I think I can find,

DM "You" and "true" was one of them

DG The "liar", the "lyre"

DM "Night" and "write" is another one in one of them,

PC Well, what you were just talking about is what Duncan calls "floating language," where it has several simultaneous syntactical meanings where it can be read, and often that occurs when you have a line break between two syntactical components of a unit. And that was the thing that I was picking up on last night in your reading as well, is that it could be read in so many different ways. So it is surprising to me too to hear you say that you're not sure,

DG Yet it goes on, the break, you know, is *intended* to have this spin around, to go on, in the poem, you get trapped in how many words this "liar" means, you can just hear it, and then go on with the poem, that *informs* the poem.

VC I think it's in here, this poem for Zukofsky, it's like a relatively early poem, and a relatively early reading, of Zukofsky which is called "After reading *Spring and All*," which is Williams, *All in All* which is Zukofsky, and *All*, no *All in All* is Corman, and *All* is Zukofsky, so it's positing something about those three writers. And it's one line broken up into syllables, almost, making syllables lines. And it's

Zuke
of
skies
liars
no liar
no Lear
no lair
I say
one
air.

PC I never had the patience to get into that sense before. I never had a sense of the kind of necessity for the play. It just seemed to me to be a very superficial game on words and

VC Well that's why I wrote this, I wrote this so that,

PC Which one's that?

VC *Some Plays On Words*. I wanted to say something directly to people who had come at me with that criticism, where, you know, you're just fucking around with the language, you don't really have anything to say, etc., etc.

DM But I really hear you *listening* very closely to the language, and letting *it*, well, the word Dwight used, "inform," inform you as you are moving along.

PC That's still part of the projective verse sense, though, isn't it?

VC No, I'm getting that from Spicer. I mean my sense of "inform" is, comes from Spicer not from Olson. What I got from Olson was, you have to be where you are and look around, and understand what you can reach. That's what I understood by locus. And Spicer wasn't even talking in those terms. He was into something else altogether, he was, you can misunderstand Spicer to be about metaphysics, when in fact, Spicer's work is like a chronicle of decay. You know he's talking about decay all the time, without actually even mentioning it. Certainly in his letters, to people, constantly there's this cynicism about the decay that's going on. That was all happening inside of him, his stomach was rotting away and that's what he was writing about.

DM In Spicer, always I have very clearly that image from Cocteau's film about the poet in *Orphée* tuned into the wireless, catching what's coming down the wire which is so very far away from that sense of locus that you mentioned in Olson.

DG Spicer is also a linguist,

PC And what's coming through the wires is Céjeste, the joke.

VC Spicer is another person, I mean, to me the people that I'm writing off are not projective verse people at all, it's Spicer and Zukofsky, and that's a weird combination for sure, trying to put those two together. I can't imagine Zukofsky reading Spicer somehow; I can imagine Spicer reading Zukofsky, but, I mean, there's things that always, that throw me on those people are little anecdotes that I hear about them. Well Spicer's alcoholism has always confused me, I can't understand how he got into that, and Zukofsky's psychosomatic reality has always bothered me, like Zukofsky's the kind of person that sounds like Glenn Gould, he'll have to put a glove on before he'll shake your hand.

DM Oh really?

VC Oh yeah. Like in the correspondence I've had with Zukofsky there's always a little note in it about how he is ill; maybe he's old, but there's a certain obsession that he has, also, with decay, or potential decay.

PC Would you elevate that to a sense of entropy, or is that what entropy means, anyway?

VC I talked about poetry as being "entropic airplanes of sense" which was just a flash phrase that I got, where, the suspension of a space between the words, like the active enjambment is what makes *my* poetry, and that's baldly what I think I'm doing. It's just taking a couple of words and putting them together, and in *Light Verse* it's words that almost rhyme. It's like rhyming "lit" with "ditch," like, I am consciously doing stuff like that. But it's not a working after rhyming, it's not coming to the word "lit" and searching for the word "ditch" at all. It's

(End of first side of cassette.)

PC One of the things, this may not lead into finishing what you were saying but I was going to go back to it anyway, sorry, is the other thing that I had sensed in what you were doing before hearing you read, was that there was a tremendously hermetic sense to what you were doing, very private, at first it seemed to me really very coldly intellectual, not an emotional thing at all.

VC The Hermit in the Tarot, is a hooded figure holding a lamp, and there's another poem somewhere, which posits myself as the hermit which is in fact the card which is identified with my sign. And it is just, I talk about myself as being "with light," almost the same way that you talk about being "with child," so that the crux is the visual.

DM OK, that leads me into something I wanted to ask you, it relates more to content, and that was a very strong sense of physical environment in all your work on the west coast, Gibsons, Roberts Creek, and so on, and very often that sense of light and water. Your poems that are located back east don't have any of that physical sense of place that I can remember, I might be wrong. What does the west coast, like, what does it mean to you?

VC Well, coming out here was coming, like coming into a cleaner light, a light that was visible, whereas I had been living in that strange gray town all that time, where winter light was, was very important, but I mean any other seasonal light seemed vague and undefinable, so incidentally a key book for me when I was younger was Margaret Avison's *Winter Sun* in which that whole thing is gotten down. She's done that in that book, she's talked about that environment and the light in that environment and it's, and you can see that in *her* work too, where, bingo, in the winter there's a definition of the light through snow, and just through clean air and the cold, that's the ideal definition, I mean that's my idea of definition, is just a clear light, and I'm not talking metaphysically at all, I'm just talking about plain ordinary clear light, one that isn't fogged.

DM And yet you have a sense that this light out here is also clear.

VC No, I'm saying that the light out here *is* clear and the light back there isn't.

DM Except in winter.

VC Except in winter, yeah. But that's the experience that I have about back east, is a real attachment to that experience, to that winter thing.

PC Does that tie in with the hermetic sense of yourself back east? Cause it seems to me to be a kind of

VC Because that's when you're active. You're cloistered in a situation where you can't really get out. But that *outside* is where the light is, so in fact you *do* get out, but it's a hermetic thing to get out because you're

PC Bundled up

VC Yeah, you're like the hermit, you know. And it's five o'clock at night and it's dark, so you need that lamp, and, I'd substitute what? conceptualising, for the lamp.

DM Right, right. Whereas a lot of the west coast stuff details the kind of

VC Oh, I had clear light in the afternoon in the summer, you know and I was amazed by it and it just opened me up completely so that I mean, what? everything was written, I mean not everything, but two thirds of it was written out here. Like I just, it opens me up.

DG What about the book *Back East*, does that sort of detail that, trip back

VC Well, I mean it's an ironic title because most of it was written out here. And it just posits the whole thing of *back*, *back* east, you know the elasticity of one's roots almost, one's *pulled* to that, sense of roots, and yet, one discovers release outside of one's roots.

DM Almost a flowering, and I keep getting this image of light seen through needles, fir needles, and you mention cones a lot

VC Cones and needles, fingers and hair.

PC I just wanted to bring this in, that great painting by Paul-Emile Borduas, "Jardin Sous La Neige," garden beneath the snow, which is very close to what you were saying, and to that sense of hermeticism in the east with the winter, yet it does force you in a way inside of yourself, which becomes that kind of open space there.

VC I wonder about "hermeticism" though. I mean, I can see what I'm doing as being oblique, and I can see it as being obscure, and I can accept that, but I don't know whether I can accept "hermetic" because, in fact, most people *can* relate, if they're listening, to what I'm saying, and I'm not worried about it, the obscurities, and the obliqueness.

DM Well, it's all in the language, you know, it's, I mean, it's not hermetic in the sense that H.D. is hermetic.

PC It's hermetic in the sense that Norman O. Brown has, of Hermes Trismagistus, the medium, and that closeness to the language itself where it does become, the transmitter of things, you're not forcing a message, you're letting what words *do* arrive speak, that's the sense of Hermes that I have.

VC One thing that came up last night, I don't know, I think it was Dwight and I that were talking about it, was how it was very difficult for people to come up to me afterwards and say, well I really liked that one poem, like you were the only person that actually did that, but then you've seen a lot of it before, so you have it available. But people who hadn't were hard-pressed to say, well, I liked this. And what people did say, was they liked *parts* of things, and I've heard you say that before. Most people that I've read to, say that, you know, I like *parts* of that.

DM Well that's how I could identify the poem I liked, was by a particular image.

VC And, like when I read in Ottawa, and I got feedback from Cid Corman and George Johnson whom I had dinner with, just before the reading, they both sort of said *that*, you know, they didn't qualify it by saying they *only* liked parts, and I can see how a particular focus in the direction of anyone's hearing is going to leave out a lot of what I do.

DM When you walk, like, to use your own image of road poetry, that you mentioned and you threw out in the reading today, each poem does take you on that walk down a particular, a particular road, you have an impetus going and then you have, say, a creek on one side and something else on the other, but you happen to, anyone *listening* happens to localize on the creek because it presents a nice cluster on the *way*.

DG You're still going down the road.

DM Yeah, right.

PC Are you aware of all the patterns of those tangents that you go on?

VC Sure. Sure. Well, that's about the only way that I rework a poem, is if I see a tangent happening which is unclear, I remove it. That's very simple. It doesn't matter whether the language is working or not, if it clutters the poem I remove it.

DG That's what I like about revision is just taking out, you know, the stuff that's gone bad.

DM Deadends.

VC Although I get very upset with my children, when they're picky about taking the brown spot out of an apple, because, to me, the ideal apple in their minds is one of these big, waxed, polished babies, that's got most of the nutrition taken out of it. And my sense of the apple is that the one that's lying on the ground, that's got a brown spot where it hit, is the real apple. And that's the one that I'm after. I'm not after the big shiny waxed apple that's sitting in the Safeway store. The bruises are very important.

DM Well, that leads me into another question that's sort of difficult for me to ask you because I don't know how to word it. The bruises, the brown spots. Why is it that so much of your work sort of focusses in on the bruises, on the, I don't know what other word to use for it, the bruised part of sex, the,

VC Cause that's the part I can't handle.

DM That's so, it's in a sense, it's like an innoculation?

VC Yeah, well, no, I don't want to be immune, I mean, I want to be able to feel, first of all, and the bruises happen. I mean I have no control over that, really, if I have control over that, then there's that aspect, I've got my thumb on the situation, and can control it. But if I take it off, and it becomes an equal element thing, then the bruises are going to happen, because you don't confront things directly without getting bruised. You can't. There's no way. You know, I'm a firm believer in tenderness, but at the same time, I keep getting the picture of the apple.

DM Yeah, yeah. And that's much more present than the tenderness. It's rare to find the tenderness in terms of sexuality.

PC I don't feel that at all. I felt an extraordinary amount of tenderness in the poems that dealt with sex today. I felt an extraordinary sense of, that pain, actually.

VC Well, a lot of the collaborations last night, though, I mean there's this whole thing happening in the collaborations,

DM Yeah! right!

VC But that's once again me suspending, something, to write with somebody else.

DM That's really *hard* for me as a woman to listen to, to a lot of that collaboration stuff.

VC Well, our whole discussion which has been going on for a couple of years now, has been extremely important to me, because I'm just understanding more, but I wasn't able to understand that before because nobody would *say* those things to me. I wasn't *hearing* those things. I wanted to understand what was going on, I wanted to understand how deeply I could touch somebody without bruising them. It had to be, tenderness was not tenderness at all. Tenderness was a holding back, tenderness was an almost touch or, you know, there's the tease aspect to tenderness which I'm never sure of. To me, you know, if you really need to hold on to something you hold on tight. You don't need to crush it, at all, but in fact the apple falls from the tree, and it gets bruised, and there's no way around it. You can't surround the orchard with styrofoam.

DM But there's, like you're still *talking* from that other point of view because it comes across as, as, going back to, you can't get enough satisfaction, it comes across in a kind of very unsatisfied manner.

VC Well. That's just honest expression of my feeling, you know, like I haven't really, in fact, gotten to the point where I feel that I've reached a plane with somebody, sexually. I want to be there, desperately, and that's where the desperation comes in.

DM And that's, so it's the wanting.

VC Sure. The wanting demands that I deal with all those things, and that I say all those things, and I'm saying them to myself, first of all, and because I understand my, the possibilities of my technique, I think it carries out to other people, now. I wasn't sure before.

DG I think there's something important about what Spicer said, about, that true poetry scared you, and what we were talking about, being tender and holding back, it comes, it gets said in the poem, can I say this? I think Victor leaves it *in*.

PC It comes back to that sense of first of all acceptance, and afterwards recognition again.

VC Like to me that's what happens, I mean the recognition comes *first*, there are too many pre-suppositions about a relationship, whether it's with a bunch of words on a page or whether it's with a bunch of people. If you presuppose that there is a way to relate, "you can't get no satisfaction." But if you, if you *accept*, whatever, whatever words are down on the page or whatever people are in the room, then through that, you can recognize, or not recognize. It's much easier, for me now, to see people right away. I really have a sense that I can see people right away, and the same for words. I can see words right away. When I write words down I can see them right away, and I know whether or not they're, they're saying something or not.

DM But do you ever have a sense that there are words that are knocking on the door but haven't opened it yet?

VC Oh yeah. Sure. Well, look, my whole reading of Zukofsky was that. Just coming back at it over and over again. Knocking on that door. Let me in!

DM And I guess, even the words, even those words that are knocking on the door, if you think back to the sense of touch as being informative for anyone who is blind, is a way of getting there, because you tap it all out and you finally find the crack

VC To go back to your question again, which was badly phrased

DM I know, I know, I thought of that, and I couldn't come up with a good phrase

VC The desire to touch is something that you have to really work up, like we discussed it so many times in letters, but we've never done it, and to me that's really important, to be able to get it down and consciously come out and say it, and blubber it out, however embarrassing it might sound, when you do get it out, to be able to do it with somebody who *is* going to respond, in a like manner, allows you almost, to, conceive of that touch. Because that's what's important. Like the touch itself is just so easy and, it's not the big problem, what's really important is the recognition after the acceptance, of it. And it's the same with a poem.

DM But like, I'm still stuck somewhere back *previous* to that, that's like with a kind of certain savage insistence, which comes across to me as savage because it's so *insistent*.

VC Well, that's me, I mean that's *my* savage insistence. Sure. I can see that. But it's somehow necessary for me to understand, how that works, before I can experience the tenderness that's necessary to get on to the plane. Because until I can, then I'm just, you know, three quarters of a person, as far as anybody else is concerned. I'm too wrapped up in something else, and not with what's there.

DM Oh yeah, that's so easy to do. And that's a constant risk. Like, I really identify with the kind of way you proceed in the writing, because I do the same, a similar kind of thing. And that's a constant risk. It's like being stuck back there, being side-tracked by all the manifestations of it, without just kind of going through, you know, through that open door.

PC That comes back to your sense of the spaces between the lines again, and that period with equidistant spaces between two phrases.

DM Janus the door that faced two ways.

PC Two ways, exactly. You're asking for something, though.

DM It has to do with savagery and I'm not sure, I can't get beyond that.

VC That's a contentious thing. I mean, like the savagery that's in the *content* of the work is difficult to handle, because, a.) one doesn't like to admit that about oneself, and yet, the intensity with which the writing approaches that savagery almost forces people, to admit it, to themselves, so that people have a difficult time, listening. I mean Warren, his parting shot to me last night was, you're a very disturbing man, and I understood exactly what he meant, you know. Like, somehow, I'd expressed a, just a universal disturbance that everybody's into now. It's not something that we can just sort of say, Oh yeah, and then next day we're gonna be different because that's not the way it works. You know, we're still fighting this thing.

DM Yeah, well, it becomes so huge as you're taking on that whole question of what is male and what is female, the definition of the sexes.

VC Well, that's been my concern, like in *Light Verse* it was naive as hell, that whole concern. But it's still there. And I see myself now, just coming out of that naivety, just barely coming out of it. I'm beginning to feel somehow mature, just as a man, as a sexual being, and as a social being.

DG I liked that idea about touch, that, you know, anybody can touch but unless you go further than that, the meaning of that, some larger, larger meaning.

DM Well, without, yeah, without a certain amount of consciousness, the touch is meaningless anyway.

DG The *recognition* of that.

VC And that's been a thing that I've dealt with since puberty, just wanting somehow to, for it to be important, for me to touch something. It has to be important to me, and if it isn't important to me then it's going to cheapen the touch when it becomes important.

PC And that's where the bruise comes in. Because that's the first visible sign.

VC But it *is* visible, and the fact that ninety nine percent of the people that we know still see it as invisible is maddening to me. That is why I'm writing what I'm writing. I feel it's a responsibility to keep writing what I'm writing.

DM You mean the collaborations?

VC No no. I mean *Stranger*.

DM Oh. Because I see the collaborations as *embodying* all that sense of meaningless touch. And that's why I really find it hard to listen to them.

VC Yeah, yeah.

PC Well that's writing out a lot of that shit that does come off the top of the head; and it has to.

VC Well, it's also the people that I'm writing with, too, the trouble with the collaborations is that it's not me, it's this other being that's been created by these people and all the stuff with David Young is working out his sexual problems, and it's very important for me, he's just another person, but he's in fact working out his sexual problem, and I mean a lot of the violence that comes in there is his, not mine.

PC I appreciated those poems very much, or those prose pieces, because it expressed so much of my own violence in ways that I haven't been able to get through, I mean there are doors and there are doors and there's a door to expressing the violence, and there's a door for getting *through* that violence.

VC There's a prelude to orgasm in a man which is frightening, really frightening, because you get to the point where it's easy to call upon just any old image that you want to call upon, and as soon as you do that, there's a bruise, inherent, in the orgasm, and no wonder people are, fucked up, because they've gotten to the point where they're aiming at an ideal, and they can't get there, and they're constantly frustrated by it.

DM Do you think that's particularly true of North American, male youth?

VC Oh, I don't know, I don't know European male youth.

DM Or is that like Marilyn Monroe and all that kind of stuff. All that stuff you were talking about in the fifties, I mean it was so strong for us when we grew up in the fifties.

PC But Daphne, you were talking about *male* youth, what about *female* youth, too. I mean when women say, hold me tight, you know, they're asking for that, you know, real pressure, against the skin, that does equivalate that whole sense.

DM Now that's a whole other bag. That gets into the whole protective,

VC Yeah, I wouldn't hear a bruise in that. I would hear, you know.

PC *Really?* I hear a bruise in that.

VC "Come around," that's what a woman is saying. That's not just protection either, it's, I mean a woman who wants to have content in that, and so often all she can do is *provide* content, she doesn't really encompass content, and so there has been a formal situation for women for a long time, just because it's been set up that way.

DM That's really interesting. The psychological reversal of the physiological. Yeah, very interesting. I think it's true. *That* provides a sense of definition.

VC Uhuh. It provides a base, for me. I mean I can, I feel much more confident about my own sexuality, simply because I can, say those things about myself, I can say, Okay, I've had these fantasies, and I've even tried to work them out, on the real plane, and it seems to me quite obvious from the work, that it didn't work out, you know, group sex and all that. And the reason that it didn't work out, was, you know, the whole mathematical thing that happens in, *Stranger*. Did I bring it? Where is it

We are three
        in the bed
our selves until one
        moves away making two
sets of particulars
        verging on division
or union

        The Third makes all
indivisible by anything but one
                or itself

This one insists
        she is one and a half

& the Third
halved by the other's design
slinks off leaving two
to divide & fall
into the arms of a difficult splendour

And it was just, its prime numbers, it's all about prime numbers, and Judy's educated me on prime numbers, she was obsessed with, prime numbers, and like one and three, are the first prime numbers, the self, and the others, and, once you realize that two, is, something else, two is just *the* most difficult thing to maintain. Like three, and you can go through life in threes, and you can go through life in ones, but the ultimate risk is to go through life in twos because it's constantly divisible. And one is available in two, but all it creates is two ones, and so, like any relationship that you have has to *deal* with that: how you're going to, to me it's just two words, enjambing again, that's what's happening in my language, is that, in fact, you're going one word at a time, and you might make phrases out of three words, but in fact, you have got to put the first word up against the second word, and the second word against the third word, and the three words are separated by that word in the middle, etc., etc. So it's happening in the language all the time.

DM But you know, that careful one-to-one-walking, that kind of action you've just described for the seeing. I hear you moving in your, in that last, in "A Proposal," away from that care, I mean the care is still there, it's not *care-less,* but it's not the primary thing, I *hear* a large sense, like if I'm going to use musical terms, a phrase building up, instead of the note, plus note, plus note. You have a larger sense of the phrase which I really liked to hear, very much a moving kind of emotional line, which I don't think I've heard very often, except perhaps, in some of the poems in *Stranger.*

VC Well, the poem to you that's in *Stranger* does that. I mean, I very seldom actually get on to that, and I don't know why. Maybe because I break it up too much. I mean, I'm not confident with, in stringing that melody out.

DM I think you get so fascinated by the units that you're dealing with that you get into those,

VC You know, I'm very waylaid by my own intelligence.

DM Yeah, yeah,

DG I think that has something to do with why you are working in collaboration, so that you can accelerate that intelligence, that you are interested in.

DM I want to hear more about this accelerating.

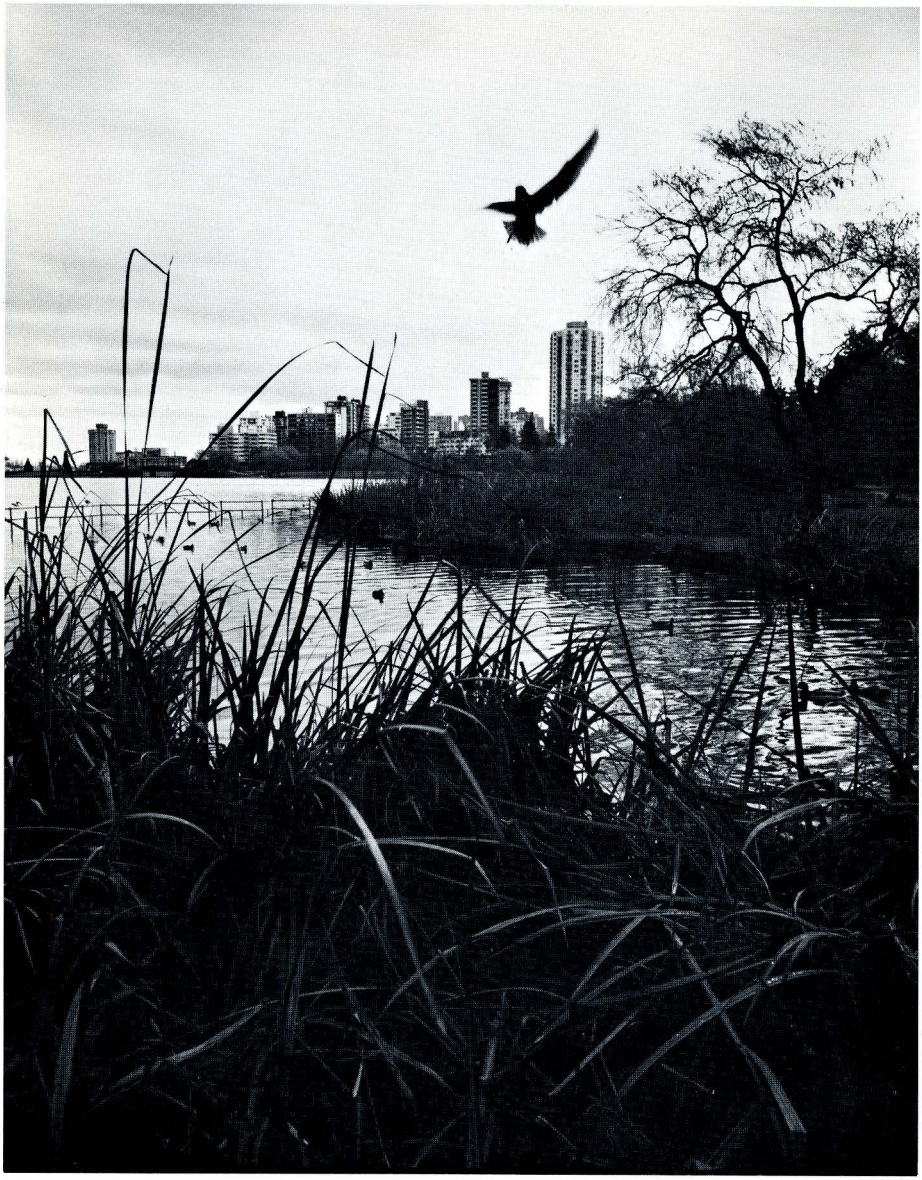
DG Well we were talking about going down the highway before, and sort of looking to the right, there's a pond, and *if* it works, there it is, but you know, the writer keeps going: he sees something else. And I think what I see in collaboration is the ability to move faster, down that highway, or something.

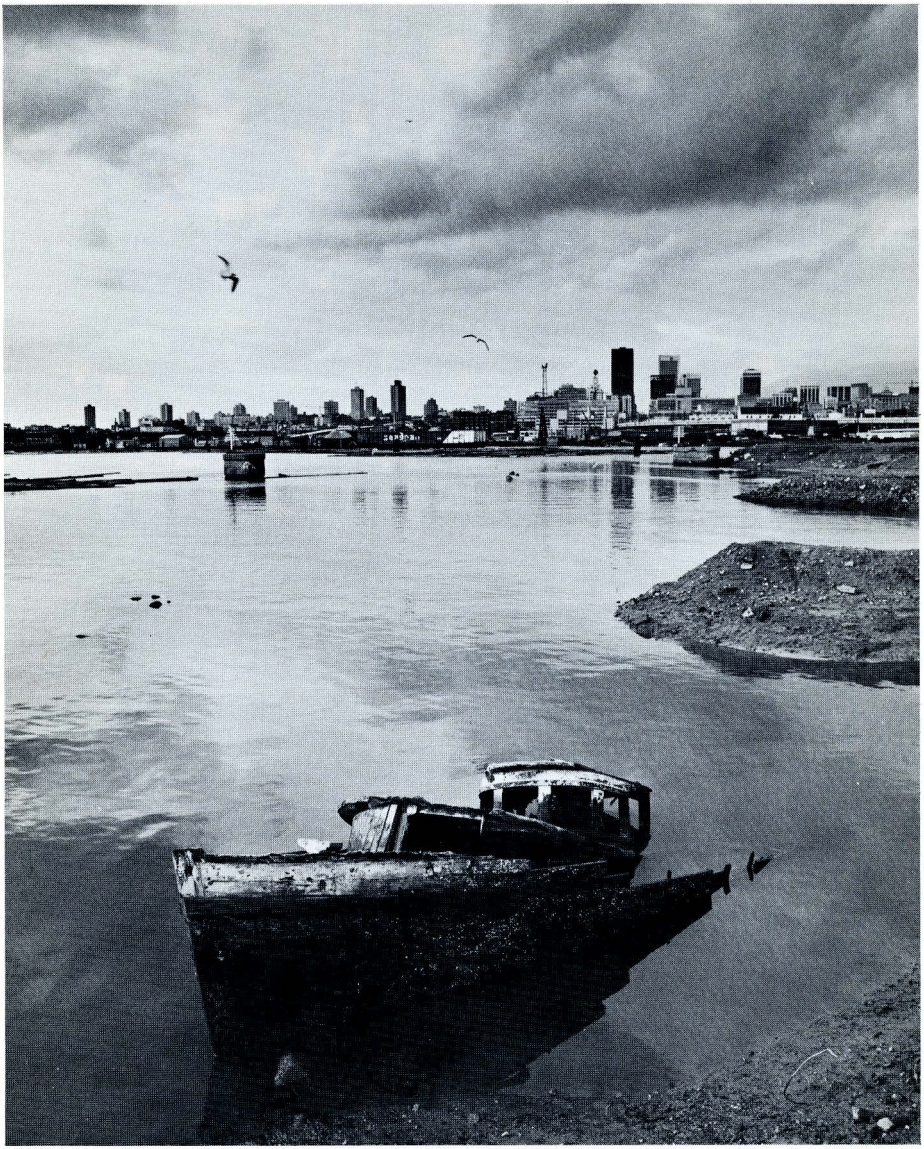
DM Yeah, to do a kind of instantaneous seeing at the same time.

VC Yeah, collaboration isn't walking, it's driving.

(End of cassette)

Rex Weyler / SEVEN PHOTOGRAPHS





Hope Anderson / TH STREET LAMP

light glitters, a perpetual moon
static, hovers where th red bird

perched, hums th mating call
with me, th peacock drill

upturned bill and tail
caws lover, th answer comes out

th echo of th sound of a word
comes out as hollow as th moon

comes, nestles with that bird
away! it stays, it waits

it stays as fire stays with frost
two by two these things
two fires
never to be too equal

David Wilk / TWO POEMS

expressions of breathing, that is, the soul

for such sound
as breath is,
its mark —
    the 1st word
spoken
is a whisper

the time it takes to measure up & blow it out

suddenly there
as in
'the holy forest of the soul'
banging
at the gates of
resonance, the physical

    word/& image is

the face of the needle
thru space
is the consecration of the act of speaking
its truth is seeing
where it goes
once it is out

10.30.73

where we go in love

add em up, each way
gets you there
faster than
you can count/
this in things,
naming, counting
the distances between us,
between
what I say
& what I see:
that's where you are
& where I stand
holding my breath
counting as
the seconds disappear
these mythical points in time
that our bodies contain,
are made of
the stuff we stand on
stands on us
our names, our visions
of how & who
we come to be
that's where you are,
precisely
& no further

11.13.73 for Geof Walker

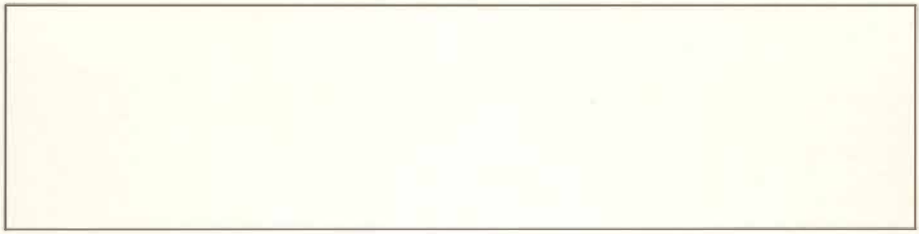
Peter Huse / EARTH

Plowing on hills is where
earth meets diesel fumes rippling
around a neck and face, fills
mosquito repellent smeared there
with dust. A quart sealer
of apple juice and sandwiches
lie under a tree by the road.
Battle River country, 1952.
I snag on the barb wire.

Trail, 1948, the year
silt goes into sandbags to keep
the Columbia out of the two-please
hole in the Odeon wicket.
The Daniel Street Dodgers build
an underground cabin to smoke in
by stacking bags like an igloo
and end by burying Barclay standing,
tickling his head with silt before we
dig him out of the mountain.

In Butler Park by the river,
earth becomes clay, too, when it
rains and clogs into spikes,
hardens into a hook slide
into third base.

Higher up slopes of No-man's Land
burnt by smoke from the smelter,
we build another cabin, secret
like a trap, roof of trees
at ground level, tarpapered
with cardboard and leaves and silt,
entrance hidden in trees. I find
evidence of someone falling through
in our absence.



Back in time and east of Kinsella,
we carve that form like
a communal grave, neatly under
poplars, cutting some for the roof.
A toad squats in the wet clay,
shining.

The dirt of the world is well worn.
Sand surrounds pillboxes at Calais,
drifting against the shell-holes
and graffiti.

Our bodies know our past
and future, digging into the ground,
pulling the earth over us,
relaxing at last in darkness.
We feel, not knowing what
in our feelings lie, where from
our school of feeling.

Whose fingers did this
dirt fall through before it
came to us, its fertility waning
from burn-out or log-out of trees,
to be killed or enriched by chemicals?
Whose body, whose idea
do I hold in my hand?
Its wet weight dries and slips
through my fingers. My hand now
is empty, its own earth.

I wash my dirty hands.
Themselves, and all they know,
dissolve cleanly.
The smudge in the space left,
I cannot answer for.

Bob Rose / from *BOAT WORKS*

Monday evening:

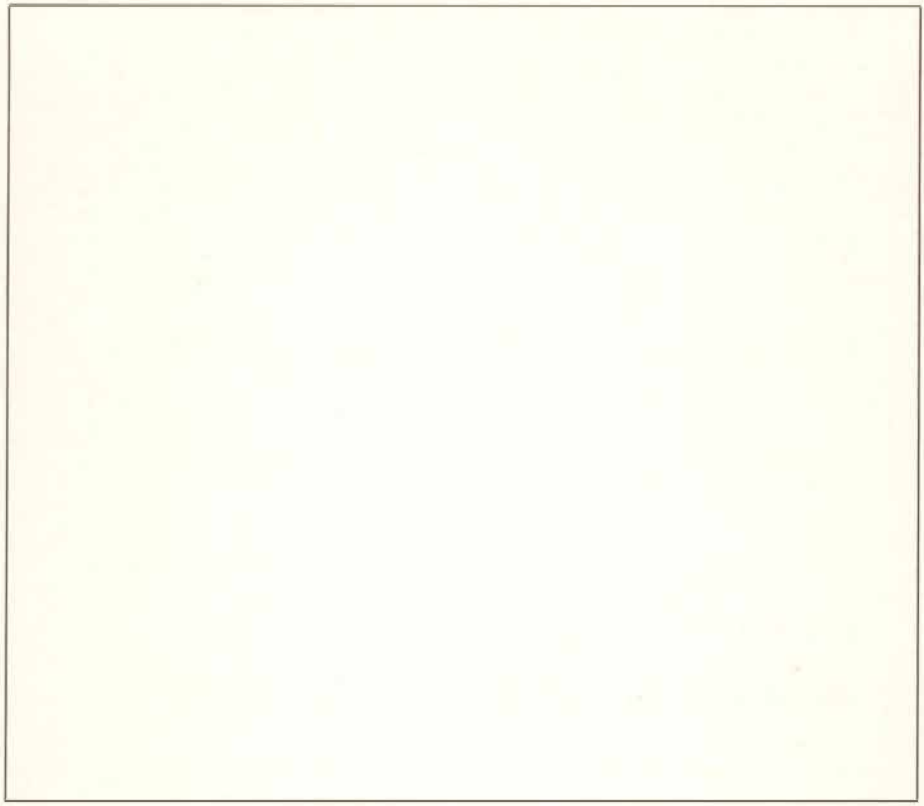
Retreat, after dinner, washing dishes, conversation touching on patterns and free will. Don Cherry's notes in Niagra Frontier Review 1965. The Spiritual Man. Trusting, impulsive, blundering.

Indeed, this room a retreat, a quietude, colorful, graced with a beauty I can now call my own.

All day, again, as Friday, at the bark pile. By 12 o'clock it was cleared down to the tracks. A Herculean labor: A pile of bark and wood chips averaging 6 feet high, 8 feet wide and 10 feet deep. By hand. Piece by piece, beginning at the top, with the dry most recent, longer pieces. Digging deeper the leavings grew smaller, more moist, surrounded by the drying silt of the Fraser bottom, the same encasing the salvaged logs penned against the river and the tide.

A high tide today mid-day, the water lapping the mill pilings where Friday the mud had extended for yards, exposing the cedar and fir chunks stuck in the grey ooze.

By hand, piece by piece
by the arm load
dumped in the wheel barrow
sitting on planks. Trans-
fer. Inter-twined bark vertically
arranged, wheeled to the new
pile around the corner, under
the mill.



Under the mill, my labor's efforts
grew
enormous, by the arm full, by the barrow
full, the entangled bark re-arranged
into a new order clearing
the ancient way, disclosing
the carriage and tracks.

Today the mill was silent, the toothed wheels hung motionless, log cradle, motionless. The river ebbed and flowed with the tides. Rain pelts against the tin roof of the boatshed.

Gilchrist logging jack. Gardner Marine Diesel

"Proper Knowledge of the landscape protects love" — Sharon Fawcett

By some agent, I was shown the circuits or conduits which circumscribe the world, the great tubes full of rushing fluid. Okeanos

Zonko / THREE POEMS

IS MURDER MURDER OR MURDER

(a blues for Gertrude

love love?
the knife the knife?
sales tax sales tax?

loving you is murder
murder understands me
in my bones

murder in my kitchen
murder on my toast
murder in my living room

slain in my seat
jumping to my feet
I hope I needn't repeat love love

the body
the body needs
needs
fine white wine

settles for
knocking off
a beer
killing some time

sometimes you make a killing
and sometimes you face
a fall on your face

is murder murder or murder
something else international
international pastime
international dateline
international cartels

the
(money money)
line expands
the dead have
opened up their hands

love love
sleep sleep
work work

circle cycle
or circle
coming round
to square the sung
a song in which
our hero is hung.

WHICH IS WHICH

or would you say
it depends
on which you wish

if you want a blue one
a blue one
if you want a red
a red

I suppose you read
where this guy Heisenberg
had a tea kettle

found a watched pot
will boil, but.

Boiling madly
here's Doubt's condensation

playfully Penelope rolls her
disintegrating tapestry out.

It's not me there.

BOTH TRUE

(for V & K

both
true

blue
too

two
one

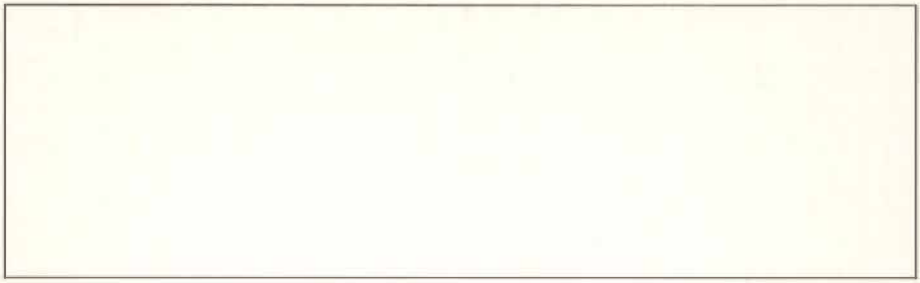
another
and

the world to boot?

the push of the question mark
to exclamation!

Zukofsky dies
part way
into this poem
the fire tells me

the trees change
the insects
blaze in their burrows



this is a door tree
rooted on its hinges
rooted in the image of
the corruptibility of means
we feed you fire

Zukofsky

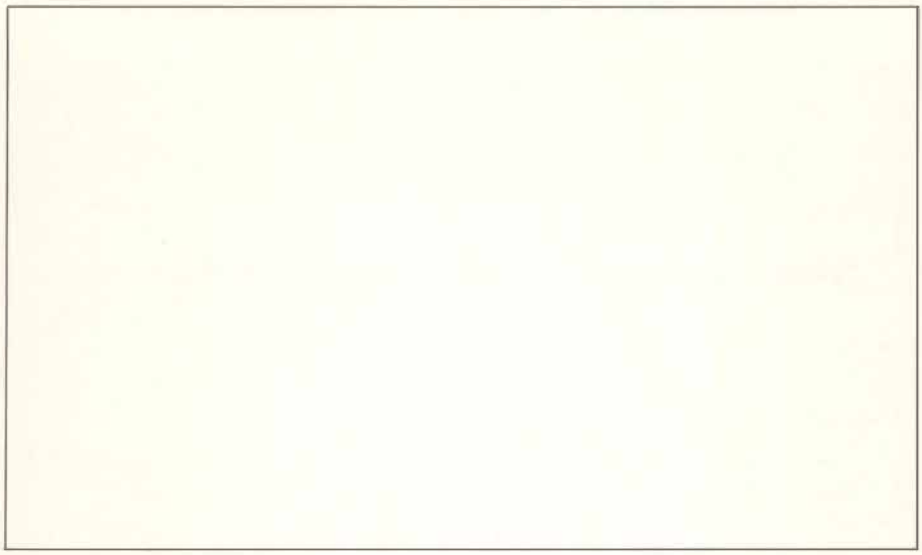
a miniature
umbrella handle tree
almost vinelike
in appearance

"keep silent
for faults of vision
always come
from question
and answer"

unleavened
true to their experience
and
true to their nature
unleashed

Appearance and Reality
came into
the store today

I put it on the shelf
in its light green jacket
& Further Speculations
by T. E. Hulme



out in the rain
in his sleeves, philosophical Van
and out in the rain
under her smile, proud Kathy
come to this
—going together.

My heart gets soggy
I smoke and smoke
perspiration & Zukofsky
evaporates from this poem
leaving the hair
under my arms
crisp

electric both
true
heart
true hair

through thinking here?

this is not the end.
this is simultaneously.

Stan Persky / NOTEBOOK ENTRIES

Jan. 1, 1974 Spicer

. . . First dream of the new year: coming up a street (later it is vaguely identifiable as Berkeley — on Telegraph there is a cafe-restaurant, Robbie's, which is where the people who had gone to Berkeley in the 'old days' — right after World War II -- still went whenever they were in town — though, now — 1963, I guess — other places were more fashionable among the younger generation of students and the first sprinklings of what would, by 1968, be known as 'street people') I am surprised to see, at the crossing facing me (I look up at the stoplight for the flash of the white man in a black background that means, Walk, Jack Spicer (in his book, *Language*, the grapheme, stoplight, appears).

I'm filled with welling up and warmth of intense love. And the awe of the miraculous. The shock of seeing someone returned from the dead.

I rush across the street. He's glad to see me. I want to embrace him — to bury myself in his hug. Shake hands. He is with another person, unshaven 2-3 day growth of stubble, very close-cropped black hair, pale white flesh as though he'd been in jail for a long time: Jim Alexander. Later, it seems fitting that the ghost-Spicer should appear with one he loved in his life.

Next scene. I'm in a large room, rather barren furnishings. Spicer has left (for a moment). Jim is there. Ronnie Primack appears. George Stanley. Both of them much younger, their flesh less *used* than it now is (e.g., cracked wrinkles around George's eyes). That's the word I often attach to the skin in thinking of aging. I see it as a material that gets used.

I'm sitting on top of a double-bunk. Someone asks if we should call Russell Fitzgerald. Oh no, not him, I say in exaggerated tones. Then the dream turns as I begin asking, in the voice of Spicer, and

in exactly his manner of making others see a thing that appears quite ordinary as something suspicious and with motivation: Just who is this Spicer? I ask several times.

The only thing that happens in the room is that George — who's wearing the kind of sweater I'm now wearing — a v-neck pullover — the type worn by college students in the 50s — wheels with annoyance, — I'm spoiling it, this return — I see him turned at an angle, from the height of my perch.

Each time I question the existence of this Spicer new questions occur to me. Where has he been all these years? Is he an android of some sort? Is he a ghost?

Wake up in the middle of the night. Joyous at Spicer's return and terrified for having seen through the illusion of Spicer's return.

Sat Jan. 5

Here.

[Jan. 10?, Jan. 19?, "33"?, Jan. 27 from "A Mirror Walking Along A Highway"?, Jan. 30]

Feb. 5 Stars

Gerard Malanga interview in *Gay Sunshine*: a gross-out.

Check this classic utterance: "I am not any less of a poet because of my being a star. It's just that most poets and all publishers and anyone connected with poetry won't accept you as a poet if you are a star. That's why I've not been asked by an establishment publishing house to have a book published, and yet my credentials far exceed *all* poets of my generation covering roughly ten years . . . and they would be the first to admit that what I say is true, although more times than not their books don't go past a first printing . . . "

Funny, and surprisingly, I examine this statement and the meanings of it change for me; it has some shimmer. First impulse was just to say: look at that, eeechh. Or a removed, urbane: Beyond the posturings . . . Where the star is such a star he has to tell you he's a star, or at another point (the interview crossed with photographs of Malanga and photos he's taken himself), he quotes verbatim an old admirer's blurb about himself that compares him favorably with the 'genius' of Rimbaud, and after this meticulous rendition, modestly allows it isn't quite so.

Beyond the posturings it's kind of pitiful. But it doesn't go beyond the posturing — as he indeed lets us know — the crucial remark, repeated: "I get such a rush out of being me!"

So, within the posturing, if one isn't disgusted (and finally, I'm not), there's a charm. Some actual shimmer, the old homosexual courage of wearing that frayed cloth with sewed-on sequins, that dimestore paste, and having the guts to play it like jewelry, making it jewelry on the strength of your nerve.

Someone taught him that being slightly outrageous, statements choked with the annoyance of slights you've incurred, and all past peeves combined with a grandiose self-evaluation that is self-conscious of its own continuous faux pas, is a way to be. Skirmishes, catfights within a dying culture.

British coal miners. Click-click. Massive strike vote. Like Malanga's photographs. Begrimed men from the collieries. Ted Heath mock-reasonable pap. Situation narrows. If not a money offer, then a general election. Or is it general strike vs. general election.
One photo in *Gay Sunshine* has Malanga, a look of thorough innocence detached from the 'personality' rattling along in the adjacent columns of type, holding in his lap a sketch of himself by Larry Rivers. The message of the photo is that the creature behind the quickie portrait is so much more total than the artifact and yet his transparence — more transparent, more opaque than the drawing's transparence, opacity — makes him available to any and all fantasy. I fall for him.

Last night in the Ambassador. Circles of drunken men cast around the orange terrycloth-topped tables. Yellowish beer. Mostly older than me. This is how they live. Getting sloshed myself. This is how I live.

"I can't go on." I write that on a piece of yellow note-paper, tape it up on the study door, so that it's not a statement, but a drawing. 3 or 4 points of — this can get mechanical, and will, where the question goes unanswered: is it meaningful to live this pain in this particular way if Bri doesn't notice it as a pain lived *for* him. Yes, it's meaningful to live this pain this way.

1-2-3. Battered young transvestite talks to grizzled, wiry man in workclothes, duck hunter's cap, age 45, caricature of tobacco-spitting okie from anti-gay *Deliverance*. Twenty-ish blond youth in

blue rayon skier's jacket with white fluorescent trim — particular bounce in his walk on way to can — flashes. Right in front of me, young man in white shirt, actually a blouse, black baggy pants, exists as a possibility until he draws into conversation older man with white socks from next table over; though he crosscuts memories of two people I've known years apart, his every mannerism and mode of speech (I half overhear; tone of infectious enthusiasm) is curiously alien from the entire culture. I can't locate any source of his style. Rough hustler shadowed in ringlets of tumbling black hair, otherwise ushering young women up the aisle in and out front and back doors of pub, stoops over to unsentimentally kiss slightly smudged tough-looking man of 40 sitting in quartet adjacent.

These illuminated vignettes, etched on smoky glass, cart me home into the dream figures who never quite assume the right spatial relationships before I wake and watch a film of frost steam off the tarpaper roof in the morning sunshine.

"How the hell are ya?" the man at the urinal over says. "Fair," I say. "Are ya married?" (Another micro-proof of the depth of the oppression that he even has to consider that assumption in a gay pub.) Shake my head no. "Are ya in the homosexual life?" Syntax blurs. Shake my head yes. Are ya married there? No. Incomprehensible last sentence lost in his laughter, he half-hugs me, I'm pissing, experience the sudden pleasure (the relief measures the guardedness I go by daily) of how unthreatening this is.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

bp NICHOL has been travelling across Canada with his sound poetry group, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. They gave an exceptionally fine reading at The Western Front recently, and we look forward to having bp and the Horsemen at Capilano College next year.

JACK HODGINS' stories are always a pleasure to publish. Jack lives in Lantzville and teaches English at the Nanaimo High School. He is one of B.C.'s most authentic fiction writers. In 1973 he won the prestigious President's Medal from the University of Western Ontario, for a story in *Wascana Review*. Jack has previously published in *The Capilano Review*, *Event*, *Canadian Forum*, *The Journal of Canadian Fiction*, *Alphabet*, *Descant*, *Northwest Review*, *North American Review*, and *The Antigonish Review*.

NANCY THAYER is a West Vancouver resident. She has published stories in *Nimrod*, *Kansas Quarterly*, and the Spanish magazine *Cuadernos*.

JANICE HARRIS is a Capilano College student majoring in Arts. She had a summer job in a hotel, out of which experience the story published here emerged. Janice is an Associate Poetry Editor of *The Capilano Review*.

AUDREY THOMAS lives in Vancouver and on Galiano Island. Following an *Atlantic* "Firsts" publication in 1965, Audrey has published a collection of stories, *Ten Green Bottles* (Bobbs Merrill, 1967), *Mrs. Blood*, a novel (Bobbs Merrill, 1970), two novellas, *Munchmeyer & Prospero on the Island* (Bobbs Merrill, 1972), and her latest novel is *Songs My Mother Taught Me* (Bobbs Merrill & Talonbooks, 1974). She has recently completed a draft of her new novel, tentatively titled *Blown Figures*. Audrey's plays have been heard on the CBC of late. She has won several Canada Council awards.

DON DRUICK continues to pursue The Great Canadian Metamusic in and around Vancouver.

VICTOR COLEMAN, one of the founders of Canada's original little press, Coach House, has lived and written in Toronto for a number of years. He edited the little mag *Island* and now (more often than not) edits *Is*. His books of poetry include *one/eye/love*, *Light Verse*, *Strange Love*, *Parking Lots*, *America*, and he has a new book, *Stranger*, appearing from Coach House soon. He recently gave very fine readings at The Western Front and Capilano College.

DAVID YOUNG has been experimenting with prose, both in his own writing and in collaboration with Victor Coleman. He is currently editing the 3rd edition of the Coach House anthology, *The Story So Far*.

GERRY GILBERT's poem printed here is from the series *Canada's Top Poet. Flow Dylan: Robert Duncan* was in *Open Letter* 2/4. *Roy Kenzie Kiyooka* was in *artscanada* magazine No. 158/159. Gerry is at present working with Peter Power on a 16 mm. movie project, *25 Views of Vancouver*; with Bob Amussen publishing & editing *The BC Monthly*; with Dwight Gardiner arranging the *Monday Night Readings* at The Western Front; with Michael de Courcy on a book, *The History of Intermedia/Vancouver*; and with Michael Goldberg on *VIDEO/BAG*, at the Burnaby Art Gallery in Fall 1974. Gerry can be reached at *Canadas National Magazine*, Box 8884, Station H, Vancouver 5. "Boycott the Postal Code."

WARREN TALLMAN has published a number of critical articles on contemporary Canadian and American poetics in *Canadian Literature* and other leading literary magazines. His latest publication is *Three Essays on Creeley*, a Beaver Kosmos Folio from Coach House Press.

REX WEYLER immigrated to Canada from the U.S. in 1971. He teaches photography at the Gallery of Photography, North Vancouver, and has exhibited his work several times in the Lower Mainland in connection with the Aural History Institute. He is "interested in investigating the way in which people control and are controlled by their self-made as well as imposed environments."

HOPE ANDERSON is a young poet from Montreal who has recently moved to Vancouver. This is his first publication in *The Capilano Review*.

DAVID WILK edits *Truck* from Carrboro, North Carolina (Box 86), and has published a selection of poems called *Sassafras* (1973, a Tansy publication). He is presently working on a field guide to wild edible plants of the North East coast.

PETER HUSE is also a composer, a "dynamite scat singer" (Zonko), has taught at Sir George Williams University, and presently directs a project at the Communications Centre at Simon Fraser University. His recent book, *Prairie Poems*, appeared in the Caledonia Writing Series (Prince George).

BOB ROSE ran the Press of the Black Flag Raised at Cambridge, Mass., and has published some of his poetry in the *Georgia Straight Writing Supplement*. He now lives in Vancouver where he is apprenticing as a boat builder. The selection in this issue is from a larger manuscript detailing the intersections of this work with his writing.

ZONKO now lives in Vancouver. *A Palinode* (November 1972) is available from Golem Press, 52 Sanchez Street, San Francisco, or from the Richard Pender, "the Perceptive Reader's Bookstore," in Vancouver.

STAN PERSKY works at Mental Patients Association in Vancouver, and writes for *The Western Voice* newspaper. His recent publications include *The Day* (1972) and *Slaves* (1974) from New Star Press.

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Warren Tallman, &
an interview

photography by REX WEYLER

poetry by PETER HUSE
BOB ROSE
ZONKO

& notebook entries by STAN PERSKY

THE CAPILANO REVIEW