Series 3, Box 9: Material about Rakosi.

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RAKOSI, CARL (November 6, 1903):

[redacted]

I was born overseas. As a result, [redacted] the first two languages I heard in my family were Hungarian and German. What special spin or tone that has given to my English I don't know. Nothing that I am aware of, but I wouldn't bet on it. Next, I don't remember ever seeing my mother, don't remember her ever touching me or holding me when I was little. My father left her when I was only one year old and my brother Lester and I were brought up for the first six years of my life by her mother in a small town in southern Hungary. My mother lived somewhere in our house but always out of sight and hearing. Not that I felt anything was missing....no mother could have been more motherly than my grandmother....but it has left a great mystery in my biological past. A big chunk is missing, the part that would have told me who I am biologically. As a consequence, there has been a slight psychic discontinuity, both things which look as if they belong in the making of a poet-self.

I have no memory of how I learned English. I was only six then and had joined my father and step-mother in Chicago. I must have picked it up on the playground from the other boys. All I remember is that one day I didn't know a word and the next thing I knew I was speaking it.

In Gary, Indiana, where we moved next, the principal's office, after giving me a battery of tests, suddenly moved me two grades ahead of my age group. This meant that all through grammar school I was the smallest kid in class and that in high school and university I was always two years younger than the others. I had no trouble keeping up with my school work but had to plug hard to keep in sports.

We settled finally in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Like the other boys, I was out all day, playing baseball and soccer and basket-ball and ice hockey and running and swimming....not football, I was too light for that....fiercely engrossed, hating every minute I had to spend away from them to do house chores. In fact, I don't remember having any inner life until my junior year in high school when, after years of passing the public library on my way elsewhere, I decided to investigate that extraordinarily quiet building, looking like a graceful Grecian temple set in a small park, to find out what was inside.

That is when Nietzsche and Huneker and Dickens and Tolstoy and Chekhov and Gorky....too many to mention them all....entered my life and I became spellbound, their junkie (we had no books at home), a kid with a secret life. A year later I wrote a paper on George Meredith for my English class. The teacher's notes in the margin showed extraordinary respect for my insight and rapport, and the dizzy thought raced through my mind that I might have been born to be one of that great company, that, in any case, my road lay in that direction. Then at the University of Chicago I wrote my first poems and after that I knew that poetry was my calling. For the next three years at the University of Wisconsin I did nothing else and thought of nothing else. It became my identity, my very character, but just how this came about is beyond me.

Coming after Pound and Eliot and Williams and Stevens, all of whom influenced me in at first different ways, the course I eventually took after the usual years of groping and imitative work, led me to a kind of poetry that was called Objectivist. Associated with me in that name were Louis Zukofsky, George Oppen and Charles Reznikoff. You might say Pound's axioms on writing re-educated me and whatever I wrote after that, followed those axioms. They made such basic sense [redacted] that they became my second nature. To all intents and purposes they were my principles and it became unthinkable for me to treat subject matter evasively or to use any word that did not (to use Pound's expression) "contribute to its presentation." Never, in other words, to be prolix or flaccid or unnecessarily abstract. Doing this, I found, made it safe to pour one's heart and mind into the writing.

My poetry is, on the whole, lyrical and contemplative, grounded always in reality and character. When not lyrical, as in my AMERICANA and DROLES DE JOURNAL, it is [redacted] satirical, or humorous, or [redacted] ironic, little gremlins that can't make up their minds whether to laugh or curse. My prose is epigrammatic, towards [redacted] which I seem always to be drawn.

Carl Rakosi

LAWRENCE FIXEL

FROM UNDERSTANDING TO EXPRESSION: RAKOSI'S PROSE

We are witnessing, in the last few years, a return of ideas, of thought, as a medium of exchange among poets, and between poets and non-poets. The period of the 60's and 70's, featuring the pursuit of "consciousness", the self-display of the "Me Generation", appears now almost as a residue. Poets are giving talks, writing reviews and essays, participating in discussions of issues important to the whole community. And all of this, whether it serves primarily an aesthetic or a social principle, takes place, of course, in prose. Which raises a double question: the quality of the prose, as well as the quality of expressed thought.

We are fortunate, therefore, to have the recent example of Carl Rakosi's COLLECTED PROSE. (National Poetry Foundation, University of Maine at Orono, 1983). Here the quality of prose and the quality of thought -- in a gathering of reminiscence and memoir, of brief reflections and aphorisms -- sustain each other. Understanding and expression work together in a dialectical whole that includes the self, language and the world.

Rakosi begins with a brief foreword: "The test of prose is whether it can escape into metaphor. If it can, it needs purifying. Ordinarily, therefore, I avoid prose, for there is nothing I like better than to escape into a metaphor. But I am also ironic and like to romp, and occassionally write prose which I strive, against my nature, to make atomic and as hard and tight and natural as a hickory nut. "

From these opening sentences then we are introduced to Rakosi as poet and prose writer; we learn of his inclination toward wit and irony, his regard for both thought and feeling.

We see at once the double recognition of temperament and personality as a source, carefully balanced with a sense of accountability toward the language. We hear a distinctive voice, witness a special conjunction of the work and play of the mature mind. We sense that for Rakosi there is a basic fulcrum of mind- spirit- character -- in sharp contrast to those whose work seems based more upon ego- shadow- substance. Burton Hatlen, in the essay that appears as an Afterword to this volume, quotes Rakosi: "It takes extraordinary character to adhere at all times to sincerity, honesty and discriminating particularity. There are reasons for this. One is the elevated expectations of writing itself. Another is the high rhetorical temperature of poetry. The third is ego." (page 50)

How accurate, how relevant is this assessment? I have just finished reading Richard Kostelanetz review of a one volume anthology of prose written by poets: CLAIMS FOR POETRY, edited by Donald Hall, University of Michigan Press, 1982, which appears in the March/ April, 1985 issue of The American Book Review. While praising Hall's careful, balanced editing, Kostelanetz finds abundant examples of "awful thinking": "The principal problem appears to be the apparent belief that the practice of poetry provides privileges, if not pomposities, that would normally be unacceptable. " Reading Rakosi's aphorisms one realizes how this happens -- "Whatever exercises in solipsism may be for the poet, they are boring to others." (pps. 29-30) "The larger the crowd, the larger the rhetoric." (p. 31) In my own terms, the need for expression is ungoverned by any intense effort at understanding.

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I have refrained so far from offering information to locate and identify Rakosi as an octogenerian, one of the Objectivist poets, along with Zukovsky, Oppen and Reznikoff. His writing career begins with publication in the Little Review, and in Pound's The Exile , continues with the publication of his Selected Poems, by New Directions, in 1940. There is a long publishing silence until the appearance of the poems in Amulet, in 1967. This is followed by: Ere Voice, 1971, Ex Cranium, Night, 1975, Droles de Journal, 1981, History, 1981, Spiritus, I, 1983. And still forthcoming is the COLLECTED POEMS. (Also from the National Poetry Foundation -- in 1985) .

There is obviously a remarkable story behind all of this, beyond the scope of this essay. It would seem though that Rakosi has a special regard for the power and integrity of the unexpressed. (My own reference here is to a conjunction of the title of two books by George Steiner: "Language And Silence", and "The Tower Of Babel".) For readers who want to know more -- besides the almeady mentioned Afterword by Burton Hatlen,-- there is an essay by Michael Heller in Montemora #8. (Heller is also the author of a book on the Objectivists published this year by Southern Illinois University Press.)) Reviews of the COLLECTED PROSE have appeared recently: in Sulfur # 11 by August Kleinzahler, and by George Evans in Three Penny Review, Spring, 1985.

My own contribution to this discussion, as already indicated, focusses on a dialectic between understanding and expression. Whether in poetry or in prose, there is a need to express something, to understand something. Sometimes these

efforts coincide and complement each other. Sometimes there is pursuit of one at the expense of the other. (The examples given earlier.) There is an experience of a world encountered as visible, tangible, expressible. But this is permeated with the sense of what remains invisible, intangible, inexpressible. Another way of saying this: we experience a present, physical reality that is in constant dialectic with a "timeless", symbolic, metaphysical reality. We have to deal with what is both imminent and immanent. The poet selects his images, metaphors, concepts -- and occassionally, as here, his aphorisms -- as a way of bridging these different realities. Sometimes he finds a language that serves to "translate" and interpret these worlds, proivding passage back and forth. Sometimes he can only express the paradox and ambiguity that indicate the impossibility of the task. Examples from other poets that come to mind: "The fear that defeats and dreams are one". (Wallace Stevens) "No defeat is made entirely of defeats." (William Carlos Williams). And here is Rakosi on ambiguity: "Ambiguity is an element in poetry because it is an element in the poet's psyche and in the creative process itself. It makes no sense, therefore, to try to remove it by exegesis. Still it's hard to live with someone else's ambiguity." (p.32) And on the intangible: "Once the intangible becomes tangible enough to be measured, it becomes ordinary and has a short interest span. " (p.83)

It is at this point that many poets call upon religion, myth or mysticism -- or even history itself -- to lighten the burden, to absolve them from the consequences of the individual vision. Rakosi may feel the occasional need to escape into metaphor or , in his PROSE, from metaphor, but he remains

committed to direct experience, seeing through the codes and icons, and the facade of culture. Within that positioning, within the limitations of language, there is what one man can see, think and feel. (Burton Hatlen's reference to Wittgenstein what is that? is much to the point here.) The same may apparently be said of many poets. What sets Rakosi apart is his extraordinary concern and respect for the Other: "If I could overcome my aversion to my adversary, I would beg him to reveal the truth about me." (p. 19) "The suffering of others saved me from staying too long in my own imagination and idiosyncracies." (p.19) Burton Hatlen suggests these last two aphorisms provide an answer to the question: "What can save us from our own egos?" But in the present context, they move as well toward deeper questions. Ego inflation and language inflation go together. The respect for the Other, even as Rakosi says, for "any of the others," is to finally let go of the desire for a phony pseudo transcendence. The respect for the integrity and power of the unex - pressed maximizes the impact of what is offered in these aphorisms: meaning and value in a distilled, circumscribed space.

"The trouble with space", said an English physicist, "is that there's so much of it -- and so little in it." There is little more than a hundred pages of text in Rakosi's COLLECTED PROSE. So little of it, and so much in it -- the prismatic prose that requires reading and rereading, with a prospect of further enjoyment leading to further understanding -- that I believe is what awaits the reader.

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April, 1985

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An Amanuensis to Time

The Collected Prose of Carl Rakosi
The National Poetry Foundation, 1983
$12.95 cloth, $7.95 paper

"The test of prose is whether it can escape into metaphor. Ordinarily, therefore, I avoid prose, for there is nothing I like better than to escape into metaphor. But I am ironic and like to romp, and occasionally, therefore, write prose, which I strive, against my nature, to make atomic and as hard and tight and natural as a hickory nut." Thus begins an evasion of that escape by one of the most penetrating of American poets. Rakosi's collected prose contains none of the literary essays or reviews one expects of a poet's oeuvre because he has made those words and subjects which cannot perform as poems function as satellites to the poems. Where he is not a poet he is an aphorist of the first rank, with no space or time between for lengthy criticism of specific works of literature. Fair enough, for we all know we are blessed with an abundance of such.

Recent poetry shows Rakosi to be as wry and observant an octogenerian as he was a twenty-eight year old in 1931 when Louis Zukofsky invented the term "Objectivist" for a special issue of Poetry and neatly slipped him in. He recalls:

> My connection to [Zukofsky] . . . began with a letter from him, then unknown to me, in 1930 inviting me to contribute to a special number of Poetry which he was going to put together and edit himself under a banner of some kind. He had seen my poems in Pound's magazine, The Exile and in The Little Review. My poems led off his issue of Poetry, and a considerable number appeared in

> The "Objectivists" Anthology, which he also put together and edited with infinite care. From that time on, Zukofsky, Oppen, Reznikoff and I became known as the Objectivists. In fact, this is how we are known to this day. This is strange because Pound, Eliot, Rexroth, Williams, Bunting and McAlmon were also in the Anthology but we were the only ones to get stuck with the name.

In fact, even the works of these four are distinctly different on many levels, but the term has stuck and it seems that it will last--at least academically. Zukofsky scorned the term since he felt he had been forced to come up with it "by Harriet Monroe, the editor of Poetry, to give a name to the contributors he had assembled so as to make it look like a movement," but Rakosi found it useful:

> It conveyed a meaning which was, in fact, my objective: to present objects in their most essential reality and to make of each poem an object, meaning by this the opposite of vagueness, loose bowels and streaming, sometimes screaming, consciousness.

Zukofsky never came up with an entirely satisfactory definition of the term, but Rakosi poses the following questions, and by doing so helps define what he takes it to imply:

> When a poet, for example, finds the basic form for a particular experience and obeys the tyrannical requirements of language, cadence, structure, associations, is he not experiencing the evolving poem as an object, something outside himself, real enough to appear to be an organism with distinct characteristics, real enough, in fact, to work on him, in turn? And when the poem is completed, does not the author become like everybody else, a reader, unable to experience the poem as anything but an object, which is there to re-enter his subjective if it can?

We are reminded by the scholar Burton Hatlen, in his enlightening afterword to this volume ("Carl Rakosi and the Re-invention

of the Epigram"), that the "Objectivists" classification of these four poets did not become truly active until 1969 when L.S. Dembo grouped them together for a special issue of his magazine Contemporary Literature. The grouping will become even more deeply entrenched when Michael Heller's critical book on the Objectivists appears from Southern Illinois University Press in the near future. If academic association is what it takes to finally turn the critical light on this diverse group, so be it--after all, what we are talking about here, regardless of how we approach the work, are four of the most engaging American poets of this century.

As a young man brought up in a steel town rife with union squabbles and industrial turmoil--a head full of Joe Hill and Sandburg--I stumbled on my first Rakosi poem, one from his "Americana" sequence which spans his writing life, and sections of which are embedded in each of his major books. "Americana XVIII":

> Atmosphere Anthrax
>
> I would rather sing folk songs against injustice
> and sound like ash cans in the early morning
> or bark like a wolf
> from the open doorway of a red-hot freight
> than sit like Chopin on my exquisite ass.

It sounded right to me, but the "Anthrax" of the title caused the deeper click. It was a twist which Sandburg, for all his tongue in cheek, could never manage. There was the sentiment I had always been exposed to, but the sleek "exquisite" against that word more common to the place, coupled with the title, was jarring. I soon discovered that much of Rakosi's work has a built-in irony which will not let the sentimental or

idealist type off the hook without keeping some of the flesh. Here was a poem that agreed, by energy, with what was the ambiance of the world around me, but there too was that infectious disease hinting that such simplistic thinking is another kind of brainwash, anti-intellectual without cause, anti-culture if you will, and not good enough. Too easy. Most importantly, those readers who do not recognize it immediately eventually realize that Rakosi consistently speaks from experience. He has been there or he wouldn't touch it. The aphorist is not so subtle:

> The poet lives for a symbol, but the ordinary citizen is in constant danger of dying for one, without ever knowing what it is.

Comparing this with the above "Americana," the difference in approach between poet and aphorist is obvious. On the other hand, there are important similarities, and when Rakosi's Collected Poems (forthcoming from the same publisher of this volume) are finally gathered in one place and order, the contrasts and similitudes will be there to explore. For now, the range of Rakosi the aphorist is clear:

> If I could overcome my aversion, I would beg my adversary to reveal the truth about me.
>
> * * *
>
> Theory acts as if its only motive was to discover truth and serve man faithfully and be his trained seal. Instead, it turns him into one.
>
> * * *
>
> Friends are not made; they are recognized.
>
> * * *
>
> The qualities for which a man is regarded as normal

> and moral before a Revolution . . . perspicacity, conscience, daring . . . make him an enemy of the state after it.
>
> * * *
>
> It takes great discipline to be spontaneous.
>
> * * *
>
> If it is true that we value originality more than they did in the ancient world, one reason for it may be that they had no need for it yet. They had not yet become exposed to depersonalizing forces or bored with the familiar.
>
> * * *
>
> Action is the nearest thing to oblivion. It leaves no impression on the soul.
> As little as Happiness, which likewise passes in a vague state through the memory and leaves no mark.

Throughout this book we are exposed to a mind deeply concerned with the philosophical, religious, and artistic problems of existence, but the longest section, "Day Book," mainly concerns itself with the poet and poetry. Metaphor, image, persona, the relationship between prose and poetry, the short poem, the narrative, and the poet's role all come under the microscope here; there is much for a young poet to learn, and, one would assume, much for an older poet to recognize and agree with. Some advice, cautionary lines, and observations:

> An occasional crow makes poetry more interesting but not prophetic.
>
> * * *
>
> Purity in verse is due not to selection and language alone. The man behind the words must also be pure.
>
> * * *
>
> Individuality remains avant garde.
>
> * * *

> Where there is utter seriousness in poetry, there is mass; and where the subject is the grave nature of the human condition, there is density.
>
> * * *
>
> A word to the tragedian poet: don't try to convince me. Just be sad.
>
> * * *
>
> It is natural for a poet in his work to be more interested in himself than in others, but the reader has no reason to humor him in this indulgence. He is, after all, one of the others.
>
> * * *
>
> The devil is still around, trying to tempt the poet to give up his humanity for a throne from which he can deliver epigrams from a great height and distance.

The last one sounds like Rakosi reminding Rakosi; in fact, it is that very quality which strips this easily abused form of its overly didactic (and therefore offensive) inclinations.

The above discussion of Zukofsky comes from a section of the prose which does not fit the description of Rakosi the aphorist. Located near the end of the book, "Scenes from My Life" is a reminiscent interlude which gives the reader a glimpse at Rakosi's personal life. It begins around 1909 with Rakosi as a six year old child in Hungary on the verge of departing for America and a new life. He progresses from there through early experiences in brief sequences, recounting university days, friends, and literary activities. He works his way to the present by recalling a visit from Eugene McCarthy, a little verbal karate with Marya Zaturenska at

Yaddo (she considered herself "the only lyric poet remaining in America"), and a humorous encounter with Borges--two aged savants loose in one room, one world-famous, one not: recognitions and friendship. Typically, Rakosi uses the event to explore his interior world. There is a lucid sketch of his good friend George Oppen, and a public letter to another important friend, Robert Duncan.

He also touches upon the subject of not writing, implying there was a time when he did not. Indeed there was, but he does not explain the circumstances, nor could one learn from the book anything about its duration, real cause, or the results of it. Rakosi's period of non-writing began in 1940, just before New Directions published his Selected Poems, and he did not resume until 1966. Remembering his early friend Kenneth Fearing, Rakosi mentions the period in passing, many years into it: "I have not written anything for over ten years, not because of blockage but because I have made myself stop for necessary reasons. Nevertheless, I am dispirited and at the lowest point in my feelings mumble, more to myself than to him, 'I don't think I'll ever write again.'" We are not privy to the details of this time in his life and its implied ordeals, but one concludes he has decided we would not benefit from them--considering his wisdom we allow the lapse.

Rakosi has spent a large portion of his long life away from the literary scene, choosing rather to live in other worlds he also intensely loves: the world of the husband, the father, the social worker, and the psychotherapist. This

life away has tempered a valuable vision, one which only long time and long experience can foster. We can live without the details as long as there is clarity of other sorts, and there is an amplitude of clarity in this man's work. His is a cold yet compassionate eye upon the world, and eye is the correct word. He writes, though out of context here: "At the end it turned out that I never left the word, eye, for what I wrote here was the work of the intellect, also an eye." And so it is. The results are these probings and observations, laced with humor, anchored in an elaborate range of experience, always at a distance profoundly his own. The question becomes a position, the position a practice. He inevitably returns from other subjects to poetry, but there is more than Parnassus here. His prose, like his poetry, springs from the world at large (as has anything of value since Caedmon), and as such it is not a simple purchase but a gain. Rakosi tells us:

> I had an assignation with the spirit of man
> but I was weak and in love with the spirit
> of language and kept him waiting.

It wasn't too long a wait--we all realize he could never put humanity on hold--but just long enough to make a difference. Read the man and see.

MERCATOR'S PROJECTION

by Carl Rakosi

When I started writing poetry, after total immersion in the Romantic poets, it seemed to me that metaphor was the god in a poem, the body in which he showed his splendor and transcendence, the motivating force behind writing itself. This belief led me to write some dreadful poems, which in time led me to my re-education. But the feeling that there is an affinity between some deep part of my nature and the metaphor never left me, and I remained loyal to it at heart and continued to woo this invisible bearer of bountiful gifts, too rich at times for my stomach, who seemed to appear on call from some higher power in the imagination. In time I learned to choose only those metaphors that would stand behind their promises and be accountable for discretion and accuracy. Metaphors with a conscience, in other words.

"Metaphors with a conscience!" I hear someone screaming. "Are you out of your mind? How can a metaphor have a conscience? What are you trying to do, Judaize aesthetics?"

I can make my point by examining a stanza from a poem by Delmore Schwartz, THE MIND IS AN ANCIENT AND FAMOUS CAPITAL:

"The mind is a city like London,

Smoky and populous----------"

A [redacted] grand opening! A grand view. Large meanings resonate, [redacted] imminent. Yet the metaphor fits. [redacted] The reader is content to be carried along at this great height wherever this Prospero has a mind to take him. Then follows:

"it is a capital

Like Rome, ruined and eternal,"

The field now is in danger of becoming overpopulated. Is it possible that the author did not realize what he had in the first metaphor? Or is this a case of pushing on in greed for still more effect, insensitive to the thickening of the atmosphere and the confusing side-effects? Whichever, the possibilities are still there but they are no longer charismatic. And the serpent whispers, "Art thou really Prospero?"

Nevertheless, the grand view continues in the second modifier, eternal. It goes with Rome and what we feel is true of its referent, the mind. But actual ruin stares the poem in the face and disbelief rushes in at the word, ruined. Why "ruined?" This term for the mind is no product of thought or soul-searching. It is the oldest and most hackneyed conceit in Romantic

Literature, greatness through suffering, at one time perhaps the honest expression of a young poet's anomie but somewhere along the way swallowed up by his ego. Now if you want a large Romantic effect, all you have to ~~do~~ do is push that button. In metaphor like a very old dog whose brain has been dead for a hundred years but whose heart still beats, kept alive by the poet's craving to dramatize and magnify himself. It's not going to be easy for Prospero to get out of this one.

He continues (still about the mind):

"Marked by monuments which no one
Now remembers."

The mind now has become the "tragic hero" but reduced to self-pity, always distasteful. Still, not egregious in the context of a fiction, although if he breaks into tears next, he'll make himself an Emperor without clothes. But he doesn't do that. Instead, he writes:

"For the mind, like Rome, contains
Catacombs, aqueducts, amphitheaters, palaces,
Churches and equestrian statues, fallen, broken or soiled."

The ruin of a fine opening metaphor has now been completed. The referent is shouting above the rhetoric, "Schwartz doesn't know what he's talking about. If he ever had any serious interest in me, it was soon lost in his laboring to establish a mighty metaphor: might for the metaphor and grandeur for himself." And the reader is bellowing, "Oh, bull!" to it all.

Moral: don't play a pair of deuces as if you had a royal flush. This isn't poker.

[redacted]

With that, [redacted] I nominate to the Pantheon of Discredit:

Rascal no. 1: metaphor for the sake of metaphor. Example: EUPHUES. But I have ~~the~~ to go easy here. If a metaphor is not for itself, what then is it for? This argument is a cunning rascal, dressed up to look as if the answer were self-evident: "Of course a metaphor has to be for itself. What else could it be for? The beauty, the clarity, the power, the precision, the mystery of a metaphor.....are these qualities not sufficient by themselves? Hence, are they not ends? We don't expect more of a flower than its beauty. What's wrong, therefore, with a metaphor for the sake of metaphor?"

The fellow has made me forget that the metaphor has a referent, subject matter, and that the best argument for the metaphor is that it endows the referent with these qualities. We expect more of a metaphor, therefore, than of a flower. As long as it has a referent, we must expect it to be for the referent.

But not entirely. Entirely would make it a dull fellow, [redacted] A certain amount must be allowed for an existence in language, an existence always there and never identical to subject matter. The question is, how much? And the answer comes from man's connection to earth: it doesn't matter how much so long as it doesn't detract from subject matter. For why should one be willing to give up one jot of that? I see no need to. One can have both.

But this now plunges us outside literary considerations, for the amount of subject matter that a poet is willing to sacrifice or compromise depends on his individual psychology. If he is turned primarily inward, there is nothing to restrain him from going all the way to EUPHUES. But if his feelings for the outer world are solid and grounded in character, he'll keep his head against the charisma of metaphor. He will not settle for charisma alone.

But isn't it grand that we can have both the earth and metaphor?

Next rascal is metaphor for the poet's own aggrandizement which turns attention away from the poem to beam in on his powers of imagination and language. One is entitled to as much self-aggrandizement as one can get away with in this fictional world but not at the expense of the poem. This is a form of integrity.

Then come metaphors which [redacted] (Patten) and perpetuate writing for the sake of writing.....e.g., writing as an ego need, as against writing out of lyric impulse. Some ego need is allways in a person but if it is the driving force, it leads to poetry without an inherent reason for being, the ultimate contamination, and to a mindless overpopulation of writing in which no one's individuality can survive. A plague of locusts would be preferable.

Then there are metaphors in place of thick subject matter and thought, and metaphors in which the poet can escape from personality, and metaphors by which he can slip into a drugged state, and metaphors that take over and lead him by the nose, and so on.

But I have run ahead of myself. Looking back to my beginnings, I see now that there was only one kind of poetry which moved me then, the lyrical. With what condescension and disdain I expelled everything else! Out! Outside the pale! The memory is embarrassing.

Then one day I myself transgressed. It happened after reading Cumming's poem, Buffalo Bill, I think in The Dial. What delight! [redacted] It touched a nerve in me

that I didn't know I had, and a poem came to me as a counterpoint, a take-off on early Westerns. It was the opposite of lyrical, of romantic, of mystical, the opposite of everything I had done up to then; and it was without metaphor. I didn't have to "compose" it . The poem practically wrote itself. Form didn't seem to matter to it. It was fun writing, but I dismissed it as negligible.

Some time later, on another binge, I wrote THE EXPERIMENT WITH A RAT. This poem took more composing, more form, but again no metaphors, and the opposite of lyrical, etc. This poem I took more seriously. With the writing of my AMERICANA suite, mostly done without metaphor, it became apparent that a different part of my nature had broken out.....humor, satire, my bond to the everyday world. These poems had certain things in common: they all had a point to make, a realistic matter to reproduce, for which they needed no assistance from metaphor. It would have been extra baggage, a distraction, an enemy to the simple state in which all mental points have to be made.

Narrative poetry, too, spurns metaphor. Who wants to be stopped in the flow of a story by the ambiguities and inner richess of metaphor? Similarly, in poetry in which the action itself stands for a larger meaning, the metaphor only impedes the symbolism. But no matter, the metaphor still haunts me. I know that what I was at my beginnings.....romantic, lyrical, idealistic.... had to have metaphors. In addition, I was possessed by the music of poetry; by overpowering, inchoate feelings.....elegiac, rhapsodic, mystical; by a sense of supernatural presences close by who would move out of their shadowy limbo and make themselves known to me if I allowed myself to go to them and listen. I stood at the edge, waiting. Would you try to express these things in literal language? Would you even be willing to admit to them as non-metaphorical states?

In this duress, metaphor came to my aid.....as it comes to everybody's, for it is a primary tool invented early in our evolution to cope with imperfection at both ends of the communication process: with some defect or inadequacy in the cognitive faculty, in its capacity to know exactly and in full what we are experiencing from moment to moment and what is before us, and with imperfection in language, in its capacity to reproduce exactly and fully. Thus the metaphor is staple in everyday talk. The moment we are stuck for perception or words, we reach for an analogy, metaphor in its simplest functional form.

If we are meditating, the cognitive and lingual imperfections are far more complex. If, for example, I am looking at a tree, what am I experiencing?

There's no point in asking that question if no demands are made on me to reproduce the experience. In that case, experience is knowing. But if I have to reproduce it, neither my self-observation nor the language of direct statement is equal to the task.

If I further ask the question, what is before me?, I run into a maze just trying to understand my own question. And if I can get past that, I run into a wall, for the real tree is not penetrable to my inquiry. Of course, if I assume that the tree is what I see, there's no problem. I wind up with a physical description. But if I sense, as I do, that there's something more there, something sui generis that is not I, a character/presence/ambience in its own purpose and destiny that is not what the scientist knows of its structure or its composition and function, then I'm in trouble because I do not have access to these things. I must invent something to represent them. The chances are, I'll start with a metaphor.

And if I want to reproduce the tree's aesthetic effect on me, its particular beauty and grace, or my connection to it when I think of its durant heart, its destiny relative to man, the mystery of its great presence..... the enumeration, however true, is never complete and does not bring me any closer to the integral that is so moving about a tree;.that is on a different plane from its parts and attributes.....if, as I said, I want to reproduce all that, direct statement and descriptive words are of no use. If, in addition, I want to express my feelings about all this, for sure I need help and must invent the metaphorical tools for it. I see that, almost without thinking, I have already done some of this in the words I used.

It is possible that I have no more entree to a tree than a spider has to the wall on which it sits and spins, but does that matter? Metaphysical riddles never stopped anyone, not the solipsist himself, from following his natural bent and intuition.

Pierre Reverdy plays this theme to death. "Poetry," he writes, "Is not in the datum but in the observant mind." I see no basis for such a dichotomy except in Reverdy's own natural bent towards solipsism, for if it held, [redacted] it would [redacted] follow that the only subject of [redacted] poetry is the mind itself, the poet/solipsist himself. We know that heavy presence, that long, millenial dream from which one can not awake because outside stimulus has been removed. We know its working principle, that subject matter is not the important thing, only the art of expressing it; that poetry has no responsibility to anything outside the poet himself, the man of unending surrealist excess and

extravaganza. Unfortunately for him, nature, [redacted] the nature of the reader, has the last word: whatever exercises in sollipsism may be to the poet, they are boring to others.

Leaving the metaphor for a moment for a larger field, I have to add that it is a fundamental problem in writing that the emotions and the intellect mix very poorly. In fact, they don't mix at all, not only because their tones clash and they exist on different planes, but no sooner does one feel something, then the mind butts in: it looks, describes, interprets, denatures, absorbs, controls, encapsulates. It imagines that it has made an even exchange because it does this with great wit, precision and eclat. The fact is that it has no choice. If it did not move in on the emotion, it would have nothing to do and no reason for being. The trouble is that when it's through, the emotion is no longer there, only its mental ectoplasm. Yet emotion without intellect is slob. Only the mind can give it form and make it look and act the way it should in a poem.

How to do this, then, with as little loss to the emotion as possible. By confining the intellect to suggestion, and by expressing the emotion in the medium in which it is most directly expressed, music; in a poem, the music of the lines. Or in a medium which uses the associations that go with certain images and configurations.. This excerpt from Denise Levertov's poem, ILLUSTRIOUS ANCESTORS, is an example.

"Well, I would like to make
poems direct as what the birds said,
hard as a floor, sound as a bench,
mysterious as the silence when the tailor
would pause with his needle in the air."

The first three similes here need no comment; they are definitive. But who is this tailor in the 4th simile? Well, from the context,

"The Rav
of Northern White Russia declined
in his youth to learn the
language of birds because
the extraneous did not interest him; nevertheless
when he grew old it was found
he understood them anyway, having
listened well, and as it is said, 'prayed
with the bench and the floor.'"

he is that slightly mystical character out of Yiddish literature and folk-

lore, the ubiquitous Jewish tailor, lowly, obscure, philosophical, which God had made him for reasons known only to Him. He and the Rav evoke the shtetl atmosphere, as we know it from this literature, in Czarist Russia, from where Levertov's father came. As such, the poem is a figuration of nostalgia. This much is on a single plane. The words, mysterious and silence and "would pause with his needle in the air, however, transport us to another plane. This simile is so much richer than its referent, so much more profound and resonant, that it displaces it at once. One no longer remembers that the poet was saying that she wished her poems to be like that. The wish seems unimportant now.

This tailor is a far more hypnotic character, in a poetic sense, than the historical tailor or the tailor out of nostalgia. The simile has made him a figure of mystery wherein the author has a heraldic existence..... heraldic, at first glance, of a Jewish past unknown to her; on a deeper plane heraldic of the mystery of silence, of the mystery of our inward state where meditation sits timelessly on the question, What is Being?

In this heraldic universe, all know, the inhabitants are not subject to mortality. It is as if the mind had made a pact with language to that effect Once its word, its metaphor, is on the page, it shall live in perpetuity, independent of its referent and its author. The conditions in this habitat, the standards, the associations, the voice, the thing that is matter there, were not set by referent or author. When they enter it, therefore, they have to undergo a transformation and abide by those conditions. Balzacian reality is taken in by them and ceases to exist as such. It becomes depersonalized. Its life space becomes aesthetic space. Above all, it becomes enhanced, a distortion not tolerable in the real world. In this enhancement lies the poet's field for expressing his deepest longings for transcendence..... is this not the very air of the soul?.....to go beyond the ordinery, and beyond the excellent too, beyond what his mind can know and his eyes can see and his hand can write, to settle for nothing less than magic in language, to have no limits, an impossibility broken when the word as symbol and metaphor transforms its referent into a heraldic thing and its author into a heraldic being.

Are these aspirations not romantic? As writing itself. And also lyrical? .....the romantic sings. Where else can one's lyrical impulses and rhapsodic feelings go but in this enhancement? Or all those vague, elegiac feelings and presentiments of the mystical that dog the poet. Or the grandiose impulses of his ego. and his need for immortality .....his double.

Enter this metaphor and you take off in a self-contained, timeless space capsule, where William James once sat when he wrote, "Immortality is one of the great spiritual needs of man:" and Lev Lunts when he wrote in the Serapion Manifesto, "Art is as real as life itself, and, like life, has no goal or meaning. It exists because it must."

From matter to trope, into imago.....the image as our way of knowing, of making matter conform to our mode of perception.....how well I know this divine transmutation! Yet I am pulled equally towards the other pole, and yearn to do what the stage designer, Nicolai Akimov, longed for. Writing during the early, sanguine period of Russian Communism, he said, "My fondest dream is to develop the expressiveness of <u>things</u> to a point where I need not be ashamed to put them on the stage beside the best of actors. As yet, this waits in Utopia, but if I should ever succeed in bringing upon the stage a chair, the sight of which would make the audience, to a man, sob, I would die in peace."

<u>Exactly</u> how I feel! So I stand by what I once wrote:

"Matter,
with this look
I wed thee
and become
thy very
attribute.
I shall
be thy faithful
spouse,
true
to thy nature,
for I love
thee
more than Durer
loved a seaweed."

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UNE LITTÉRATURE MÉCONNUE DES U.S.A.

Carl RAKOSI

(né en 1903)

Rejoignant plus tardivement les trois autres, Rakosi figure dans « l'anthologie objectiviste » mais ne participa pas à « l'objectivist Press ». Il a publié deux livres (depuis 1960) :

Amulet, New directions, 1967.

Erevoice, New directions, 1971.

Un troisième, *Ex cranium night* devait être publié en 1975 par Black Sparrow (Los Angeles). La longue série des « Americana » (voir le choix de textes) contient certains des poèmes les plus forts de l'intervention des poètes américains contre la guerre du Vietnam.

J. R.

AMULETTE
AMULET

LA VILLE (1925)

5

Quand le souffle de la lumière jaillit de la mer
la fenêtre s'aggloméra et souffla comme Vénus
révélant ma tendresse
et plusieurs pensées
un coup de feu la nuit
ainsi découvre une bête qui boit
et ces devoirs
qui me dévorent comme des chiens un gésier.

Je vis la ville
changée,
dressée comme de la verrerie d'un laboratoire,
ou des amines dans la saumure de hareng
l'acide malique de l'argousier
la balance à ordonnances sous son couvercle de verre
l'acier et l'agate, Fabrik Köln

un médicament clair comme l'alcool
ou la Vita Nuova, je ne sais.
Les créanciers dinaient au Cliquot Club
lisaient les journaux. Le commerce changeait
leurs chevaux mouraient, au gros ventre.
leurs chiens dormaient dans la vapeur chaude.

une ambulance aux portes
de verre, modestes, avec une croix d'argent
monte la garde dans la nuit
un chirurgien
ses instruments de nickel, délicats
posés sur un plateau

sur la table d'opération illuminée
nus, des souffleurs de verre
des armuriers, coiffeurs, employés, importateurs,
vieillards dans les hôtels, roses, soignés,
prêtres irlandais à l'odeur de naphte,
visage de garçon-cravate du portier de cinéma,
Frankel, Shmulik, horlogers de la vieille Europe.
Puis un cheval banc dans le parc
cigares et politique.
La ville entourée de cellophane
forme d'œuf
tordue comme Ugolin
eau de mer
système circulatoire
de l'homme en train d'observer sa magnifique urée.

***

AMERICANA V

Prenant de l'âge
la troisième génération
se sent solitaire près de ses enfants
et entre dans la chambre noire
pour développer une photo
où l'on voit des vaches encombrantes qui retournent du pâturage
[boisé
à la fin d'un jour d'été il y a un siècle
mammelles lourdes de lait

Planter du maïs dans le champ
au nord de la porcherie
qu'on mangera plus tard avec du beurre de ferme frais

visites de familles on vient de cent kilomètres à la ronde
chanter dans l'ombre du grand arbre

Là où la route bifurque près de la grange rouge
où le chêne a un nœud
du côté nord
Les vieux se sentent chez eux
sarclant les mauvaises herbes dans le petit jardin
et s'émerveillant de la croissance des plantes
le maïs a fait un bond de trente centimètres
pendant le week-end du Quatre-Juillet
bien planté sur ses jambes historiques
entouré de tous côtés
par (comment mettre cela en capitales)
Dieu et le Travail
se tient le Dix-Neuvième Siècle

***

LE VIEIL HOMME

Pour commencer les poils
poussèrent plus touffus sur sa poitrine
et sur son ventre
mais plus rares sur le sommet
de son crâne.

ensuite du gris apparut
sur le côté droit
de sa poitrine.

un jour se regardant
dans un miroir
il aperçut des poils
gris, épais, dans ses narines

alors il admit
qu'il devait reconnaître
que l'âge était venu
le vieil homme
sortit ses dents
du verre d'eau
et se servit
une petite saucisse

jeune garçon
il était si pressé
de devenir vieux
maintenant il se sentait plus jeune
que jamais.

***

Ma maison éclaire le tonnerre
comme un pigeon de tungstène
et l'ombre d'une feuille s'abrite dans les lambris
un chien de chasse.
je ferme les portes contre ces sales courants d'air.

la lumière parla au-dessus des pièces du jeu d'échecs:
Je suis Avalokiteshvara Matsyendranatha
Dieu des poissons.
Ta carcasse sera enterrée demain
par des sceptiques accomplis,
comme le père Jupiter, le grand Dieu splendide.

***

Une lumière le matin
cristallisant sur la crête
ravit la vierge.

Le faon se tenait là
traqué, réduit, impressionné
souffle de sainfoin,
qui fut sans savoir
une cornée de lumière

***

FLORE ET L'OGRE

Que ses genoux de coings fléchissent
et l'arc jouet de la rosée
pâquerette
guide ses pieds doux,
son torse n'est rien d'autre pour moi
qu'une nonne dans une gravure sur bois.

Dans un peignoir qui neige sur ses chevilles
elle arpente le mouvement
du soleil et du sombre.
son pas est comme le pouls du lys.

Tout mouvement estompe l'écart parfumé de sa jupe
(linge qui est une retombée de labiales
et ressac dans les veines)

pendant que les trois temps du verbe
hésitaient entre ses cuisses douloureuses
un vent d'écharpes se leva.

Aucun assaut marin du tonnerre
Aucun frisson vert du froid
ne viendra-t-il me délivrer ?

***

AMULETTE

tu es idéale
o figurine
fraîche comme le camphre
les yeux enfoncés
dans un peu de jade bleu
la tête une piqûre comme
goutte d'un noisetier des sorcières

bénis la gorge blanche
de cette dame
qui boit du lait
dans une réception

***

AVANT-VOIX
ERE-VOICE

POUR LA MAISON DE MES PETITES-FILLES

il y a une hégémonie
de mère

là où le concombre est réel
mais entre ma maison
et la vôtre
zéro se change en Titania
et il ne faut pas
prendre une étoile à la lettre.

***

ABSTRACTIONS SUR UNE ENFANT
(seizième siècle)

une magnitude de fée
de l'ordre de zéro
une distillation
pas plus grosse qu'une larme.
je n'essaye pas
de faire croire que ces vers sont de moi.
ils viennent juste de s'envoler
de ma mémoire.
j'ai pensé qu'il valait la peine de les préserver
aussi je les ai épinglés en travers
du titre afin que tous les regardent
dans un temps théorique,
comme un papillon,
spécimen identifié.
Serai-je honnête envers vous?
j'avais l'intention d'écrire
un poème sur mes petites-filles
mais je ne suis pas parvenu à faire mieux.

***

LA DANSE DU VIEIL HOMME

Le petit chien qui saute
pour atteindre la bouche
de l'homme
cette course de petites filles
comme des oiseaux des sables
pour arriver ici avant leur propre pensée

l'engoulevent au bord extrême de l'hiver
ah! Atlantide!

***

DES COUPLES PASSENT EN SE PROMENANT

ici, quand nous avons une belle journée
l'abeille est au méridien
et les petites filles en vieilles pantoufles
charment l'adversaire
dans l'œil de l'inconnu.
Alors pénètre incognito
l'influence matrimoniale du soleil
qui suce son cornet de glace
et les Suédois deviennent Italiens
et les Italiens deviennent lézards
et Diogène prend la mer.

***

L'ŒIL ROMANTIQUE

Sous un grossissement de 8000
le chromosome de la mouche chironomus
remua ses nébuleuses microscopiques
Afin d'imiter la croix orthodoxe grecque.

***

L'EXPÉRIENCE DU RAT

chaque fois que j'actionne ce ressort
on entend une sonnerie
et un homme sort d'une cage
assidu et astucieux comme un de nous
et m'apporte du fromage.
comment a-t-il fait pour tomber en mon pouvoir ?

***

LA COUPE

étrange que cette coupe de verre
en forme de trompette
soit plus intéressante
que le Saxon inconnu
avec lequel on l'enterra.

***

AMERICANA XI : STRICTEMENT IOWA

Ils étaient mariés depuis si longtemps
qu'ils en étaient réduits
aux mêmes éléments:
deux yeux bleus terre-à-terre
un visage ouvert à taches de rousseur
ni libéral ni conservateur
comme celui d'un fermier de la Révolution
et aussi économe d'adjectifs
qu'un chien à poil ras.

***

AMERICANA XIII

Capitaine Patterson, les gens ici
voudraient connaître vos impressions
après votre première victoire.

Nous venions d'achever notre mission
et nous revenions à la base quand nous avons aperçu sur la
[gauche
4 Mig. 17.
ils se dirigeaient vers nous.
Nous nous sommes débarrassés de notre lest
et nous avons grimpé vers la gauche.
le Mig de tête a ouvert le feu.

La bataille avait commencé.
J'ai plongé à 70° avec le Phantom.
Un Mig a traversé notre champ de droite à gauche
quittant le secteur à vive allure.
J'allais me lancer à sa poursuite
Quand un autre Mig est apparu à « 10 heure en haut »
J'ai crié à Doug
« il est à nous »
« Repère-le au radar »
Doug l'a repéré
et nous l'avons filé pendant trois kilomètres.
Alors nous lui avons foncé dessus, lâchant une bombe du côté
[du vent
tout doucement par l'aile gauche.
elle a suivi le Mig un bon moment
et puis à peu près à trois cents mètres derrière
elle s'est redressée délicatement pour s'enfoncer

et il s'est transformé en une boule de feu brillante
ça a été du gâteau
nous voudrions bien qu'ils montent
un peu plus souvent dire bonjour.

***

AMERICANA XIV : MOUSTACHE DESSINÉE SUR « AMERICANA XIII »

Je te parie un dollar contre une crêpe
que les « vincents » vont attaquer cette nuit.
Le chef du village vient de partir
prétendant qu'il avait à faire à Danang.

Je voudrais m'en aller moi aussi
et tout droit jusqu'à Flint Michigan
Je me présenterai à l'aéroport avec pour passeport
une grande pancarte: SORTEZ LES MARINES
DU VIETNAM
et au-dessous, en petits caractères:
en commençant par moi.

Traduction de Jacques Roubaud.

CARL RAKOSI : "LE MONDE DU LANGAGE ET LE MONDE SOCIAL"

Q. — Je me demande si nous ne pourrions pas commencer par votre biographie, M. Rakosi. Vous vous considérez comme un homme du Middle West, n'est-ce pas ?

R. — En fait je suis né à Berlin, en Allemagne. Mes parents étaient des juifs hongrois qui se trouvaient vivre là à l'époque. Quand j'avais un an, la famille est retournée en Hongrie et j'ai vécu jusqu'à l'âge de six ans à Baja, une petite ville du sud. Et puis mon père, mon frère et moi nous sommes venus aux Etats-Unis — c'était en 1910. Nous sommes d'abord allés à Chicago, puis à Gary, dans l'Indiana, pour aboutir à Kenosha dans le Wisconsin. Donc Kenosha est vraiment ma ville, celle où j'ai été élevé et où je suis allé à l'école. Puis je suis allé à l'université du Wisconsin et j'ai passé une licence d'anglais et une maîtrise de psychologie de l'éducation.

Q. — Comment êtes-vous arrivé à devenir assistant social ?

R. — Par pur accident. C'était une période de grande misère économique et il était très difficile de trouver du travail où que ce fût. Par hasard j'ai parlé à quelqu'un qui cherchait aussi un emploi, et il m'a dit : « Pourquoi n'essayez-vous pas l'assistance sociale ? » Je ne savais même pas ce que c'était. Lui non plus, mais il me dit qu'il y avait un bureau à Chicago qui embauchait des gens, j'y suis donc allé. C'était le bureau de l'Association américaine des assistants sociaux, et si vous étiez en vie et possédiez une licence, on vous engageait, si grande était la pénurie de personnel. Et si vous étiez un homme, ils vous accueillaient avec tous les honneurs. J'ai débuté dans une agence de Cleveland. Je n'avais nullement abandonné l'idée d'écrire ; je me figurais que je pourrais faire les deux. Mais je suis tombé amoureux de mon travail social, et cela a ruiné ma carrière de poète, en un sens. Je n'ai pas réellement renoncé à l'idée d'essayer d'écrire de la poésie avant la fin des années trente, où je m'amusais à des choses différentes. J'ai quitté le travail social pour quelque temps et je suis retourné à l'université. Je pensais que peut-être si je me tournais vers la psychiatrie, cela me donnerait

quelque chose que j'étais capable de faire tout en continuant à écrire. N'importe comment, le travail social m'attirait très vivement. Mais ce n'est qu'à la fin des années trente qu'il m'est apparu impossible d'être assistant social et d'écrire en même temps.

Q. — C'est très intéressant parce que sur la jaquette d'*Amulette* (1) on prétend que vous avez cessé d'écrire parce que vous étiez désenchanté d'un monde où la poésie n'avait plus de place.

R. — C'est un autre élément. Pendant les années trente, je travaillais à New York — c'était au creux le plus profond de la Crise — et tous les jeunes qui avaient de l'intégrité ou de l'intelligence s'affiliaient par la force des choses à quelque organisation de gauche. Vous ne pouviez plus vous supporter si vous ne le faisiez pas. Aussi me suis-je engagé à fond dans toute cette affaire de marxisme. J'ai pris au pied de la lettre les idées fondamentales de Marx selon quoi la littérature devait être l'instrument d'un changement social, servant à exprimer les besoins et les désirs des masses. Et, ayant cette croyance, je ne pouvais écrire de la poésie, parce que la poésie que j'étais capable d'écrire ne pouvait remplir ces fins.

Q. — Nous pouvons peut-être parler un peu du genre de poésie que vous écriviez. Je sais que vos œuvres sont parues dans l'*Anthologie des « Objectivistes »* de Louis Zukofsky et que vous êtes actuellement considéré comme un objectiviste *per se*. Dans son *Autobiographie*, Williams raconte qu'il s'est mis avec Zukofsky, Charles Reznikoff, George Oppen et Basil Bunting pour lancer le mouvement vers 1928 à peu près. Je me demandais si vous aviez participé à leurs discussions.

R. — Ce n'est pas exact. Williams n'a pas eu de contacts avec ces hommes pour fonder le mouvement objectiviste. Et je doute que ce soit un mouvement au sens où l'on emploie généralement ce mot. Le terme a été vraiment trouvé par Zukofsky, il l'a tiré d'un chapeau. Ce n'était pas une façon tout à fait exacte de désigner les quelques personnes rassemblées dans l'anthologie et aussi dans le numéro « objectiviste » de *Poetry*. Mais il avait besoin d'un nom, et il m'a demandé ce que j'en pensais, et je présume qu'il l'a demandé à d'autres. Le nom était parfait, mais je lui ai dit que je ne croyais pas que certains poèmes de l'anthologie étaient « objectivistes » ou très objectifs dans leur signification. Il a dit : « Oui, c'est vrai », mais j'ai oublié les raisons qu'il m'a données pour conserver le nom. Cela n'avait pas d'importance. Mais Williams n'a pas grand-chose à faire avec cela. Il était inclus, mais l'initiative ne vient pas de lui.

Q. — Je vois. Eh bien, en tout cas, diriez-vous que vous pouviez écrire de la poésie qui était « objectiviste » — quoi

(1) *Amulet.*

que cela voulût dire — alors que vous ne pouviez écrire de la poésie qui était marxiste ? Et que finalement parce que la poésie objectiviste n'avait pas d'arrière-plan social, elle a perdu toute signification pour vous, et que ce fut peut-être une des raisons pour lesquelles vous avez tout simplement renoncé à la poésie ?

R. — Non, non. Je n'ai jamais pris tellement au sérieux mon association avec Zukofsky et les autres. Après tout, je vivais dans le Middle West, à l'exception d'une courte période à New York où je voyais Zukofsky, et je ne connaissais même pas les autres.

Q. — Zukofsky lui-même vous a-t-il fait une forte impression ?

R. — Il est arrivé à une époque où il était très important pour moi d'avoir quelqu'un comme lui dans les parages. Je lui envoyais quelque chose à lire, et cela me revenait avec très peu de commentaires, mais ils tombaient toujours pile. Il semblait savoir mieux que moi ce qui était du vrai Rakosi et ce qui n'en était pas. J'ai un sentiment très chaleureux envers Zukofsky pour cette rétroaction critique. Nous avions une correspondance fort intéressante. A propos, j'ai toujours ses lettres, bien que je ne croie pas que Louis aimerait les voir rendues publiques. Elles sont très courtes, comme certains de ses poèmes. Si Louis pouvait écrire sur un timbre-poste, il le ferait.

Q. — Que pensez-vous de la poésie de Zukofsky ?

R. — Je crois qu'il s'y manifeste un sens puissant de la forme — elle est très fermement structurée ; les coutures, pourrait-on dire, sont extrêmement fines et tiennent remarquablement. J'ai aussi l'impression, cependant, qu'il y a dans son œuvre des choses qui se détruisent ; son être personnel, son humanité transparaît rarement tel qu'il est en vérité. Je trouve ceci regrettable parce qu'au fond je crois que c'est un être plein de chaleur. Les nombreuses ellipses de son œuvre me contrarient parce qu'elles représentent, peut-être, sa façon subconsciente d'empêcher la partie humaine de se manifester. D'autre part, il y a une véritable dignité et une solidité ramassée. J'aurais pourtant voulu que Zukofsky n'ait jamais rencontré Pound. Je crois que son orientation aurait peut-être été différente.

Q. — Comment cela ?

R. — D'abord, je ferais mieux de reconnaître que les écrits critiques de Pound — en particulier le célèbre essai « Ne faites pas » (1) — est une pierre angulaire absolue des lettres américaines contemporaines. Mais pour ce qui est de son œuvre propre je crois que son exemple a été désastreux, absolument désastreux pour les écrivains plus jeunes. Je pense en particulier aux *Cantos*, à leur ton épique. Sur quoi était-il

(1) *Don'ts*.

fondé, après tout ? Sur l'expérience de l'homme ? Certainement pas. L'expérience des hommes dans les *Cantos* a seulement un intérêt très spécialisé, idiosyncratique. Sur sa conception de la nature de l'homme ? Ridicule ! Tel que Pound le conçoit c'est un nigaud ou un escroc ou quelque chose de ce genre. Sur ses systèmes théoriques ? Ses choix ici ne sont même pas intéressants. Alors pourquoi un ton épique ? A cause du besoin personnel de Pound de suprématie, de son amour du grandiose. On a le sentiment qu'il a fourré dans sa machine lyrique excitante tout ce qui pouvait servir à son but. Ce n'est pas honnête. Il prétend que son matériau est épique, alors que c'est seulement un procédé pour atteindre le grandiose aux dépens du lecteur. Toute cette prétention et cette tricherie me donnent la nausée. Et sont hors du sujet. Aujourd'hui, les gens ne sont pas héroïques et la nature humaine moderne n'est pas épique. Elle est seulement humaine, et tout le reste n'est qu'un jeu que l'on joue.

Q. — Et vous croyez que Zukofsky est grandiose ?

R. — Non. En fait la longue forme de *Un* (1) convient mieux à Louis que les formes plus courtes, puisqu'il s'y révèle davantage. Mais Pound lui a fourni un modèle à grande échelle de fragments décousus, et l'a amené à croire qu'il est parfait de faire les références les plus abstruses, les plus spécifiques, comme s'il allait de soi que le lecteur lettré les connaisse et ait l'attitude de Pound envers elles. Si je lis un poème de Pound, qu'est-ce que j'ai à faire de ce qu'il a lu ailleurs ? Cela ne m'intéresse absolument pas.

Q. — Ne croyez-vous pas qu'il sait vous y intéresser en le mettant dans un poème ?

R. — Non, pas du tout. Il prétend savoir ce qu'il ne sait pas et méprise tous les nigauds qui ne comprennent pas ses références et n'ont pas saisi ce qui est évident pour lui : par exemple, que Confucius savait toutes les réponses. L'image finale qui apparaît dans les *Cantos* est celle d'un maître de la langue et de la cadence, mais l'homme qui parle, le personnage, est ridiculement grandiose. Et c'est un exemple terrible pour les autres, qui ont suffisamment de mal à maîtriser leur propre tendance au grandiose, afin de pouvoir affronter un sujet de façon authentique, sans qu'une Lorelei leur déclame ce qu'ils brûlent d'entendre mais savent impossible, que la route de la grandeur passe par le grandiose. Mais c'est ce que chante Pound, et une fois que l'on a été exposé à l'aura de Pound, il est difficile de ne pas y succomber. Après tout, qui ne désire pas être grand ?

Mais cela traîne partout. Les poètes sont jugés, par exemple, être grands ; plus grands que ; pas si grands que ; bons mais pas grands, etc. Et aussi, il n'y a pas loin du grandiose de Pound à la notion séduisante — entre parenthèses, Zuko-

(1) *A*.

fsky est beaucoup trop fin pour s'y laisser prendre — que tout ce qui entre dans l'esprit est précieux. Le long poème devient ainsi une nécessité pour certains écrivains. Avant d'avoir appris à écrire un poème court authentique, on annonce qu'ils travaillent à une œuvre de longue haleine — ce qui veut dire à quelque chose d'énorme. Cela mène à un système philistin irrationnel où l'on doit s'excuser d'aimer « Une clarté tombe de l'air, / Des reines sont mortes, jeunes et belles », parce qu'il n'y a que deux vers (1).

Q. — Pour revenir à ma question antérieure, quel genre de poésie espériez-vous écrire ?

R. — Eh bien, d'abord j'étais très séduit par l'élégance du langage, les associations imaginatives des mots ; je participais à un monde de langage — un peu comme le monde de Wallace Stevens, qui fut une de mes idoles à un moment. Mais en même temps une autre partie de moi-même ne s'écartait pas de la réalité sociale. Vous trouverez dans la section des *Moqueries Juvéniles* du recueil *Amulette* beaucoup de mépris pour ce qui se passait dans le monde social. Dans mon œuvre récente, je fais quelque chose de différent et de très difficile pour moi, c'est de prendre une chose très personnelle pour base d'un poème. Après tout, personne ne s'intéresse à Rakosi en tant qu'individu, n'est-ce pas ? C'est un défi formidable, par conséquent, de voir si l'individu Rakosi et ce qui lui arrive peut passer dans la poésie. Pour *Americana* c'est autre chose. Dans ces poèmes, j'ai été fasciné par le folklore et je cherchais des types d'Américains fondamentaux qui ont vraiment influencé notre pensée — et ces types se trouvent dans chacun de nous d'une certaine façon. Je regrette de m'être arrêté d'écrire *Americana*, j'espérais pouvoir continuer.

Q. — J'aimerais revenir au problème d'un « monde de langage imaginé » dans un instant ; mais avant pourriez-vous développer ce que vous disiez des poèmes *Americana* ? Peut-être pourriez-vous commenter *Americana 1 (Amulette)*, ce court poème sur un pionnier à qui l'on demande pourquoi il emporte son fusil en allant en pays indien, puisque « Si votre heure est venue, vous mourrez de toute façon », et il répond « Je le sais, mais il se peut que ce soit l'heure de l'Indien ».

R. — Eh bien, qui était le colon américain, qu'était-il en réalité ? Il m'a semblé que la vérité, en ce qui concerne le pionnier, n'était pas qu'il était romantique mais qu'il était pratique. Sa réponse est très primitive et astucieuse. C'est là mon idée personnelle de ce qu'a dû être le pionnier, pas de la façon dont il apparaît dans le folklore américain, bien sûr, où on en fait un héros.

Q. — J'avais l'idée que le poème reposait seulement sur

(1) Ces vers sont de Nashe, poète élizabéthain (N. d. T.).

le mordant du vers. Mais vous dites en effet qu'il faut réfléchir à la personne qui fait la déclaration plutôt qu'à la déclaration elle-même.

R. — Oui, je le crois. Bien qu'il soit vrai que j'ai essayé de comprimer pas mal de choses dans ce dernier vers.

Q. — Mais pour revenir au corps principal de votre poésie, dans « Ligne de rivage » vous écriviez « Ce sont les données brutes. / Un mystère les traduit / en sentiment et perception ; / puis imagination ; / enfin la dure / inévitable figure / de quartz de la volonté / et du langage. » Il me semble qu'il y a là une indication de la façon dont vous considérez le processus poétique en général. Ce passage ne serait-il pas en accord avec ce que vous disiez d'un monde de langage imaginé ?

R. — Je crois que c'est vrai, bien que ce ne soit pas tout. La première ébauche de ce que je veux écrire sera plus ou moins des données brutes qui ont été tournées et retournées. Puis je continue à les retourner encore, mais ce sont toujours des données brutes. Elles n'ont pas encore été converties en un... Je dirais que c'est un mystère qui les change. Je veux vraiment dire un mystère parce que je ne sais pas ce qui rend la conversion possible. Je sais seulement quand je ne l'ai pas faite. Qu'y a-t-il dans un individu qui ne lui laisse pas de repos tant qu'il n'a pas transformé une expérience, certains sentiments et observations qui sont reliés entre eux et le frappent soudain comme étant un sujet important ? Je ne connais pas la réponse.

Q. — Eh bien, en fait, j'avais présent à l'esprit l'état de certaines perceptions et images du poème fini. « Le homard », par exemple, semble présenter des données brutes, bien que, si vous l'examinez soigneusement, ce ne soient pas des données brutes du tout : « Mer orientale, 100 brasses, / sable vert, cailloux, / coquilles brisées. / Au large de Suno Saki 60 brasses, / Sable gris, cailloux, / Bulles s'élevant. /... Le bateau de pêche *Ion* / jette l'ancre ici / recueillant / des traces de plancton et de la faune. »

R. — Eh bien, il y a ici beaucoup de détails, mais ce ne sont certainement pas de simples données brutes, elles s'additionnent pour former la mer, le mystère et le froid de la mer. A propos, ce poème a été réimprimé plus qu'aucun autre ; pour une certaine raison les gens l'ont aimé, je ne sais vraiment pas pourquoi ; en un sens, il est moins du Rakosi qu'aucun autre de mes poèmes, ou presque, parce qu'il n'introduit pas de personnes. Ce que j'essaie de projeter ici, c'est quelque chose de dépersonnifié qui est la mer.

Q. — Et la personne du locuteur qui voit chacun de ces objets arriver du fond ? Le lecteur ne voit-il pas ce « matériau brut » par les yeux d'un homme situé sur le bateau de pêche ?

R. — C'est bien ça, mais ce que j'ai essayé d'écrire c'est un poème sans poète.

Q. — Croyez-vous que ce soit possible ?

R. — C'est possible (relativement parlant peut-être) bien que je n'aime pas beaucoup écrire de cette façon.

Q. — Le poème intitulé « Temps à tuer » semble soulever les mêmes questions. Il semble présenter des données brutes, une description objective — mais, si vous l'examinez, les observations sont nettement celles d'un homme qui a du temps à tuer, quelqu'un qui s'ennuie peut-être.

R. — C'est exact, dans une certaine mesure. C'était en été par un après-midi très chaud et vous savez comme tout s'épaissit et se ralentit quand il fait chaud, de sorte que la perception qu'on a de ce qui se passe devient plus lente et plus dense. Puis un vieil homme arrive et j'ai éprouvé un peu de pitié que j'ai essayé d'exprimer là.

Q. — Mais vous diriez alors qu'il y a un sujet humain, qui perçoit les choses ?

R. — Oui, c'est très différent du « Homard » à cet égard. Et « Temps à tuer » a été écrit il n'y a pas longtemps, alors que « Le homard » a été écrit il y a trente ans. Je n'aurais pas pu écrire « Temps à tuer » quand j'étais jeune.

Q. — Pourquoi pas ?

R. — Mon rapport à la réalité n'était pas le même alors.

Q. — Que voulez-vous dire ?

R. — Une vie entière de relations avec d'autres gens par le travail social sépare ces deux époques. Ceci pourrait faire de moi un poète plus pauvre à certains égards, parce que je ne suis pas aussi entièrement subsumé par le langage que je l'étais alors. Je m'intéresse tout autant au sujet.

Q. — Vous avez parlé de Stevens tout à l'heure. D'après mes calculs, votre poème « Hommage à Stevens » doit être une œuvre de jeunesse, puisqu'il semble être surtout un exercice de style.

R. — Oui, de ma première jeunesse. Si j'avais eu plus de poèmes à inclure dans *Amulette*, je n'y aurais pas mis celui-là.

Q. — Pourquoi donc ?

R. — Il ne dit vraiment rien. Je prenais plaisir aux images et au langage, c'est tout. Je ne sais pas quelle expérience Stevens a faite au début ; mais si vous prenez un de ses poèmes et essayez d'y voir un homme disant quelque chose, vous êtes perdu. Ses beautés sont quelque chose d'entièrement différent. Il a tué tout le sujet.

Q. — Diriez-vous que Williams a fait de même ?

R. — Oh non. Williams avait beaucoup de respect pour le sujet.

Q. — Eh bien, *Paterson* traite d'un sujet humain et d'un monde humain, mais je pensais à certains poèmes antérieurs qui n'étaient que des présentations formelles, de nouveau une affaire de perception.

R. — Peut-être, mais chez Williams vous avez toujours l'impression qu'il y a là un homme qui parle. Chez Stevens vous n'avez pas cette impression. Il s'est transformé en quelque chose de merveilleux et de beau, mais ce n'est pas un homme qui parle.

Q. — Mais vous devez reconnaître que certains de vos propres sujets n'apparaissent pas à première vue. Par exemple ce poème intitulé « Le moucheron » ou « La cité, 1925 ».

R. — J'ai aussi eu un peu de difficulté avec le poème du moucheron, quand je l'ai relu. Le sujet en réalité c'est l'hiver — si vous imaginez les rigueurs et l'énormité de l'hiver (l'hiver est particulièrement énorme dans le Minnesota). Et qu'est-ce qu'un individu ? C'est vraiment un moucheron. C'est moi, un moucheron en hiver.

Q. — Eh bien, que sont les « six fleuves / et six jeunes filles / les douze victoires » dans les vers par lesquels se termine le poème ?

R. — Je ne peux pas vous répondre. J'ai peut-être abandonné le sujet de l'hiver au milieu du poème et j'ai continué sur quelque chose d'autre, dans ce cas les deux moitiés ne vont pas ensemble. Ou bien les six fleuves et les six jeunes filles, que je considérerais comme six victoires n'importe quand, n'importe où, m'ont peut-être traversé l'esprit précisément à cause de l'hiver, pour en triompher, en quelque sorte, et ainsi de suite. En tout cas, les ellipses du poème me mettent mal à l'aise.

Q. — N'avez-vous pas un autre poème intitulé « Janvier d'un moucheron », qui reprend certaines images ?

R. — C'est un de mes premiers poèmes. Il est tout entier fait d'images. Le sujet en est ma propre imagination jouant avec les impressions que me procurait l'hiver.

Q. — Des impressions d'hiver d'un point de vue très imaginatif, pas des impressions immédiates.

R. — C'est tout à fait juste.

Q. — Et « La cité, 1925 » contient-elle aussi un sujet, bien qu'il ne semble pas y avoir de lien logique entre les images ?

R. — Eh bien, je puis en dire ceci. Je suis un jeune homme de vingt-deux ans, timide et solitaire, et j'arrive à New York venant d'une petite ville, et c'est écrasant — l'immensité, la profusion, l'infinie variété, les gens. Le poème est un effort pour maîtriser cette impression écrasante. Puisque c'est la première fois que j'y suis exposé, il y a tout un tas d'objets à décrire — des objets qui n'ont pas de liaison entre eux. La liaison se fait par ma perception, du fait que je les reçois dans leur formidable multiplicité.

Q. — Donc une fois de plus celui qui perçoit devient l'élément important du poème.

R. — C'est vrai. Mais intuitivement j'essayais de laisser ces objets aussi intacts que possible, de laisser intacte leur intégrité. Aussi il y a cet élément d'adhérence à l'intégrité de l'objet qui le différencie de la simple perception. En même temps, vous avez raison. Le vrai sujet du poème, ce ne sont pas les objets eux-mêmes, si intéressants soient-ils, mais ce que ce jeune homme éprouve en leur présence. Ce qui est important est que soit préservée l'intégrité du sujet aussi bien que de l'objet. C'est-à-dire, je respecte le monde extérieur — il contient beaucoup de choses qui sont belles si vous les regardez attentivement. Je ne veux pas contaminer cela ; cela a son être propre ; sa propre beauté et son intérêt propre ne doivent pas être corrompus ou déformés. Mais le poète a aussi son être propre.

Q. — Que diriez-vous que sont certaines des forces corruptrices agissant sur la perception du monde réel dans sa beauté intrinsèque ?

R. — Eh bien, je vais parler en psychologue. Il y a une force très grande qui s'exerce à l'intérieur du poète, dirigée contre le sujet — en fait, dirigée absolument contre l'acte d'écrire un poème. Aucun psycholoque ne l'a mieux compris qu'Otto Rank. Il nommait cette force la contre-volonté. Cette force est toujours là quand on éprouve le besoin d'écrire, et elle est égale à lui, et souvent même supérieure. On reconnait le jeu de ce démon contraire dans les atermoiements de l'écrivain, bien sûr, mais il opère aussi en coulisse d'une autre façon plus subtile et plus détournée chaque fois que l'on élude son sujet en se réfugiant dans la rhétorique ou l'ellipse par exemple. A la surface, cela paraît innocent, comme s'il ne s'agissait que d'une question littéraire, mais si l'écrivain lui-même est de cet avis, cela signifie qu'il a réussi à se protéger et qu'il s'est fait manœuvrer par son démon contraire. A cette occasion, il peut lui arriver de faire quelque chose d'aussi bon, ou même de meilleur, mais il n'en reste pas moins qu'il n'a pas préservé l'intégrité de son impulsion initiale, il a été obligé d'apaiser ou de tromper sa contre-volonté par un produit de remplacement. Vous voyez que ce démon contraire est quelqu'un de très vivant pour moi.

Q. — Et l'abstraction ? Ceci nous ramène à Pound, à ses « Quelques ne faites pas ».

R. — L'abstraction, bien sûr, est l'ennemi public numéro un. Quand vous écrivez sur quelque chose comme si c'était un principe ou un concept ou une généralisation, vous avez à ce moment-là éludé cette chose, sa spécificité, sa vie terrestre. Vous parlez d'autre chose. En vérité d'un tout autre ordre de réalité.

Q. — Voyons si je vous comprends bien. Vous semblez dire ici qu'il y a deux sortes de corruption qui sont à l'opposé l'une de l'autre. L'une consiste à éluder complètement le sujet en employant des procédés formels dans le poème, et l'autre est une appréhension rationnelle à outrance du sujet, de sorte que le sujet se change en la conception qu'en a le poète au lieu d'être présenté dans son soi-disant être intrinsèque.

R. — Si vous mettez « généralisations » à la place d'« abstraction », vous êtes dans le vrai. Il est extrêmement difficile de présenter le sujet, l'objet qui a été la cause de votre expérience, dans son intégrité — et vous, qui en faites le portrait, dans votre pleine intégrité aussi.

Q. — En réalité, c'est justement cette façon de l'aborder que l'on pourrait nommer « objectiviste ». Cela correspond-il à votre idée de ce que le terme signifie vraiment ?

R. — Oui, je crois. C'est la raison pour laquelle j'ai jugé que le terme était assez bon à l'origine, quand Zukofsky l'a conçu. Une façon de voir ce qu'il est consiste à voir ce qu'il n'est pas — la façon dont l'objectivisme diffère de l'imagisme ou du symbolisme, par exemple. On pourrait croire un instant, après tout, que l'objectivisme est une forme d'imagisme ou de naturalisme. Mais l'imagisme tel que je me le rappelle — et cela fait trente ans que je n'ai pas lu de poèmes imagistes — a été une réaction contre la manière qui le précède immédiatement, contre l'affectation littéraire. Ainsi les imagistes se sont mis à faire ce que faisaient les impressionnistes français en peinture : à sortir et à regarder, à voir ce qu'il y avait à voir et à l'écrire sans recourir à l'affectation qui régnait alors dans la littérature. Et c'est ce qu'ils ont fait, mais cela ne suffisait pas. Ce n'était que le premier pas du processus littéraire. C'est pourquoi l'imagisme n'est pas entièrement satisfaisant ; la personne du poète n'y est pas assez présente.

Maintenant le symbolisme, bien sûr, s'oppose davantage à l'objectivisme. Il me semble que le sujet du symbolisme est une impression poétique, et son but est de la reproduire. Le point de départ n'importait guère — que ce fût une fleur ou la lune. La seule chose dont s'occupait le poète, c'était sa propre impression. Et pour ce sujet, le symbolisme convient, mais c'est un sujet très étroit.

Q. — Une impression qui était très éloignée de l'objet lui-même ?

R. — Tout simplement sa propre impression. Il ne se souciait vraiment pas de la lune, ou de la fleur, du vrai caractère de la fleur.

Q. — La différence radicale est alors entre une impression *per se* et une impression qui résulte d'une perception directe de l'objet.

R. — Je le formulerais ainsi. C'était une impression généralisée que le poète avait en lui. Un objet n'était qu'une occasion pour lui de projeter cette impression.

Q. — Cette impression que possédait le symboliste — sa

façon d'aborder la réalité — était en un sens un *a priori*...

R. — Absolument.

Q. — ... tandis que l'objectiviste l'aborde *a posteriori*. Il faisait dépendre ses impressions de l'objet et était fidèle à l'objet.

R. — Juste. Prenons donc mon poème « A une jeune fille ». La jeune fille n'est pas une abstraction ; elle reste réelle tout au long du poème. Ce n'est pas l'épitomé d'une jeune fille, ce n'est pas le bel idéal d'une jeune fille, c'est une jeune fille réelle. Or elle devient subjective dans ce sens que moi, ou le locuteur, j'entretiens un certain dialogue intérieur avec elle, mais c'est mon affaire, c'est ma réalité que je projette dans le poème. Mais la jeune fille est une personne réelle. Je respecte sa réalité.

Q. — Ceci nous ramène à « Ligne de rivage », n'est-ce pas ? Vous commencez par les données brutes et puis, en y étant fidèle, vous les transformez en perception et impression et ensuite en quelque chose d'imaginatif.

R. — Oui. Je ne me suis pas rendu compte en écrivant ces vers qu'ils exprimaient de façon aussi vraie ce qui se passe en moi et quelle est ma conception de la poésie, de la poésie objectiviste. Mais c'est vrai.

Q. — « A une jeune fille », donc, tout en étant fondé sur un objet extérieur, décrit en réalité quelque chose qui se passe dans l'esprit du poète ; il imagine ce que la jeune fille elle-même pourrait penser et il entretient un dialogue imaginaire avec elle. Il m'a semblé que l'important dans ce poème c'était la vivacité, pour le moins, des pensées et des impressions du vieillard.

R. — Oui.

Q. — En fait il m'a fait penser à Humbert Humbert et à Lolita. La nymphette s'avère être en partie une créature née de l'imagination du vieillard.

R. — Je suis pleinement d'accord. Vous savez, parlant de fidélité à l'objet, il vient de m'arriver quelque chose d'autre. Il y a eu un compte rendu d'*Amulette* dans un nouveau périodique britannique, appelé la *Grosseteste Review*, fait par un jeune poète qui a trouvé une ressemblance entre moi et un jeune poète tchécoslovaque qui s'appelle Holub. Holub est médecin et on dit qu'il reconnaît avoir été influencé par Williams qu'il a lu en traduction. J'ai le livre d'Holub chez moi, et c'est vrai qu'il y a des ressemblances. Il m'a semblé qu'une des raisons pour lesquelles Williams, Holub et moi avons quelque chose en commun est qu'aucun de nous n'est poète de profession ni universitaire ; nous avons tous exercé des professions similaires et peut-être que l'expérience que nous en avons retirée a conduit à la similitude de notre poésie. Williams a toujours eu un sentiment de respect pour l'objet. En fait, il était pédiatre et son travail était aussi bien psychologique — établir un rapport avec la mère et l'enfant, rassurer, comprendre — que médical. Et c'est vrai pour l'assistant social. Je ne sais pas quelle était la spécialité médicale de Holub, mais il se peut qu'il ait aussi eu ce genre d'expérience. Williams, bien sûr, ne s'est jamais arrêté d'écrire, comme moi ; je suppose que sa première réaction à l'expérience a été comme la mienne mais qu'il avait plus l'habitude de la transformer en matériau littéraire.

Q. — C'est une idée intéressante. Donc vous avez l'impression que votre poésie est très proche de celle de Williams ?

R. — Eh bien, non. Je dirais que celui qui m'est le plus proche est Charles Reznikoff.

Q. — D'après ce que vous avez dit, je comprends ce que vous voulez dire.

R. — Je crois que Reznikoff apparaît dans ses premiers poèmes comme un homme entièrement compatissant. Il apparaît comme une personne. Quand il observe quelque chose, vous êtes à l'intérieur de lui.

Q. — Vos poèmes *Americana* semblent rappeler certaines des choses qu'il faisait dans *Témoignage* (1).

R. — Ce livre m'a fasciné. Mais ce qu'il y disait, c'est que les données brutes parlaient d'elles-mêmes. C'était ce qui arrivait, ce qui se trouvait dans les ouvrages de droit et dans les comptes rendus des tribunaux, et c'est de la poésie.

Q. — Donc il regarde la réalité du point de vue de sa propre profession, en avocat.

R. — Pas exactement. Il se contente de la rapporter avec la spécificité simple et la phraséologie du langage juridique de la façon dont le ferait un bon compte rendu d'audience. Ce livre n'a pas été bien accueilli par la critique, pour autant que je me rappelle. Je crois que les critiques ont dit qu'il n'avait pas suffisamment élaboré son matériau. Mais ma première réaction quand je l'ai lu a été de me dire que peut-être Reznikoff avait raison. Peut-être que le matériau parle de lui-même. Mais mon point de départ dans *Americana* est différent. Je ne suppose pas que les données brutes sont effectivement la poésie. Cependant une chose qui est semblable est que Reznikoff semble avoir été fasciné par le langage juridique et l'a laissé tel quel. Dans *Americana* j'ai été fasciné par l'afflux singulier du langage familier et je l'ai gardé tel quel.

Q. — Appelleriez-vous Reznikoff objectiviste ?

R. — Oui. Je crois bien que, pour écrire un poème, il procède à peu près comme moi. Pas tellement dans *Témoignage* que dans les poèmes antérieurs. Il y a de cela des années, Zukofsky m'a dit que je devrais entrer en contact avec Reznikoff parce que nous avions des tas de choses en commun. Mais nous ne nous sommes jamais rencontrés.

(1) *Testimony.*

Q. — Avez-vous jamais rencontré George Oppen ?

R. — Non. Mais j'ai du respect pour sa poésie. Il lui arrive de présenter d'éblouissantes perceptions de la réalité, où le moi est intéressant, tout autant que l'objet. Mais elle ne m'excite pas. Elle est trop dépouillée.

Q. — Je me demande si je pourrais changer complètement de sujet maintenant pour vous poser une question personnelle. Qu'est-ce qui vous a fait décider de recommencer à écrire des poèmes après un intervalle de plus de deux décennies ?

R. — Eh bien, c'est une très jolie histoire. Un jour, j'ai reçu une lettre qui avait été dans pas mal de villes avant de m'atteindre, écrite par un jeune Anglais, Andrew Crozier. Il m'écrivait qu'il avait lu mon nom dans un article de Rexroth, cherché mes œuvres dans les revues et copié tous les poèmes que j'avais écrits. Il en avait dressé la bibliographie et voulait savoir si j'avais écrit autre chose. Eh bien, la pensée que quelqu'un de son âge puisse s'intéresser à ce point à mon œuvre m'a vraiment touché ; après tout, nous étions séparés par deux générations. Et c'est là ce qui m'a décidé.

Cette lettre a un à-côté amusant. Vous savez que mon vrai nom est Callman Rawley, et non Carl Rakosi, et Crozier a eu beaucoup de peine à me découvrir. Heureusement il ne s'est pas découragé en recevant une lettre de mon éditeur qui lui disait qu'il ne savait pas si j'étais vivant et qu'il avait entendu dire que j'étais peut-être un agent secret du Komintern et que j'étais mort derrière le Rideau de fer. Cependant, ce n'était qu'un bruit qui courait, et Crozier ne devait en souffler mot à quiconque ! Je devine qui a pu lancer ce bruit. Mon éditeur a dû être en rapport avec quelqu'un qui connaissait mon vieil ami, Kenneth Fearing. Fearing et moi, nous étions compagnons de chambre à l'université. Ce genre de blague lui ressemble bien. Je crois l'entendre rire comme une baleine de cette farce.

Q. — Eh bien, la lettre vous est tout de même parvenue et ce fut une chance. Une dernière question : avez-vous retravaillé certains des poèmes antérieurs que vous avez inclus dans *Amulette?*

R. — Effectivement, j'ai fait des quantités de changements dans les œuvres tirées de revues que j'avais recueillies dans mon premier livre, *Poèmes choisis*, paru en 1941. Zukofsky a dit que j'en avais gâché certaines. Il avait raison. J'ai fait de trop nombreuses coupures. Dans *Amulette*, j'ai modifié certains textes en les rapprochant de la version primitive, et aussi d'autres écrits par la suite, en allant pour ainsi dire jusqu'aux années soixante. Mais je ne suis jamais satisfait. Je pourrais continuer à les réécrire toute ma vie. C'est une bonne façon de n'arriver nulle part, parce que l'individu change constamment, et ce qui le satisfait un jour est obligé de lui déplaire le lendemain. Donc, à moins qu'on n'ait amélioré son jugement critique — et il n'y a pas de raison que cela se produise passé un certain âge — la troisième version a toutes les chances d'être aussi bonne que la quatrième, ou même meilleure, parce qu'elle est plus proche de l'impulsion originale. Mais j'ai beau me le dire, je ne puis m'empêcher d'y mettre la main. Il y a quelque part en moi un lourdaud qui persiste à croire qu'une aperception neuve d'un poème est plus juste que l'ancienne. Cet imbécile refuse de regarder en face le fait que chaque occasion nouvelle crée une situation nouvelle et exige un poème nouveau. Quelle bataille ce serait avec ma contre-volonté, si jamais j'adhérais à ce point de vue !

4 avril 1968.

Traduit de l'anglais par Nelly Stéphane.

Extrait de *Contemporary Literature.*

memories of the twenties

The Casual Years

by Charles J. Duffy '26

WHAT THE enrollment was in the mid-twenties matters little now. My guess is that there were some five or six thousand. It was a comfortable number, housed in rooms along Park Street, West Johnson, Wisconsin Avenue, and in the stately mansions on Langdon, Iota Court, and neighboring places. High hemlines (not yet mini) and bucket hats marked the co-eds whose legs were tubular and whose chests flat. The men went in for coonskin coats, squash hats, and both Jack and Jill served as models for the John Held drawings then recording the contours of college men and women in the old *Life Magazine* and *College Humor*. The fashionable walk, affected by the men, was a heel scraping gait, and in shaking hands it was *de rigueur* to raise your elbow so that the forearm slanted downward at an angle of forty degrees. Exhortations to the contrary on the part of the faculty, education had not yet become "serious", and the ethos of the jazz age reigned.

> Dancing, prancing,
> crazy-looking lads
> Up on all the nutty,
> newtime fads.

Although Wisconsin was—as were schools all over the country—something of a fun college, there were a number of students who became in later years luminaries of one sort or another. Doubtless my contemporaries will detect horrible gaps in my little list, and I hope amendments and corrections will be made.

One figure stands out in memory insistently: that of Kenneth Fearing, with his great shock of uncut, unkempt hair, which was the talk of the campus. He was to go to New York to continue writing verse and his novel, *The Hospital*. Fearing was a non-joiner who jeered at convention. The Wisconsin yearbook used to run "senior summaries" printed alongside the photos of the graduating students. Most of them read like this: "Joseph Doaks. Sophomore Prom Chairman, '24; Band '24–'25; Haresfoot '24." When we came to look at Fearing's we found he had printed for himself "Indian Reservation '24–25." We prized his reply to someone he passed on State Street, "Where are you going, Ken?" "I am going to perform a public duty," replied Fearing, "I'm going to get a haircut."

A companion of Fearing was Carl Rakosi, a little fellow with an intense manner and tragic eyes, whose soulful verse appeared in the *Literary Magazine*, edited by Marjory Latimer and later by Carl Weimer. Rakosi's verse attracted the attention of William Carlos Williams in after years and gained some acclaim among critics. In those days he could ask odd questions. Once he wanted to know if seventeen dollars was much. "Much for what?" I asked. It developed he wanted to buy a canoe and had no idea what one paid for such a craft.

In the Fearing–Rakosi circle was Marya Zaturenska, then a pale girl with long hair, whose verse had been commended by William Ellery Leonard. She too contributed to the *Lit.* and was soon to follow others to New York. Her *Cold Morning Sky* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1937. She married Horace Gregory, also on campus, but a few years earlier.

One of the campus beauties was Emily Hahn, or Micky as she was called, whose adventures in Africa and the Far East became known through her fiction and non-fiction which appeared in the pages of the *New Yorker*. She had many distinc-

Otis Wiese

Emily Hahn

Marya Zaturenska

Kenneth Fearing

WISCONSIN WOMEN'S DAY

Program Highlights

April 25, 1967

"Facing the Fantastic Future"

Below is a program outline for this year's Wisconsin Women's Day. Use the blank at the bottom of the page to register for this popular event.

MORNING PROGRAM—Wisconsin Center, 702 Langdon St.

8:15– 9:15 a.m.—Registration and Coffee Hour

9:30–10:40 a.m.—Seminars

10:50–12 noon —Seminars repeated

Seminars:

A—STUDENT LIFE AND INTERESTS—LeRoy Luberg, Dean for Public Affairs and Joseph F. Kaufmann, Dean of Student Affairs.

B—MEDICAL FORECASTS—Drs. Edgar S. Gordon and Ben Peckham of the UW Medical School.

C—SCIENCE BRINGS CHANGES—Erwin A. Gaumnitz, Dean of the School of Business, Prof. Richard W. McCoy, data processing, and Prof. Reid A. Bryson, meteorology.

D—THE ARTS—H. B. McCarty, professor of radio and television, Lee S. Dreyfus, professor of television education, and Hazel Alberson, emeritus professor of comparative literature.

AFTERNOON PROGRAM—Memorial Union, 770 Langdon St.

12:15 p.m.—Luncheon, Great Hall

Greetings from the University
—Madison Campus Chancellor Robben W. Fleming

1:30 p.m.—Wisconsin Union Theater

Lecture–Recital—"The Music of Schubert" by Paul Badura–Skoda, world-renown pianist and artist-in-residence at the University of Wisconsin

2:45 p.m.—Tour of the new Alumni House

Wisconsin Women's Day, Wisconsin Center, 702 Langdon St., Madison, Wis. 53706

Here is my reservation(s) for Wisconsin Women's Day to be held on the campus April 25, 1967. I enclose $_____ at $4.00 per ticket (includes registration fee, coffee, and luncheon). Make checks payable to the Wisconsin Alumni Association.

Name _____

Maiden name, if married _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Circle two seminar preferences: A B C D

Reservation deadline: April 21

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tions, among which was her degree in mining engineering—the first (and the last?) ever won by a woman at Wisconsin.

Professor Alexander Winchell asked our class in mineralogy for a definition of *cleavage*. Micky was the only one who defined it correctly. When she took a walk on campus she was usually attended by a squad of engineers, all wearing lumberjack shirts and high boots, an attire Micky also wore. Once, *a propos des bottes,* I asked her, "Are there flying squirrels in Australia?" "You," she laughed, pointing at me, "have been reading a book on how to make conversation."

For a while we had Lawrence Schoonover on campus. He was to go into advertising and later to abandon it for writing, achieving fame as a popular novelist and producing *The Gentle Infidel,* certainly among his most exciting yarns; he merged history and fiction into a palatable confection.

Ray Allen Billington came to Wisconsin as a junior. His major was history at a time when Paxton and Fish taught courses in that subject. Billington went on to Harvard for his doctorate and studied under the elder Schlesinger and interested himself in Turner's work on the frontier. His many books have given him a place in American historical studies along with the most notable of his generation. With all his scholarly interests (he made Phi Beta Kappa in his senior year), he had lots of fun in his nature. Once on a walk on Picnic Point he found snails on a granite boulder and selected two of them: one was his, the other mine. We made a bet on their speed toward a chalk line. His won. Another time we came across a chunk of curbstone near Park Street. This must have weighed close to forty or fifty pounds. We lugged it upstairs and placed it in the bed of Gene Bradley, covering it with the bedclothes. Ray wrote in his diary (a treasure trove of undergraduate shenanigans): "The idea was that Brad would break his leg."

ANOTHER big-man-on-campus was Otis Wiese from Davenport. I knew him only slightly. He was, as I remember, activity-minded and no doubt his senior summary would reflect his wide interests. So far as I recall, he went straight to *McCall's* after graduation, served for a time without pay, and became for a long term of years the editor of that prosperous magazine. He later went into harness for the *World Encyclopedia.* Jack Davis once said of him: "He was marked for success." He was something of the all-American boy—handsome, gallant, aggressive.

Jack Davis, after a bout in academia, harkened to the call of New York, where for many years he edited the magazine published by Shell Oil, joined the Lamb's Club, and married a fellow lady-journalist. He was editor of the *Octopus* for a while and conducted a fine paper, having sound literary judgment, as I can attest. Once I submitted a poem; he read it closely, wrinkling his forehead. "Well," he said in his slow, deliberate voice, "It . . . does . . . rhyme." Shortly before Easter vacation he and Chic Gindorff got hold of a sizeable metal sign and surreptitiously placed it in Billington's suitcase, just before Ray was to leave for Detroit. He hauled it all the way home before discovering the sign, "Murray Street."

Because he worked hard and was too busy filing for a Milwaukee paper, we saw little of William A. Casselman. After a movie on the square where we watched cowboys handling whips, Bill pretended to wield a blacksnake. He went through the motions of cracking it while Jack Davis and Don Trenary, standing a block away, would jump, waiting a while, as though the whip would have to travel that distance before reaching them. Bill wound up in New York, as did so many others, and made his way to the editorial room of the *Daily News,* the managing editor of which he now is. We sat in a lecture in philosophy and listened to Professor McGilvary expound one of Principal Morgan's books. He scribbled a note to me, "Emergent evolution is philosophy's gracious gesture inviting God to have a chair."

Of course there were others in that far-off time who have made splashes, but I knew them only slightly. There must be lawyers and judges, engineers, social scientists, chemists, physicists, biologists, musicians, artists and doctors who have come to prominence. A few of these I have come across in recent years but I did not know them in academia.

They were good years. College life had still something of casualness which has, in a measure, been lost. Or maybe I only think so.

Alumni News

1911–1920

Earle S. Holman '10, a member of the *Antigo* (Wis.) *Journal* editorial staff, was recipient of the Antigo Area Chamber of Commerce "man of the years" award presented at the Chamber's golden anniversary meeting in January.

The title of honorary president of the Master Builders of Iowa was conferred on **W. A. Klinger '10** of Sioux City by the membership of the Association at their 55th annual meeting in January.

Warren Pease, Jr. '16 of Palm Beach, Calif., is the winner of the 1966 Ben Hogan Award.

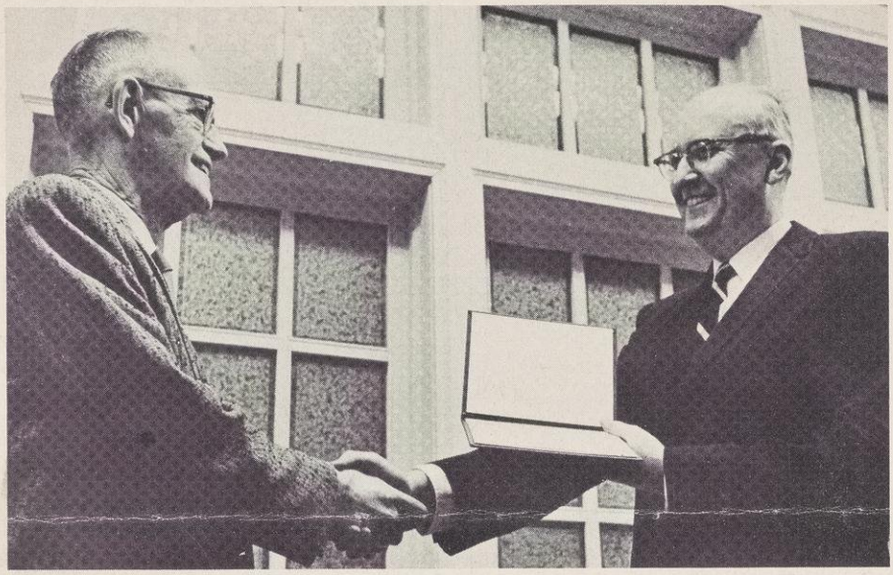
Dr. Barry J. Anson '17, research professor in the department of otolaryngology and maxillofacial surgery at University Hospitals, Iowa City, Ia., presented two papers at the Third Symposium on the Role of the Vestibular Organs in the Exploration of Space. The NASA-sponsored Symposium was held in January at the U.S. Naval Aerospace Medical Institute, Pensacola, Fla.

Two brothers of a distinguished UW family—**Allen M. Slichter '18** and **Donald C. Slichter '22**—were presented with the Milwaukee Alumni Club's 1967 distinguished service award at the Club's Founders Day celebration in February. Allen Slichter is chairman of the board of the Pelton Steel Casting Co. in Milwaukee. His brother is retired board chairman of the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co. and first vice president of the Wisconsin Alumni Association.

1921–1930

Chadron State College has announced that its new women's health and physical education building has been named for the late **Adelaide Miller '22.**

Hugh L. Rusch '23, former vice president of Opinion Research Corp., has



One of the most unusual requests ever made of the University was granted recently when UW Pres. Fred Harvey Harrington (right) handed a new diploma to Arthur Nelson Lowe, Loraine Hotel, Madison. In 1921, the UW alumnus received a B.A. in commerce from Wisconsin under his original name, Arthur T. Nelson. Later, as an employee of an insurance company, he found the name too common, causing problems in his dealings with the public and with his mail. The courts permitted the legal change to Arthur Nelson Lowe in 1925, and since then the Madison resident has worked to correct all previous records. The University put a gratifying period on that effort when a diploma bearing the adopted name was placed in Lowe's hands.

organized his own sales, marketing, and public relations consulting firm in Princeton, N.J.

Everett J. Thomas '24 has retired from the General Electric Co.

Clement P. Lindner '25, Atlanta, Ga., recently retired from Government service and the position of chief engineer, South Atlantic Division of the Corps of Engineers.

Louis C. McGann '27, Madison, has been elected to the board of directors of the National Guardian Life Insurance Co.

Atty. Edward J. Konkol '30 has been named legislative representative for the Wisconsin Association of Life Underwriters.

Dr. Walter C. Rogers '30, Pasadena, Calif., recently served as chief of staff aboard the hospital ship S. S. HOPE on a medical teaching-treatment mission to Columbia.

1931–1940

Atty. Allan L. Edgarton '31, Fond du Lac, has been appointed to a five-year term as a member of the Wisconsin State Universities board of regents by Gov. Knowles.

Lloyd H. Rooney '31 has assumed his duties with the Middle Atlantic Region headquarters of the Federal Water Pollution Control Administration, United States Department of the Interior in Charlottesville, Va.

Dr. Garrett A. Cooper '32, clinical professor of medicine at the UW, has been appointed to the State Board of Health by Gov. Knowles.

Edward G. Christianson '37 has been elected a director and executive vice president in charge of exploration and production in the Shell Oil Co.

Robert M. Kelliher '37 has been named vice president of office administration at the American Family Mutual Insurance Co. in Madison.

Paul F. McGuire '37, Highland Park, Ill., has been elected to a second three-year term on the board of directors of the Chicago Board of Trade.

Donald W. Blanchar '38 has been elected to the board of directors of the Research Products Corp. in Madison. He is assistant general manager of the Forsberg Division, EasTex Packaging, Inc.

Howard W. Fiedelman '38 has been appointed director of salt research at the Morton Research Center in Woodstock, Ill.

Richard W. Koehn '39 has been elected president of the First National Bank of Oshkosh.

Dr. Ben M. Peckham '39, professor of gynecology and obstetrics, has been named associate dean of the UW Medical School.

1941–1945

R. R. Fish '42 has been elected vice president, comptroller of E. R. Squibb & Sons, Inc. in New York City.

Dr. Robert G. Wochos '42, Green Bay, served as a specialist in general surgery aboard the hospital ship S. S. HOPE on a medical teaching-treatment mission to Columbia.

1946–1950

Edward P. Leight '47 was recently married to Elaine Schleif. He is public information director for the Wisconsin Council of Safety in Madison.

Gerald L. Frei '48, former Badger football star, has been named head football coach at the University of Oregon at Eugene.

James M. Hilgendorf '48 is a counselor for the Minneapolis School System.

Mr. and Mrs. Don Huibregtse '49 (Laurel I. Karau '49) have sold the weekly newspaper, the *Blair* (Wis.) *Press,* after publishing it for 13 years. Mr. Huibregtse has been assigned as managing editor of the dairy industries publications for the Miller Publishing Co. in Minneapolis.

Alfred Jaehn '49 has been appointed senior quality control engineer for Consolidated Papers, Inc., Wisconsin Rapids.

Ben J. Russo '49 is curriculum coordinator for secondary education at Lincoln High School in Wisconsin Rapids.

Harvey G. Smuckler '49, Washington, D. C., has been elected vice president-agency of the Bankers Security Life Insurance Society.

Eugene E. Young '50 has been appointed director of public information for the Wisconsin Power and Light Co. in Madison.

1951–1955

Rolland G. Frakes '51 has been appointed marketing manager, film and sheet, for the Celanese Plastics Co. with offices in Newark, N.J.

Dr. George E. Inglett '51 has been named chief of research on cereal properties at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Northern Utilization Research Laboratory, Peoria, Ill.

Victor Johnson '52 has been named industrial engineer of the Davenport, Ia. plant of Oscar Mayer and Co.

Dr. Lola V. Hopkins '54 cruised around the world last summer with her sister, Mrs. Myra Mertes of Huntsville, Ala. Dr. Hopkins is the author of the recently published *Pharmaceutical Synonym Dictionary.*

Harvey Kuenn '54, a veteran of 14 seasons in the major leagues, has retired from baseball to work as director of sports development for television station WVTV in Milwaukee.

Robert W. Pohle '54 has been named vice president and trust officer of the Bank of Madison.

Byron H. "Tony" Stebbins '54 has returned to Madison to join the Harry S. Manchester department store firm. He was formerly a divisional manager for the Store of Homes of the Joseph Horne Co. of Pittsburgh, Pa.

William M. Brissee '55 has been named city editor of the *Wisconsin State Journal* in Madison.

NOTES ON CARL RAKOSI by H. S. Ephron

Of Carl Rakosi, it might be said that: "He was never young and never old."

Before Carl arrived at the Jewish Board of Guardians, the other staff members had all known each other from the first day we had come to work there in 1925. Social work, psychology, psychoanalysis and potato soup lunches at Hammer's Vegetarian Kosher Restaurant on East 14th Street, as well as radical politics, were the sum and substance of human existence for us. Two-hour discussion lunches were not infrequent, and when talk got too psychoanalytical, that is too given over to uncurbed "dirty-talk" (like sex) Dr. Alexander Tendler (our psychologist) would lace into us and remind us he would not tolerate "low brow unprofessionalism." Red-faced, we coughed into our coffee, and cooled our enthusiasms. With our limited training, our inadequate knowledge of psychotherapy, of necessity we had to rush to cover behind a mask of pretended professionalism.

Into this world of uncertainty, reaching with trembling heart for some channel of salvation, walked a stranger, youthful, preoccupied -- but seemingly old, though inexperienced and even more disturbing, seemingly indifferent to our concerns. This was Carl Rakosi. Friendly, very friendly -- of course, but not really "one of us". We were New York, we were Hammer's cold borsht and potato soup. Carl was young, he was old, he was a stranger, he remained a stranger -- he was not New York. He could be "taken" by the New York sharpees, but he wouldn't know

it. Like the rest of us, he got his tiny cubicle -- he had an "office"; he was given the little black book with close to a hundred cases to look after -- he was a social worker.

Ghostly? No! We never saw him much at first, but he was alive, busy. Yet, I wondered: did he really belong? Was he one of us? He was liked -- very much so, especially by the women on the staff. Carl went his strange way. Because our offices were adjacent to each other, we became friends -- though how could you tell, since at first we talked little, and never met at Hammer's.

Carl was neat, but never "polished". He was always from "the country" -- a simpler way of life. He seemed essentially inactive, yet he got around -- very much so. A bachelor, yet not really, but then who was to know?

We had a spare room, and Carl moved in. He brought Leon Herald along to share costs -- so we had two boarders living in that one room. Leon was a mad vegetarian, so we had a gaunt looking Armenian living with us who was starving to death on carrots, peppers, and for all we knew, on raw potatoes and butchered green cabbage. Then came visitors, friends of Carl and Leon -- Marjorie Latimer and Kenneth Fearing. All four had been students at the University of Wisconsin and had studied with the then famous poet, William Ellery Leonard, an agoraphobic professor who could not leave the campus. Thus, we were suddenly surrounded by four gifted young writers, inspired by one of America's better poets, and partially aided by patronage from Zona Gale.

Peripherally, as always with Carl and his friends, we became strangers, while these four carried on, writing and all. Exciting days, busy days. Marjorie, the ever-so-golden blond -- beautiful, feminine, gifted, charming; Leon, all vegetables, all the glowing essence of poetry -- essentially Armenian and undereducated; Kenneth, brooding, aesthenic, painfully shy, hiding behind a pall of anger and biting humor (later to become one of America's exciting poets and novelists); Carl, spending days and days, reading, studying "words" (for all I could figure out), and implying always that he had difficulty in relating to women.

Leon lived a troubled life and wound up as a short-order cook in a run-down restaurant. After his wife died, he had the task of raising a baby son. Marjorie died a few years later in childbirth, cutting short a promising artistic career. Kenneth married a leading artist, and won recognition for his writing on many levels. When Senator Joe McCarthy pressured him, "Are you now or have you ever been a communist, or fellow-traveler, etc.," Kenneth roared back with indignation, "Not yet! Not yet!"

To this day, I believe that these four poets, writers, were in love, a) with Marjorie; and b) with their art. Leon went even further, he loved people, animals and vegetables. As I look back upon his early days, something in me wants to shriek, "My God, he looked starved!" Yet, Leon, the underdog of the four, was bright-eyed, active, very much alive, and though human, though a sensitive poet, he was kind, warm, friendly, playful.

In those many months, Carl spent every spare moment in the 42nd Street Library, bringing back reams of experimental "phrasings", notations of special use of words garnered from the writings of others. One day he went to a party and both Leon and Carl came back home, "late", at midnight. Both seemed very happy and talked late into the night. They must have fallen asleep at three in the morning. Eyes asparkle the next morning, Carl greeted me with unusual joy, the joy of discovery: they had ventured into the land of the cocktail, and had conquered it, or were conquered by it. "Jesus, it was wonderful! You find yourself talking, like you never talked before. Jesus!" Notwithstanding, Carl fell far short of becoming an alcoholic. (Not so, Fearing, who drank more than was good for him.)

Carl had trouble approaching girls, so one day my wife and I took him to the dance arena at the Palisades Amusement Park. There we picked out plausible female companions on the floor, and encouraged him to approach them for dances. He followed orders, danced, and a good time was had by all. We didn't get home till quite "late". It must have been about 11 p.m. It was indeed a happy occasion.

Occasionally we dropped by Freda Goldfeld's place on a Sunday morning. There couldn't have been a more futile gesture. Freda was always one of the best-looking lady social workers in New York, but it was a waste, because her huge Great Dane would always take a great liking for Carl and would insist on making unyielding efforts to mount Carl -- the dog weighing at least thirty pounds

more than Carl. And Carl would yell "Get him off me! Get him off me!"

Around this time also, Carl began to let us know he would only marry a girl who was "plain folks". No professional girl for him.

Meanwhile, in those years, Carl was writing poetry and being widely published. He was in constant communication with the leading poets of that day. It was H. L. Mencken who at that time declared that of all the young poets he'd read, he felt that Carl Rakosi was the only young poet of promise who would make good.

I'll never understand what took Carl into social work, away from writing belle-lettres. He worked for agencies where he said his job was devoted to "promoting chastity among the youth". Yet, again, he declared he envied the youngsters in the cellar clubs who quite joyously and with much freedom and abandon violated all precepts of chastity. He completed professional social service training with what was then called "The Philadelphia School," led by Jesse Taft and (I believe) Virginia Robinson. He treasured these teachers and became a leading exponent of this Rankian approach to the Problems of Social Agency Techniques. He wrote impressive and outstanding technical papers for the official journals of this group and became one of their top executives and leaders. Apparently, good poets should work as clerks in banks, in the professions, or in other vocational fields. After jobs in New York, Brooklyn, Boston, Cleveland, Carl wound up as

Executive Director of the Jewish Social Agencies in Minneapolis, where he served with distinction till his retirement. He was married to Leah in New York, and raised two gifted children, and is now a grandfather.

These are the historical facts as I remember them, yet several things stand out in my mind about Carl which defy any chronological treatment. They are my feelings about him.

Carl's manner was and is almost totally devoid of artificiality. He was not a "showman" in the livingroom. His way of being with others was entirely nonintellectual, in the sense of intellectual one-upmanship or playing "games" with ideas.

Carl never paraded his ideas on the social stage. When he talked, it was to say with great earnestness and in great detail exactly what was on his mind. He always lacked, to an extraordinary degree, the self-consciousness one would (perhaps naively) expect of the poet, of the artist. Instead he seemed to be without any pretenses whatsoever, even without the degree of posing characteristic of the average nonartist. He was easy, comfortable. From the first I felt at home with Carl. Others felt this too. They were often surprised and often charmed.

But Carl's simplicity did not mean a lack of challenge for he is outspoken, candid, and occasionally frank to the point of tactlessness. He says what is on his mind with no introduction to the subject (whatever it may be) and no softening of words. If he disagrees, he disagrees. "I think that's utterly

ridiculous!" he will shout. "I don't see how you can think that!" He is not a diplomat. He makes bald statements that are as sharp and critical, as enthusiastic, or as alive and full of curiosity as his mind at the moment. He does not conceal feelings. Whatever he is speaking about -- whether it is his children and his concerns about their lives or whether it is winning (or not winning) a literary honor (such as how he feels about a near-award that didn't come through) -- both sides of the picture will come tumbling out. His conversation is artless beyond the ordinary.

While his voice has always been hoarse, almost squeaky, his opinions are firm and uncompromising. Yet he has never been cantankerous -- merely open, surprisingly so. Is it from this uncompromising directness that he derives his swift, keen poetic metaphors?

Carl follows a simple behavioral path. If he needs to criticize his friends, he feels entirely free to criticize them -- without reservations and without their permission. Deeply engrained in his character is an inclination never to garnish or gloss over anything and not to dissemble. It is as though he were crying out (as in the ancient fairytale): "Hey! That emperor is plain naked!" And usually he laughs at the whole matter.

Carl seems to enjoy his own frankness. At times he almost plays with it in a teasing manner, seeming somehow to relish his jabs at others. He often laughs at them and at life --

spontaneously, like a bright, self-certain child who feels safety in the presence of others -- so much safety that he need not be coy. Is this lack of coyness why he chose the most economical of expressive forms -- poetry -- to be his art?

Because he is so outspoken and unreserved in his criticism of what he does not like about anything or anyone (and to their face), Carl's compliments are embraced. His praise is so obviously without guile and it is so clear that it cannot be obtained unless at that moment he wants to give it -- that his friends feel entirely secure when they receive his good opinions.

There is also an underlying stubbornness in Carl. I have never tried to push him around (literally or figuratively), nor he me -- but I have a feeling he does not shove easily. For all his slight frame and unassuming voice, it seems clear that he could not, would not, and will never be, "pushed around".

What, then, has Carl been, as friend to me and to my wife and family? Exactly that I believe -- a friend, in the easiest, most unassuming, direct manner. Carl was and is a genuine being in our midst -- a man remarkably able to be himself. I might add, that is all that is necessary.

Is this "realness" of his the basis for his determination and candor as a poet? I leave that to others to decide. For me, he remains a good firm friend -- steady, there, and known, clearly and well.

HAMLINE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

RECITAL OF STUDENT COMPOSITIONS

Woodwind Trio — JIM PHILLIPS

Sue Amundson, Clarinet
Pam Glad, Bassoon
Barb Johnson, Flute

Strings in the Earth and Air — JIM PHILLIPS
(written for Diane and David Steele)

Five Pieces for Choir — JIM PHILLIPS
(with texts by Carl Rakosi)
1. The Poem
2. Amulet
3. Pike-Eater's Song

Dancer's Song No. 1 (vivace) — JIM PHILLIPS
(written for Joan and Tom Schank)

The Phillips Follies Chamber Choir
Kathy Kelly, Nancy Peterson, Sopranos
Roxanne Johnson, Ardyce Mohler, Diane Owen, Altos
Terry Reische, Neil Robinson, Tenors
Bill Englund, Darrell Larson, Jim Phillips, Basses

Sonata for Piano — JIM PHILLIPS
First Movement

Kay Knowlan, Piano

Come Away Death (Shakespeare)

Neil Robinson, Tenor
Janet Kocher, Piano

Songs from the Poetry of Tu Fu — JIM PHILLIPS
Loneliness
South Wind
Far up the River
Clear Evening after Rain

Nancy Peterson, Soprano
Kay Knowlan, Piano

Renwood Suite — STAN KELLEY
Prologue
Act I
Act II
Epilogue

Stan Kelley, Trumpet I
William Rusten, Piano

INTERMISSION

A Round on 4 Themes — DAVE TIDBALL

Byron Holth, Trumpet I
Doug Ingle, Trumpet II
Martha Knutson, French Horn I
Lynn Anderson, French Horn II
Jan Shoemaker, Flute
Les Johnson, Alto Saxophone
Bill Taylor, Tenor Saxophone
Dave Tidball, Baritone Saxophone

Paul A. Pizner, Director

Song without Words — DAVE TIDBALL

Dave Tidball, Piano

Feelings — DOUG INGLE

Stan Kelley, Trumpet I
Doug Ingle, Trumpet II
Sue Hanna, Piano

Variations for Clarinet and Bass Clarinet — BILL ENGLUND

Sue Amundson, Clarinet
Becky Robinson, Bass Clarinet

Hold Fast to Dreams — BILL ENGLUND

Cliff Reykdal, Bass
Roxanne Johnson, Piano

1st Movement — BILL ENGLUND

Barb Johnson, Flute
Sue Amundson, Clarinet
Becky Robinson, Bass Clarinet
Patty Petrik, Violin
Bill Englund, Piano

* * * * * * * *

BRIDGMAN HALL (OLD MAIN)

SUNDAY, APRIL 8, 1973

8:00 P. M.

Andrew Crozier's piece — on sale for The Dictionary of Literary Biography

Carl Rakosi belongs to the generation of American poets who, starting their careers in the twenties, took their initial direction from the expression of contemporary sensibility made possible by the formal innovations of the now classic modernist poets: T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens, and William Carlos Williams. Unlike some members of his generation (Yvor Winters and Allen Tate, for example) Rakosi did not seek to associate his poetry with the formulation and propagation of a new literary-critical canon, and thus make a theoretical connection between writers in the present and the literature of the past in the name of a prestigious tradition of the sort ~~proposed~~ adumbrated by Eliot in his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent". Instead, he ~~became~~ found himself associated with a number of poets whose writing investigated the formal possibilities of the data of their directly registered perceptions of the world around them. Like him, these poets came mostly from immigrant families and, cut off from cultural traditions which American experience tended, anyway, to negate, the necessity of their attention to formal arrangements that could be understood as the specific, unprecedented resolution of their experience is distinctive and legitimate. It is as a member of this group, along with George Oppen, Charles Reznikoff, and Louis Zukofsky, which was sufficiently cohesive for them to allow their work to be collectively described as "Objectivist", that Rakosi is best known. As such he occupies an important position in the history of American poetry, for the "Objectivists" can be seen as constituting the first revolt against institutionalised modernism by virtue of their rejection of the impersonal theories of discourse implicit in the notion of "tradition". Their work might be seen, also, as an attempt to incorporate and develop the initiatives of the classic modernists at a time when their careers had begun to diverge. Any such program, however, was inauspicious in the thirties, when the main opposition to the academic modernism of the "new criticism" came from left wing

demands for a literature of solidarity and social commitment.

The "Objectivists" constituted what was, in effect, an alternative development of modernism, one still closely responsive to the instigations of the previous generation of modernists by virtue of their understanding of form as the resolution of responses to new modes of existence rather than an adaptable convention able to accommodate and so regulate a problematic and perhaps undesirable novelty. Such an alternative emerged (perhaps only could emerge) outside the new establishment of literary power relationships brought into existence by the alliance with modernism of an increasingly professionalised literary criticism. This alliance, which proved to be the dominant mode of appropriation of modernism by poets of Rakosi's generation, took place primarily in the universities, and its values were demonstrated in Yvor Winters's review of An "Objectivists" Anthology in 1933, which casigated the "Objectivists" for their lack of "rational intelligence" nd misread their work as that of "sensory impressionists of the usual sort". Winters's elaboration of a critical system led him to categorise "form" in a disablingly restrictive way by requiring that it demonstrate the mind's rational control of disorderly sensation and feeling--an analysis of poetic form, content, and technique in which he was at all points at odds with that of the "Objectivists".

But if the "Objectivists" tended to be seen, when they were noticed at all, as foolishly extreme followers of yesterday's fashions, this only reflected their stake in the literary world. Their position was marginal at best, and by choice as much as necessity they operated outside that world's preferred institutions. Indeed, for complex reasons, Rakosi renounced poetry after the publication of his Selected Poems in 1941, and wrote nothing for the next quarter of a century. He was not alone in this: Oppen withdrew from poetry for a similar period, and there are parallel cases to be observed in Europe. Such silences need to be

seen as significant events in themselves, not simply as reflexes of the vagaries of literary fashion. When Rakosi began to write again in the mid-sixties it was at a time of quickened interest in the work of the "Objectivists", and this has perhaps tended to obscure the extent to which his later writing, by far the greater portion of his work as a whole, differs in manner and tone from that of his "Objectivist" phase. The later Rakosi turns mature experience to advantage, and makes poetry a vehicle for the expression of a wry sagacity, a belated understanding of the roots of personal feeling, and a passionate yet amused comment on human behaviour. There is, nonetheless, genuine continuity between his earlier and later work, both explicitly acknowledged and characteristically recognisable in his formal authority of cadence using the phrase as a basic unit of poetic construction.

Carl Rakosi was born in Berlin, where his father was in business as a manufacturer of walking sticks. Both parents were Hungarian. They separated in 1904, his father Leopold emigrating to America after the failure of his business partnership, and his mother Flora returning to her parents' home in Baja, Hungary, where Rakosi and an elder brother were cared for by their grandmother. Their mother played little part in the boys' upbringing, and may have been permanently invalid. Leopold Rakosi remarried in America, and in 1910 the two boys were fetched from Baja by their stepmother Rose. At this time the family was living in Chicago, where Leopold was employed as a watchmaker in the wholesale trade. Rakosi recalls the pressures experienced by the immigrant child. "How long did it take me to learn to speak English? About twenty-four hours. I mean it. I had to. The first place we lived was a tough neighbourhood in Chicago and the kids on the school playground would have beat the shit out of me if I hadn't. As it was, I remember on my second day in school some kid made fun of my accent and I bust him on the nose and chased him down the street. It had to be done." Hungarian--

and German, the language of educated Hungarians--continued to be heard at home, however, although significantly Rakosi recalls his inability to share fully in the warmth and happiness of occasions of festive nostalgia celebrated by his parents' generation. Leopold went into business on his own account, as a jeweler and watchmaker, in 1911, first (without success) in Gary, Indiana, and then in Kenosha, Wisconsin. His elder son, in due course, followed the same line of business. It was in Kenosha that the family finally established itself, and Rakosi became an American citizen through his father's acquisition of citizenship in 1917.

Rakosi attended the University of Chicago in 1920, and began to write poetry in his English class. In 1921 he trasnferred to the University of Wisconsin in Madison, where he majored in English, was an editor of the Wisconsin Literary Magazine, and received his B.A. in 1924. Kenneth Fearing was his room-mate for a while, and William ~~Emery~~ Ellery Leonard--who enjoyed a considerable reputation as a poet in the same genre as Carl Sandburg--was a prominent member of the English faculty. Sandburg himself, whose fame at this time was widespread, noticed Rakosi's work in a national collegiate poetry contest. Such an unpromising literary background gives little indication of the direction in which Rakosi's poetry was to develop during the ensuing decade. During these years he beagn to earn his living as a social worker, studying as and when he could to obtain the appropriate professional qualifications. On more than one occasion he rebelled against the constraints of his professional life, which he felt left him too little time for writing, and tried other means of subsistence such as teaching and the merchant marine. For legal purposes he changed his name in 1926 to Callman Rawley, retaining his original name for his literary work. Perhaps as much for such reasons ~~of~~ of personal uncertainty as in response to the necessities of the economic situation of the times, Rakosi moved from one employment to another, rarely spending more than a

year in any one city, and still using Kenosha as a ~~secure~~ permanent address in the early thirties. In this way he moved from Cleveland to New York in 1924, and then in turn to Madison, Milwaukee, Boston, Houston, Chicago, and New Orleans, returning to New York in 1935 where he based himself for the next five years. In the course of these ten peripatetic years Rakosi established himself as a widely published member of the avant garde, associated through his writing on equal terms with other poets whose work engaged ambitiously with the idea of a poem's potential as an expressive object as complex as modern life. Yet he accomplished this while keeping his distance from avant garde centres in New York and Europe, and for the most part his literary existence was carried out by correspondence and attention to the little magazines that served as clearing houses for information and published his work and that of his peers. The development of his writing during these years shows him to have been a serious critic of his own work, perhaps also afflicted by doubt about its ability to realise its own purposes and respond to the needs of the times--whatever the case, he eventually found poetry itself wanting in the face of the demands of social and practical life in a time of economic and political crisis.

Rakosi's books provide difficult access, at best, to this first phase of his career. The Two Poems of 1933 are comparatively late work: "Men on Yachts" originally formed part of longer piece, and removed from its initial context its ~~proper~~ appropriate form obviously gave Rakosi some difficulty, for he published other versions of it under different titles; "The Lobster", on the other hand, was his most frequently anthologised poem and, as he remarked much later, although it proved to be his most popular poem it was not typical of his work. The Selected Poems of 1941 presents today's reader with different and greater problems, for it might more suitably have been called "selected extracts". It includes a number of pieces from the late thirties, but

for the most part it consists of a drastically edited reworking of poems published between 1931 and 1934, and imposes a sensibility based on the particularised detail, the taste of the vignettist, on writing which was previously serial and compound in its range and complexity of reference. Most of the writing Rakosi published between 1924 and 1934 appears, in one form or another, in Amulet, the volume that announced his reappearance in 1967, but here again the record has been extensively tampered with, rewritten, and, in some instances, reorganised into what are to all purposes enirely new poems. In addition, old work is interspersed with poems written in the sixties; as a whole, therefore, Amulet, spanning though it does Rakosi's long period of silence, demonstrates both an integrated sensibility and one that is distinct in tone from that of his writing of the twenties and thirties. It is self-reflective, original ambiguities and conjunctures of imagery now treated as material that is fair game for an ironic and revisionist autobiography. In thus appropriating and repossessing his poetic history Rakosi effectively hid it from his readers. Although, in the absence still of an adequate edition of his work, it is ~~therefore~~ necessary for any account of the first phase of Rakosi's writing to refer back to his poems in their original magazine and anthology appearances, there is something instructive and appropriate in this. The absence of a contemporary edition of his first ten years' work reminds us that, although he was widely published, in places we now think of as having possessed a seminal importance, his work at the time was little recognised and, like that of his peers, tended to make itself available only to readers to whom poetry was not ~~necessarily~~ primarily an adjunct of either criticism or propaganda.

Rakosi's earliest published work (in Palms, an undistinguished little magazine) already bore traces of some of his distinctive qualities: a social wit projected into personal feeling, with excursions

into a lurid and subversive diction. These first poems do not, as might have been expected, have any affinity with the celebratory regionalism of Sandburg. (Rakosi's nearest approach to such an example, "Vitagraph", published in 1926, is in fact parodic of Western stereotypes.) They allude, rather, to the conventional refinements of sensibility of the "decadent" poetry of the 1890s, a style that could still be regarded as excitingly modern in the early twenties, and the very thing against which Sandburge represented a somewhat simple-minded reaction. But for all the symptomatic references to Whistler. or the highlights glimpsed in a woman's hair, and flirtation with the sonnet form, these poems neither depend on such stock conventions and effects nor identify with the decadent poet's anxious comparisons of sacred and profane love. In a sense Rakosi was working over ground on which T.S. Eliot, and others, had preceded him. But whereas Eliot's Prufrock was made to reveal the absurdity of the modern courtly lover, guiltily aware of his fleshly bachelor existence, the equivalent figures in Rakosi's poems are unequivocally youthful and resistant rather than absurd. The female may have the propensity to immobilise the male, to put him to sleep, but he retains the alternative of action, the obligation to "compose the shifting forms to beauty" ("Creation").

Such last-ditch refinements of a late-Victorian problematic could be, at best, no more than starting points. "Beauty" was already a flawed touchstone, and the spectacle of a young poet digging himself out of the sexual politics of a situation in which the female could only be imagined through an outdated literary convention, however compensatingly grotesque she might then appear, rev ealed little more than the poet's non-committal attitude. What strength these poems still possess lies in the way the proprieties of formal convention are not so much filled out as pulled indecorously out of shape by the solids with which Rakosi's agile imagination furnished settings for personages who themselves remained no more than symbolist enigmas. 325

(2332)

May

SMALL PRESS BOOK CLUB SELECTIONLIST

1201
DROLES DE JOURNAL by Carl Rakosi (The Toothpaste Press). 6½ x 8; 30 pages; $5/paperback, smythe sewn.

Carl Rakosi is a prominent poet of the Objectivist group of the Thirties. He is associated with Louis Zukofsky, William Carlos Williams, Lorine Niedecker, Charles Reznikoff and George Oppen, but he has a distinct sound which makes his work far more than simply representative. This sequence of 20 poems combines a few reworkings of earlier poems with new ones that examine aesthetics, academia, and the world of everyday life. "The reader is almost surprised to find himself moving from a homely, apparently naive sometimes almost domestic landscape, into a mind that is neither naive nor domestic; and it is the casual leap into serious thought and back again that keeps us balancing on the points of our mind". (Stanley Cooperman). One wonderful example of this is the opening poem, a meditation on the consequence of not shifting back to lower case on the typewriter and receiving a "message:""In short/it was grounded/on the unconditional,/one of the attributes of beauty."

The poems were handset, and designed and printed by Alan Kornblum on Curtis Tweedweave. The text paper, inks and fine, elegant design make a handsome showcase for this sequence.

1202
CONVERSATIONS WITH PIONEER WOMEN by Fred Lockley, compiled and edited by Mike Helm (Rainy Day Press). 5½ x 8½; 310 pages; $8.95/paperback, perfectbound.

Fred Lockley was one of Oregon's pioneer newspapermen. He worked for newspapers in Montana, Kansas and then Oregon, where he was known as the "Journal Man" and for nearly 20 years his column "Impressions and Observations of the Journal Man" appeared in the *Oregon Journal*. During his career he conducted more than 10,000 interviews with men and women in all sorts and conditions of life: bullwhackers, muleskinners, pioneers, 49ers, trappers, preachers, poets. These interviews, an amazing oral history collection, are in the Oregon Collection at the University of Oregon. Helm has selected from these to make this his first volume in a series: *Conversations With Pioneer Women*.

The interviews are not in any significant order, nor do they appear to have any thematic or narrative intent, but reading them, sometimes only brief narratives of a particular event, what strikes a reader most is the casual familiarity with death, violence, even freak accident. "...He was playing with a rope and fell into the campfire, knocking over a large kettle of boiling water, which scalded him to death." Striking, but this is not all. The book is full of personalities molded under conditions and in situations far from our own, yet not unfamiliar. There are commentaries on religion, on medicine, by women whose ideas and attitudes were often shaped by the obviousness of sheer necessity. One interview begins, "They say I am hard and bitter." No indeed. Just tough.

1203
THE ECOTOPIAN ENCYCLOPEDIA by Ernest Callenbach (And/Or Press). 7¼ x 9¼; 288 pages; $9.95/paperback, perfectbound.

The *Encyclopedia* is subtitled: "For the 80's, A Survival Guide for the Age of Inflation" and promises "thousands of ideas to help you live better and save money A to Z." It is designed for "people who are looking for solutions to the economic challenges of the 80's, and is the product of Ernest Callenbach, whose ecological classic and utopian vision, *Ecotopia*, envisions California, Washington, and Oregon seceding from the United States to form a separate country based on an ecologically stable-state economy. If this country existed in fact and not fiction, this *Encyclopedia* might serve as a citizenship manual.

It has, however, ideas for our present non-stable, ecologically marginal world, too. Stewart Brand, of the *Whole Earth Catalog* says of this: "Kind of like *The Whole Earth Catalog*, maybe better." It provides an ecologically sound and sensible system for improving every facet of daily life (in alphabetical order), including food, housing , health, entertainment, transportation and more. It may become a survival guide, indeed, for those who have it. The suggestions are easy to follow, even for those who have resisted doing for themselves, and some suggestions apply to everyone of us.

1204
HOUSEHOLD WOUNDS by Deborah Keenan (New Rivers). 6 x 9; 88 pages; $3/paperback, perfectbound.

This is the first volume in New Rivers' "Minnesota Voices Project," a program to publish and foster recognition of Minnesota writers of poety and short stories, It is a stunning example of the way in which regional publishing can work to foster literature, since in this first volume at least, the "voice' is not local, or restricted by region, but rather enriched and extended by it. Keenan's *Household Wounds*, a substantial and varied collection of poems(and one short prose piece), speaks to us all in images and capsule events of great clarity and simplicity. The title poem, for example, does indeed detail the life of a woman trying to survive in every sense, in a house with her children. Her day is measured out in the small, literal wounds of daily life: The knife which reaches through the apple to the finger, the page in a children's book that slices invisibly as you turn a page, the hammer-smashed thumb. These become a chronicle of the "dangers" which lurk larger in the poem, threats to self, to children in the guilts and responsibilities inherent in care and love. The poems are like that, in all three sections: "Pursuit," "Mending," and "How Will I Know When the War is Over."

The volume is, as the series promises, attractive, simple and sparsely but nicely illustrated by Gaylord Schanilec.

1205
THE CASE FOR THE BURIAL OF ANCESTORS, Book I, by Paul Zelevansky (Zartscorp). 8½ x 11; 123 pages; $15/paperback.

For those lucky ones who have seen Paul Zelevansky's earlier book, *The Book of Takes*, this new one, *The Case for the Burial of Ancestors* will not come as a total surprise, but only as a joy. For those who have not, the surprise and joy are both promised. Zelevansky is clearly creating in the rich details and exquisite skill of his visual images and his occasional orphic text, a world, its geography, its history and rituals and myths and, perhaps in works to come, its future. *The Book of Takes* was its basic geography, and the pages of "places" framed as camera shots were given a concrete space in the "Jericho map", a copy of which was tucked beautifully into an envelope at the

the name, big name, i'm taking issue with in this letter, is an old acquaintance of mine, & in many ways, a fellow in the faith: i.e., robert bly, whom you interviewed in recent newsletter. i think, nay, believe, that he's a terrific translator of the swedish poet tomas transtromer: he literally put him 'on the map' for us: & of kabir, etc.: & of the silence in the snowy fields, etc. in no way wd i care, or want to, take issue with his assumptions of stature in american poetry...

what i object to is his final statement in the interview, viz. "return to form", equals, "return to right wing". i think that it is based on a complete (i.e., more than 'total') misunderstanding of both terms--"form", & "right wing".

to take the smaller one first: "r.w." does not mean shit in active contemporary parlance. it is, however, understood to encompass nitwits & charlatans along a spectrum from jerry faulwell & ron reagan to the kkk & the american nazi party: none of whom, i hope & trust, present any real threat to american poetry--if for no other reason because they are quite incognizant of it; any 'wider' description of it wd require far more detailed discussion than i believe mr. bly wd care to engage in (say, with mr. hugh kenner, or mr. john wieners, etc.).

"form", now, is something mr. bly seems to be a little more clear about: i.e., "english forms". it is true that the retrenched guild of academically employed poets (of whom i am one, albeit intermittently) has had recent spokesmen (i.e., richard hugo) who propose that the 1980s task (let's say, "task") of teaching poets, & writers in general, is to take on the burden previously borne by straight-arrow english & american lit. professors--simply, the task of making students, at whatever level, READ instead of phasing in & out of nighttime t.v. plus whatever social activities they might muster. & this, mainly, because of the dwindling enrollments in s.-a. english courses, compared to the steady interest in 'creative writing', combined with the general dearth of students in any discipline, however, in the present decade...

as anyone at all familiar with the texts produced & presented at the st. mark's project over the past 20 years shd know,--well: is it only 15?--, "form" cannot be understood in anything like the simple-minded manner mr. bly proposes. obviously, folks who like imitation shaker or art deco furniture, etc., marc chagall prints, etc., will also feel most comfortable with the kind of (soi-disant, i was going to say: but, well, it passes by that label) poetry that the new yorker, poetry (chicago), & most of the university-connected journals are printing these days (not to mention a lot of the 'rustic' stuff being put out by various--& numerous--'regional' little magazines). that, as they say, is quite true, & if that is what mr. bly is looking at, he certainly has every right to feel dismayed.

what mr. bly seems to be totally blind & deaf to, is the continuous & genuinely amazing development of formal concerns in what i, for one, see as the main & most exciting body of poetry being written in this country today. meandering on about 'sound'--as i've heard him do on contemporaries, i.e., competitors--, he obviously has not, ever, spent any time with the work of louis zukofsky, george oppen, charles reznikoff, & mina loy--to mention "only the dead"--nor, i believe, with the work of william carlos williams: &, honestly, i do not think that anyone claiming to be an american poet could afford to be as negligent as that. carl rakosi, as a matter of fact, is still with us: so is basil bunting: i wd suggest apprenticeships, direct or indirect, to mr. bly, with these people--much more fruitful, i shd think, than any to third-hand kabir or tagore, etc. especially in matters of sound, & attendant form: & i cannot restrain myself (sorry) from mentioning three or four other people who do, indeed, "point the way": robert creeley, alice notley, ted berrigan, robert grenier...

truly, i welcome an opening-up of debate on this: & i think it is time for the new york scene to pay attention to the possibilities of a slightly more accurate vocabulary: as a useful text, i'd like to suggest the current issue of HILLS magazine, 6/7, titled TALKS, edited by bob perelman: a record of a group of people--writers, painters, film-makers, dancers, etc.--talking to & with each other in ways that seem little thought of, or even imagined, in either new york city or southwestern minnesota.

-- anselm hollo

**LITTLE CAESAR, 3373 Overland Ave. #2, Los Angeles, CA 90034: Little Caesar 10: Another incredibly interesting issue with an essay by Lita Hornick on Naropa, an interview with Joe Brainard by Tim Dlugos, photos by Gerard Malanga, Alan Lewis Kleinberg, essay by Peter Schjeldahl, interview with Leif Garrett, poems by Tom Clark, Elaine Equi and many others. ($1.50p/$4.00 for 3 issues).
**TREACLE PRESS, 437 Springtown Rd., New Paultz, NY: Shamp of the City Solo by Jaimy Gordon ($3.95p/$12.50h).
**THE WORLD #33, The Poetry Project, St. Mark's Church, 2nd Ave & 10th St, NYC 10003: edited by Tony Towle with work by Paul Violi, George Tysh, Kit Robinson, Vicki Hudspith, Cliff Fyman, Ron Padgett, Steven Hall, Mike Heffner, Neil Hackman, Jeff Wright, Tom Weigel, M. LaBare, Charles Bernstein, Cheri Fein, John Godfrey, Jim Brodey, Art Lange, Rachelle Bijou, Rose Lesniak, Steve Levine, and many more. Cover by Jean Holabird. ($3 postpaid).
**LITTLE LIGHT #!, 52 E. 7th St., NYC 10003: Edited by Susan Cataldo. Features 20 pages by Harris Schiff, 2 pages by Kathy Foley, Bob Rosenthal, Tom Savage, Daniel Krakauer, Susan Cataldo, Rochelle Kraut, Eileen Myles, Jim Brodey, Susie Timmons, and Bill Kushner. ($1p).
**TELEPHONE BOOKS, Box 672, Old Chelsea Sta., NYC 10011: The Temple by Janet Hamill ($2p).
**BLACK SPARROW PRESS, P.O. Box 3993, Santa Barbara, CA 93105: Cap of Darkness by Diane Wakoski ($5.00p/$14.00h).
**STARE PRESS, Two Hands Bookstore, 1125 W. Webster, Chicago, Ill 60614: Spaz Attack by Jerome Sala ($3.00p).
**OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 200 Madison Ave., NYC 10016: Lives of the Modern Poets by William H. Pritchard. Interesting brief biographical accounts, character sketches and critical evaluation of the achievements of writers like Thomas Hardy, Yeats, Frost, Pound, Eliot, W.C. Williams, Hart Crane. ($14.95h).
**UNICORN PRESS, INC., P.O. Box 3307, Greensboro, N.C. 27402: Words for All Seasons by Jacques Prévert. Excellent! ($5.00p/$15.00h). Queneau, Selected Poems. Translated by Teo Savory. Only translation of his poetry in English. ($4.00p/$10.00h). Guillevic, Euclideans. Tr. by Teo Savory ($5.00p/$10.00h).
**VISCERALLY PRESS, 118 Crain Ave., Kent, OH 44240: The Difficulties. A New magazine devoted to process-oriented language-centered work. First issue has work by Corman, Messerli, Enslin, Zavatsky, Sherry, Howe, Ashley, Waldrop, Callahan (NPL).
**NALANDA UNIVERSITY PRESS, c/o The Poetry Project, 2nd Ave & 10th St, NYC 10003: Slow Waltz on a Glass Harmonica by Tom Savage. Filling Spaces by Tom Savage. Covers by Alice Notley. Dos-a-dos binding gives you two books in one. (NPL).
**SCULPTOIDS, 614 Kentucky Ave, P.O. Box 1117, Paucah, KY 42001: Alpha Omega Entropy by Raymond L Roof, D.D.S. with photos by M. Madeleine Ullom & A. Thomas Ullam (NPL).
**THE ELIZABETH PRESS, dist. by Small Press Distribution, 1636 Ocean View Ave, Kensington CA 94707: The Force of Desire by William Bronk with seven etchings by Eugene G. Canade ($14.00p).
**BIG RIVER ASSOCIATION, 7420 Cornell, St. Louis, Mo 63130: River Styx Number 7--Space & Movement issue with work by Lyn Lifshin, Wendy Rose, Ken Daley (drawing), Tom Savage, Allen DeLoach, and many others ($3.00 per issue/$5.00 per year for 2 issues).
**OFFSHORE PRESS, 294 Mount Auburn St, Watertown, MA 02172: Clearing by Anthony Petruzzi with photographs by Daniel Weingrod (NPL).
**L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E, 464 Amsterdam Ave, NYC 10024: Volume One edited by Bruce Andrews and Charles Bernstein, compiling the first 6 issues of L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E magazine, so if you missed any of the first issues, here's your chance to get them all for ($6.00p).
**It's Spring & we're wearing our art on our sleeve. KOFF 4 is a very artistic teeshirt, front & back. $6 -or $7- by mail from CPL, 27 First Ave #14, NYC 10003.

* * *

APARTMENT WANTED: Lewis Warsh and Bernadette Mayer are looking for an apartment 4-5 rooms or more, beginning August 1, in the vicinity of 10th St & 2nd Ave. Call collect: (603) 428-7278.

NEWSLETTER SPECIAL THANKS: The Merry Month of May was brought to you by: Maureen Owen, Ron Padgett, Gary Lenhart, Michael Scholnick, Eileen Myles, Rose Lesniak, Steve Levine, Greg Masters, Helena Hughes, and of course the staff...

WEDNESDAY, June 18 at 5 pm --- Gerard Malanga will be reading at B. Dalton, 666 5th Ave, NYC, as part of a Celebration of Black Sparrow Press.

Some recent reviews of Brother Songs: A Male Anthology of Poetry

Publisher's Weekly (July 2nd, 1979):

Despite, or because of, the recent welter of feminist books about relationships, the subtitle of this new anthology is bound to raise a smile: a male anthology of poetry? What could that be? It could be the perfect mirror image of those other sexual liberationist books, and more. By coming at the same subject in an inverse way, this book seems to liberate everybody. Among his catagories -- poems for fathers, for sons, for brothers and for friends and lovers -- Perlman strikes such a fine, thoughtful balance of voices that his collection makes a flattering showcase for the 52 poets represented. He integrates the famous (Bly, Dickey, Hall, Ignatow, Levine, Rakosi, Snyder, Wright) with younger and lesser-known poets, and especially "regional" poets from the Midwest and Far West. Obviously, the book deals with the difficulties American men face in talking with their brothers about their feelings and with the subterfuges they are forced by convention to adopt. It is a small, multipurpose triumph and a model of anthology making.

Ask
Tell Matty about the book, Self-Portrait

" " about letters from other writers about my work
Viz., Eric Mottram / Ed Corman / Carlos Wms /

Reviews in Open Places,

Quote from Dembo's letter to Laughlin (1/2/68)

"I hope we'll be able to work something out with the Objectivists. Despite Zuk's assertion that nothing came of the movement, I am convinced it represents the basis of the whole dev. of modern poetry, esp. of the post war avant-garde. I'd like to do whatever I can to see that these poets get the attention they deserve."

There were asperities and aggressions, and it is probably important to admit them to some emphasis. Because there is something more at stake here than the heritage of those American Jews whose ancestry is the East-European immigration. *World of Our Fathers* implies something for the whole of our knowledge of the cultural and social shape of America in the 20th century. Howe's subject is the Yiddish ghetto, which was not paradigmatic of all of the other ghettos, but there were many others and assuredly there were similarities between all of them. During the episode of the New Immigration there came upon this country a stunning 12½ millions of assorted Poles and Slavs and Greeks and Sicilians, as well as East-European Jews. Add to this that in the latter part of the same period, a couple of millions of Southern blacks suddenly achieved visibility by moving into the Northern cities. And among the older Americans, one need not have been Henry Adams to think that the country was being overwhelmed by barbarians. The frustrations, the bitterness, the arrogance, the manipulations of power and the occasional bloodletting on both sides gave us the country we have today. One need not look very far to know that what we have in this country is a plurality of cultures, and also a quite abiding inheritance of isolation, division, and resentment. □

Poetry and the 'Back of the Book' (Part II)

GRACE SCHULMAN

This is Part II of an essay whose first section appeared last week.

Although *The Nation* was not primarily, like *Poetry*, an outlet for the new verse, it did provide a forum for literary opinion. The major writers of the century were represented over a period of many years. Ezra Pound's *The Spirit of Romance* was reviewed in 1911, and his work was reassessed by Allen Tate in an essay based on *A Draft of XXX Cantos*, which appeared on June 10, 1931. Many essays on the work of T.S. Eliot appeared in *The Nation*, including a review of *The Waste Land* in 1922. Some especially notable essays were those of Edwin Muir, on *The Sacred Wood* (September 9, 1925), and Granville Hicks, on Eliot's relation to society (February 6, 1929). T.S. Eliot's own essay on Mark Van Doren's poetry, "Why Rural Verse?," appeared in *The Nation* on April 15, 1925. Although the work of William Carlos Williams was not seriously evaluated until July 15, 1950, Wallace Stevens was noticed as early as 1925, when *Harmonium* appeared. And Marianne Moore's great poem, "The Mind is an Enchanting Thing" (December 18, 1943) appeared while Margaret Marshall was literary editor. Miss Moore's review of *One Times One*, by e.e. cummings, was published on April 1, 1944.

As for the modern poetry that arose in consequence of the impact of the Imagist movement, the dividing year is 1919 for *The Nation*'s literary section. Concrete imagery and conversational directness characterize poems of that year by Margaret Widdemer, Padraic Colum and Rolfe Humphries. Witter Bynner's "Chinese Drawings" embodied the new use of models from the ancient past and from remote civilizations. His translation, called "A Vendor of Rose-Bushes" reads

I am very poor.
Anyone who can buy from me
Ought to do it.

The Nation encouraged many unknown writers, such as John Erskine, whose "Kings and Stars," published on November 15, 1919, is a remarkable piece. It ends with a king's words:

One said:
The world widens
By starlight
And the mind reaches;
Stars beget journeys.

The 1920s generated a storm that rattled the book section. Robert Frost's *North of Boston* (1919), T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) and John Crowe Ransom's *City of God* surged like breakers on the literary scene. Mark Van Doren, who was literary editor from September 3, 1924, through September 26, 1928, wrote in a manner that expressed excitement, wit and profound irreverence. On October 24, 1923, he wrote of Louise Bogan's *Body of This Death*, "The 30 pages which they cover are packed more tightly with pure poetry than any 30 pages have been for a generation." On September 12, 1923, he said of *The Pilgrimage of Festus*, by Conrad Aiken, "Music is still the medium through which the poet speaks and sees." And on March 11, 1925, he said, "The most rousing volume of verse I have seen in a long time comes, it appears, from California. *Tamar and Other Poems* by Robinson Jeffers attracted no attention whatever when it was published here last summer." He said it was "rich with the beauty and strength which belong to genius alone."

Mark Van Doren uttered praise for a translation of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* ("it is contemporary as Austin Dobson or Ezra Pound"); he said that John Crowe Ransom's first collection of poems contained pieces from "that extraordinary Southern magazine of verse, *The Fugitive*." Of the six-volume *Autobiographies* of William Butler Yeats, he wrote, on March 16, 1927, "Mr. Yeats, like Mark Twain, and surely the two are alike in no other respect, has the power of remembering anything whether it happened or not." And when Edith Sitwell's long poem, *The Sleeping Beauty*, appeared in this country, he defended its publication with a characteristic celebration of what was genuine: "It gives me pleasure which is real and continuous if not profound; to that extent it deserves praise."

In 1923, two new features appeared in *The Nation*'s "back of the book." In one new series, critics wrote about themselves: H.L. Mencken wrote about H.L. Mencken; Ludwig Lewisohn said of himself, "I knew from the beginning that I would please no one."

The second feature was *The Nation*'s Poetry Prize, which was first presented on November 7, 1923, to Edwin Arlington Robinson, for his sonnet "Reunion." Subsequent winners included Allen Tate, Stephen Vincent Benét, Babette Deutsch and Genevieve Taggard. The Poetry Prize, last awarded in 1927, was revived in 1974, and has survived in Discovery—*The Nation*, '76, representing a union of *The Nation*'s contest with that of the 92nd Street YM-YWHA.

The masthead of July 18, 1923, lists artists, critics and political figures. Freda Kirchwey was managing editor (and became literary editor in 1929, after Mark Van Doren's tenure); Ludwig Lewisohn was associate editor; John Macy was literary editor. Contributing editors included Anatole France, Carl Van Doren and Norman Thomas. Maxwell Bodenheim wrote frequently in this period for the "back of the book." In "Truth and Realism in Literature" (October 8, 1924), he said, "Most realistic novels are failures primarily because reality itself is effective only when the tale is

Reference to a poem of mine on next page

being physically lived." He felt that the experimental novels of Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson were more exciting than the conventional novels of D.H. Lawrence.

D.H. Lawrence's extraordinary poems, though, covered a full page of the "Fall Book Section" on October 10, 1923. The poems, "Bare Almond Trees," "Tropic," "Peace" and "Humming-Bird," are powerful songs of death and resurrection. In "Peace," the image of a volcanic eruption bodies forth the violent end of a dying civilization. Lawrence's poetic force is his passionate rhythm and strange, vivid images which, as they depict the death of the old world, also suggest the risen self and the discovery of a new harmony. The poem begins:

Peace is written on the doorstep
In lava.

Peace, black peace congealed.
My heart will know no peace
Till the hill bursts.

Brilliant, intolerable lava
Brilliant as a powerful burning-glass
Walking like a royal snake down the mountain towards the sea.

Forests, cities, bridges
Gone again in the bright trail of lava.
Naxos thousands of feet below the olive-roots,
And now the olive leaves thousands of feet below the lava fire.

The striking quality of the poems that appeared in *The Nation*'s literary section during the 1920s is their diversity. There were poems in set forms and poems in freer rhythms. There appeared on December 25, 1925, "Sonnet: The Holy Bonds," by Carl Rakosi, whose style changed sharply in subsequent years, and on January 22, 1930, there was a Petrarchan sonnet, "Parting," by Stanley Kunitz, whose versatility permits him to use conventional forms. On the other hand, there were songs in unconventional cadences by Babette Deutsch, Margaret Widdemer and Witter Bynner.

The best of them had passion and intensity, such as the four poems on the lead page of the "Fall Book Section" on October 13, 1926: "Animula Vagula," by Babette Deutsch; "The River," by James Rorty; "Text for a Bitter Vision," by Rolfe Humphries; and "Dark Summer," by Louise Bogan.

Bogan's poem, for example, captures with precision the dangerous moment of waiting:

Under the thunder-dark, the cicadas resound.
The storm in the sky mounts, but is not yet heard.
The shaft and the flash wait, but are not yet found.
The apples that hang and swell for the late comer,
The simple spell, the rite not for our word,
The kisses not for our mouths, light the dark summer.

In the 1930s, a prevailing theme in the arts and in political thought was the revolutionary search for a new civilization. It was the decade of the Spanish Civil War. In the minds of artists and social philosophers, there was a growing awareness that men and women were fated and death-driven. In that sad decade, there appeared two significant obituaries in *The Nation*'s "back of the book." One was of D.H. Lawrence, and was written by Joseph Wood Krutch (March 1930). The other was "Death of Spain's Poet: Antonio Machado," by Waldo Frank, appearing on April 15, 1939, three months after the poet died.

Joseph Wood Krutch drew a connection between Lawrence's nomadic life and his hatred of civilization:

> The Shaws, the Galsworthies, the Wellses were, however much they might battle with their fellows, patriotic Englishmen at bottom. They believed in modern society, in the possibility of reforming it, and, even more specifically, in the society of England. But Lawrence's abandonment of England and his wanderings in Australia, Mexico, and the American Southwest were outward signs of the fact that he had given up that white man's civilization which he so bitterly reviled. He had no political interests and no social program. It was only incidentally that he condescended to touch a detail of the system, as he did, for example, when he attacked the censorship, for he had repudiated it in toto and he saw no reason for meddling with the details.

And, in a moving portrait of the writer who died on the night after the fall of Barcelona (January 27, 1939), Waldo Frank said that Machado made art of Spain's great tragedy and that he sang of his country's rebirth:

> His last volume of verse is called *La Guerra*. Within wars Machado sings of the spring "stronger than war," the spring that has flowered in this war, in the lives of the soldiers, and in that other avatar of Spain's arduous, ever ardent body, her friends and *huertas*.

On April 15, 1939, three months after the sudden death of William Butler Yeats, two of his poems appeared in the "back of the book." They were "The Statues" and "Long-Legged Fly," subsequently in *Last Poems, 1936-1939*. In "The Statues," Yeats wrote of the chaos of modern times and, on the other hand, of the heroic possibilities in Western society. The poem's first and last verses read:

Pythagoras planned it. Why did the people stare?
His numbers though they moved or seemed to move
In marble or in bronze, lacked character.
But boys and girls pale from the imagined love
Of solitary beds knew what they were,
That passion could bring character enough;
And pressed at midnight in some public place
Live lips upon a plummet-measured face.

. . . . . .

When Pearse summoned Cuchullain to his side,
What stalked through the Post Office? What intellect,
What calculation, number, measurement, replied?
We Irish, born into that ancient sect
But thrown upon this filthy modern tide
And by its formless spawning fury wrecked,
Climb to our proper dark, that we may trace
The lineaments of a plummet-measured face.

The poem mentions three kinds of sculptured figures—the Greek models of Phidias, the Buddha and the Cuchullain statue in the Dublin Post Office. Those figures, interrelated, are manifestations of the unity of all peoples.

Although *The Nation* had followed the work of the Irish poet since December 15, 1892, when Thomas Wentworth Higginson had called *The Countess Kathleen* "one of the most original and powerful of recent poetic volumes," Yeats's transformation of current issues was not always apparent to his critics. On June 7, 1919, the reviewer of *The Wild Swans at Coole* asserted that despite Yeats's sure ear, he "ignores the late war," quoting his lines:

I think it better that in times like these
A poet keep his mouth shut, for in truth
We have no gift to set a statesman right.

Actually, Yeats built his art on patterns of interdependent opposites—innocence and heroic action, for example—as a way of exploring the human dilemma. In the title poem of this volume he was concerned with the death that modern civilization appeared to be seeking, and, on the other hand, with the nobility of art and great deeds.

Between November 1, 1947, and June 16, 1951, there appeared in *The Nation* five extraordinary poems by

Randall Jarrell. The poems are energetic and compassionate, though their tone is frequently ironic and detached. "A Game at Salzburg" concerns a 3-year-old child who says to an American in Austria, "*Hier bin i*'." The poem ends as the American leaves her, in a storm:

But the sun comes out, and the sky
Is for an instant the first rain-washed blue
Of becoming: and my look falls
Through falling leaves, through the statues'
Broken, encircling arms
To the lives of the withered grass,
To the drops the sun drinks up like dew.
Life, life everywhere.
In anguish, in expectant acceptance,
the world whispers: Hier bin i'.

Beginning in April 1956, *The Nation* appointed a special editor for poetry, and the number of poems appearing in the journal increased sharply. The first editor was M.L. Rosenthal, and his successors were W.S. Merwin, Paul Blackburn, David Ignatow, A.R. Ammons, Alexander Laing, John Logan, Denise Levertov, Michael Goldman, Allen Planz and Robert Hazel. The "back of the book" carried poems by new writers and by established ones, in English and in translation. And many of the translations were from the less common languages, such as Vietnamese, Turkish and Sloyene.

One of the most powerful poems of the Vietnam War, "What Were They Like? (Questions and Answers)" by Denise Levertov, appeared on June 27, 1966, under the editorship of John Logan. The poem is a startling catechism set in the future:

1) Did the people of Viet Nam
use lanterns of stone?
2) Did they hold ceremonies
to reverence the opening of buds?
3) Were they inclined to rippling laughter?

. . . . . .

1) Sir, their light hearts turned to stone.
It is not remembered whether in gardens
Stone lanterns illumined pleasant ways.
2) Perhaps they gathered once to delight in blossom,
But after the children were killed
There were no more buds.
3) Sir, laughter is bitter to the burned mouth.

Another remarkable poem of the 1960s was "The Birds on the Morning of Going," by W. S. Merwin, who has a deceptively calm, chilling way of presenting terror:

now I can see
I have been carrying this
fear
a blue thing
the length of my life asking Is this
its place
bringing it here

to the singing
of these brightening birds

they are neither dead nor unborn

If the major American poets have been represented in *The Nation*'s literary comment since 1865, more of their poems have appeared in the past two decades than ever before. During that period there have been poems by John Berryman, James Wright, Muriel Rukeyser, David Ignatow and Pablo Neruda, as well as many of the younger figures, such as Margaret Atwood and Charles Simic.

When I consider the "back of the book," however, it is not those poets I think of. Nor does my mind travel to the work of T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats or even Marianne Moore. I think of Mark Van Doren's review of Genevieve Taggard's *Circumference, Varieties of Metaphysical Verse, 1456-1928,* in which he lists the poets that she includes in the volume: Léonie Adams, Louise Bogan, e.e. cummings, Robert Frost, Phelps Putnam, Allen Tate and Wallace Stevens.

I think of Phelps Putnam, and, for that matter, of Genevieve Taggard, whose astonishing poem, "Woodsman," appeared in *The Nation* on October 24, 1923. I dwell on Robert L. Wolf, who wrote "A Pagan Reinvokes the Twenty-third Psalm" (December 5, 1923), and on James Rorty, author of "The River," which appeared in the issue of October 13, 1926. Although their names do not rank with their major contemporaries, such as T.S. Eliot and Wallace Stevens, they too, had moments of blazing intensity.

In our own time, I think of Michelle Murray, a young poet and contributor to *The Nation* who died two years ago, and of the good poems that come in envelopes marked "Whiskey Creek Road, Tillamook, Oregon" and "Ferndale, Washington." However literary historians may confound the poetry of our time—for there are hundreds of fine writers and their number is growing—some of the excellence of the present moment is recorded forever at the "back of the book." □

Speer—the Great Time-Server?

SPANDAU: The Secret Diaries. *By Albert Speer. Translated by Richard and Clara Winston. Macmillan. 463 pp. $13.95.*

MICHAEL SELZER

Of all the defendants at the Nuremberg trials of the major Nazi war criminals, Albert Speer—Hitler's architect and minister for war production—appears to have made the least unfavorable impression on judges, prison personnel and general public alike. He was not acquitted by the tribunal, it is true; but unlike the three men who were, he obviously was neither devious and slippery (von Papen, Schacht) nor a fanatic Nazi (Fritzsche). Indeed, Speer fully acknowledged his personal culpability for the widespread use of slave laborers in the Reich's armaments factories and, to the distress of his fellow defendants, agreed with the prosecution that the Nazi leaders were collectively responsible for the crimes committed by the regime. And he created a sensation by disclosing that he had not only refused to implement Hitler's order for a scorched-earth policy in face of the Allied advance into Germany but actually had attempted to assassinate the Führer in his bunker.

Since Nuremberg, Speer has enjoyed as good a press as a former Nazi leader might hope for. Soviet intransigence, based on superpower political considerations rather than on the merits of his case, forced him to serve out the entire twenty-year term to which he had been sentenced, but during much of this period an impressive array of prominent Westerners joined in appealing for his early release from Spandau.

Spandau, a sequel to Speer's earlier *Inside the Third Reich,* comprises extensive extracts from the illegal diary which he kept during those years. Although the chief interest of the new book lies in the insights which it provides into its author's personality, it is also a powerful evocation of the dreariness and desperation of prison life. As such, it will leave few readers unmoved, despite themselves, by sympathy for Speer's protracted agony. Noteworthy, too, even if manifestly biased, are Speer's portraits of his fellow prisoners. One is struck, in particular, by their almost complete lack of mutual trust, and by the ease with which their behavior toward one another oscillated between the extremes of petty treachery and sentimental camaraderie. These patterns, it seems safe to assume, were not merely produced by the stresses of prison but accurately reflect the manners of the Nazi elite even during its years of power. Also striking is the evidence accumulated by Speer that Hess's amnesia was phony, and the fine irony with which he catalogues the inanities of the four-power prison administration. Numerous recollections of Hitler add to the important materials which Speer had presented in his first volume. In his judgment, hatred of the Jews was "Hitler's central conviction . . . everything else was merely camouflage for this real motivating factor."

But what of Speer himself—and of his vaunted contrition, which has been authenticated by Erich Fromm, Alexander Mitscherlich and other responsible authorities? Speer was one of the Nazi leaders who had been given the Rorschach ("inkblot") test by a prison psychologist at Nuremberg in 1945. In our analysis of it, Florence Miale and I were led to conclude that although Speer's confession of guilt at the trial was partly authentic, it was also "partly phony, revealing not only his psychopathic propensity for dissimulation and his readiness to adjust to whatever structure surrounded him, but also his ability to pursue his ego-inflating pretensions in a new setting."

This finding has been criticized as unwarranted, but Speer's prison diary now seems to confirm it. Certainly, he recognized the grandiose nature of his confession. "Of course I know in my own heart that I was guilty," he writes in October 1946, "But should I have bragged about it quite so much to the court?" Eight months later he returns to the same theme. "It seems to me that in this kind of thinking I am only maneuvering myself into the old position of leadership—wanting to be first even as a penitent."

Nor, to say the least, were his feelings of guilt unequivocal. Significantly, it is precisely in settings of grandiose aspirations that they most frequently give way to regret for the things that were—or might have been. In March 1947, Speer's "head reels" as he is "repeatedly plagued by fantasies in which I imagine how I would have been one of the most respected men in Hitler's world government." Seventeen years later he reports that his head is again reeling—this time because he has been unable to decide whether, if he had to do it all again, he would have given up the fame and power he once had enjoyed, despite the high price *he* was now paying for them!

But it is not only in such passages that one is jarred by the realization that the writer who so frequently manages to win our sympathy for the sufferings he is enduring is less than a completely de-Nazified Nazi. In December 1954, he comments indignantly in his diary about the harshness of the American co-director of Spandau toward Raeder. "If they aren't going to respect his military rank, at least a man decades younger than he might show respect for the dignity of age!" Still more bizarre is the advice which Speer, on the last night of his imprisonment, gives ex-Deputy Führer Hess. He urges him not to try to buy his release by simulating insanity. "If he did that, I said, he would be undermining his image, whereas now, thanks to his consistency, he was regarded with a certain respect even among his enemies. He would only destroy that if he played the madman. It would throw a bad light on his own bearing during the past decades, make all that seem merely obsessive be-

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MY SCARECROW

You are not here
for the pleasure of the flat miles,
the crease of dyke and tulip,
landscapes, pouring through the wind.

Animal,
you lean sideways,
breaking into a straw smile.
Should I leave you to gnaw fire

when they begin the yearly burning,
the blacking
of the spiked stubble?
You'd smile, still leering.

But I have you, late at night,
when the birds rattle in your head
and the rats
slide around your ankles.

I can hear you,
shuffling in the wind.
I can smell you, oozing nastinesses,
like the dyke's soft slime.

And in the morning,
I'll walk past and ignore you,
your strident, stitched smile,
your eyes, pecked landscapes.

William Bedford

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Notice of broadcast mention of:
NEW DIRECTIONS 28 on July 7th edition of
High Atop The Ingrown Pipe

".....This spring New Directions released the 28th in its series of international anthologies of prose and poetry. N.D. 28 features exciting works by authors from five nations. The lead story is by Walter Abish, a new writer whose excellent novel ALPHABETICAL AFRICA was published this spring. My personal favorite from the collection was one of six poems by Carl Rakosi. "Instructions To the Player" filled a spot in my soul, and will continue to do so for some time. ...."

*******30*******

(Mentioned in the context of recommending three anthologies, ND 28, REDDUST New Writing #'s 1 & 2, and American Review 20)

 by Samuel PUTN

ing to a close and he was about to enter upon the one marked by the publication of his master work, the first sixteen *Cantos*, in 1925. But with it all, he was not too preoccupied to engage in the gentle Whistlerian art of making enemies; for he seems to have made one of just about everybody in town connected with the profession of letters. It was then that he moved across the Channel, although he was to continue to write for the *Criterion* for some little while.

There followed, in the early 'twenties, what may be described as his musical interlude. Taking up his Parisian residence in the little rue de Seine, he proceeded, in John Rodker's words, to fill the neighborhood with all sorts of weird "rumblings and tootings" as he practiced the "loud bassoon." For, while it may not be widely known to the general public, Pound is a musician as well as a poet and will be found listed in the British *Who's Who* as "poet and composer." Villon was the influence that set him off; and in 1926 his opera based upon that poet's *Testament* was given a partial performance in Paris. Meanwhile, Ezra had made another discovery, that of George Antheil, and *Antheil and the Treatise on Harmony* had appeared in 1924. He had also, once again, quarreled with all and sundry and had moved on to Rapallo, Italy.

It was in Rapallo, in the beautiful lake country of northern Italy, that he found a haven at last. Here conditions were probably as nearly ideal for him as they could possibly have been anywhere. Relieved of the stress of personal encounter and word-of-mouth controversy, he could still carry on the fight—and frequently have the last word—through the medium of the mails; while round about him, in the little Italian village, he had gathered a circle of his own which gave him the adulation that, despite his bellicose temperament, he seemed unable to do without. In the café which was the meeting place of this *cénacle*, Gaudier's bust of Pound was the most prominent object in the room, something like an American Buddha to which in spirit all present bent the knee.

This likeness, by the way, is one that is worth studying. With the closed eyelids and the death-mask effect, it is doubtless intended to be heroic; but it may be that, as a portrait, it says more than the subject realized. The artist's excuse may be the plastic line, but the effect is like that of some of the royal portraits that Goya did, in which the painter, while appearing to idealize his sitter, did a masterly and unsuspected job of character delineation. Gaudier's bust, which has been reproduced many times, shows a face that is fat, fleshly, rather than spiritual or poetic; but it is Pound's favorite image of himself.

At Ezra's instigation, a literary journal known as *L'Indice* was founded in the vicinity of Rapallo, and in its columns (in Italian, of course) he would hold forth at great length on such writers as Robert McAlmon, Louis Zukofsky, Carl Rakosi and the American "Objectives" (long forgotten now), John Rodker, and one or two others; the impression conveyed was, as usual, that these were the worth-while representatives of contemporary literature in English, the only ones in fact that were worth bothering about. At one time he inserted a notice in *Il Mare* of Genoa inviting Italian writers to submit work for translation into English, "providing they think they can stand the acid test of such criticism as that of Zukofsky, Eliot, and W. C. Williams." It was a strange kind of shadow-boxing in which he indulged during this last phase of his migrations; for the Italians, it is safe to say, simply did not know what he was driving at, as he himself would have put it, and if they had depended upon his orientations they would have formed a bizarre conception indeed of our modern American writing scene.

From all this it should be evident that Ezra had taken what was for him the easiest way out. He had in a manner of speaking walled himself off from the world while preserving all his rancors and continuing his long-distance sparring. How long it might have lasted if it had not been for the turn of world

LIVE POETRY READINGS

CARL RAKOSI

Biographical Note:

Rakosi, Carl. Pseudonym for Callman Rawley. American. Born in Berlin, Germany, 6th November, 1903. Educated at the University of Wisconsin, Madison; the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; University of Chicago; and University of Texas, Austin (degrees in English, psychology, and social work). Married to Leah Jaffe, a sculptress; has one son, George, and one daughter, Barbara. Executive Director of the Jewish Family and Children's Service, Minneapolis, 1945-68. After 1955 engaged in private practice of psychotherapy, Minneapolis. Recently devoted himself full-time to the writing of poetry.

Publications:

Selected Poems. New Directions, 1941.
Two Poems. Modern Editions Press, 1942.
Amulet. New Directions, 1967.
Ere-Voice. New Directions, 1971.

1.

In a century which prides itself on its readiness to hail the latest in any art, it is astonishing how critics, writers and readers on both sides of the Atlantic have contrived to ignore some of the finer masters of the art and craft of poetry. Of British poets, Basil Bunting, Hugh MacDiarmid and David Jones now seem the figures whose excellences it is impossible to avoid, yet each was approaching the age of seventy before he received the beginnings of adequate response - before, indeed, he found it possible to keep his poems in print. Sadly, the pattern is repeated and younger men of, say, Roy Fisher's or Tom Raworth's accomplishment are received with something approaching the conditions of silence.

In the United States, the equally remarkable fact was that of the wholesale dismissal - no, less than a dismissal, a choosing to ignore - of the marvellousness of the various Objectivist poets. Of those whose names have been closely identified with that occasion, Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams are now widely accepted as major poets, though the news that a British publisher would, and at last, publish his work reached Williams four days after his death, while Louis Zukofsky and, even more so, Carl Rakosi, Charles Reznikoff and George Oppen all had to wait til the latter part of the last decade to see acknowledged the qualities of poems they had written as much as thirty years before.

2.
Who are these Objectivists?

The Objectivists are an unconcerted group of poets (some of them have never met) who had several things in common - though, often, as many things at variance. In common they had three things deserving of mention: their appearances in the February 1931 Objectivist issue of Harriet Monroe's Poetry Magazine and The Objectivists' Anthology of the following year, both edited by Zukofsky; their work with the Objectivist Press, organised largely by Zukofsky and run largely by Oppen, which published their own writings and those of poets with related concerns; and, most importantly, an approach to the writing of poetry which each would define in terms of Objectivist principles, though they each might differ a little as to what those principles were.

If we take all these three points together, it is interesting to note that although Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Kenneth Rexroth, William Carlos Williams, Basil Bunting and Robert McAlmon all appeared with them in The Objectivists' Anthology, it is Zukofsky, Rakosi, Reznikoff and Oppen who are most usefully thought of as Objectivists.

3.
What are the generally agreed upon Objectivist principles?

The clearest answer is probably Carl Rakosi's:

> "For myself, I found the term Objectivist useful. It conveyed a meaning which was, in fact, my objective: to present objects in their most essential reality and to make of each poem an object ... meaning by this, obviously, the opposite of a subject; the opposite, that is, of all forms of personal vagueness; of loose bowels and streaming, sometimes screaming, consciousness. And how does one make into an object

the subjective experience from which a poem issues? By feeling the experience sincerely, by discriminating particularity, by honesty and intelligence, by imagination and craftmanship ... qualities not belonging obviously to Objectivists alone.

To go on, as the basic form for a particular experience is found and the poem begins to take shape and fill in, all the insatiable tyrannies of language, which we only borrow ... the form, the cadence, the associations, etc., ... set up requirements of their own which must be followed in order to come out with a poem. In this sense the author experiences the poem as an object; a real thing outside himself which works on him; so alive, in fact, that it feels like an organism with distinct characteristics. Once the poem is completed, the author becomes like everybody else, a reader, and it is no longer possible to experience the poem as anything but an object, which is there to reenter the poet's subjective if it can."*

4.

Especially useful here, it seems to me, is Mr. Rakosi's discrimination that what Objectivism means is not a preference for psychologically objective (as opposed to subjective) states so much as the objectification of that state, be it subjective or objective, into the otherness of the poem. Using such a definition, it is possible to relate Objectivism to the earlier activities of such individuals as Pound, Williams and Marianne Moore, and such a movement as Imagism. All were concerned to revivify an outworn poetic diction by exercising great scrupulousness in both the examination of the nature of a particular experience and in the choice of words to convey it: all had a common regard for such past poetries, embodying these virtues, as those of the Classical epigrammatists, Sappho, Catullus and the masters of Chinese and, especially Japanese haiku: all are, in their awareness of form as expressive of meaning, part of the Modernist movement, and relatable as such to, say, the German-American architect, Mies Van der Rohe, whose famous axiom that "Less is More"** many of them would subscribe to.

What the Objectivists bring to this unconcerted tradition, apart from their great consistency, is a more active sense of the writing of a poem as a clarification of experience, almost a rescuing of the true nature of that experience from the general flux of events. They, even more than their predecessors, accept that we live in an existentialist period; that, these days, the world is only as real as we each for ourselves can experience it to be; and that, therefore, we had better bring the minutiae of any experience into focus that it be engaged with as deeply as possible for, in that sense, our world depends upon it. This, then, is a poetry of definition, of bringing into definition, and all their poetries yield examples of a peculiar Objectivist particularity, in comparison with which much that passes for the best in modern verse looks sloppy:

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* "A Note on the Objectivists: 8 February, 1969" by Carl Rakosi. Stony Brook 3/4 (1969) pp.36-7

** Mies Van der Rohe: Architecture and Structure by Peter Blake, Pelican Books (1964) p.28

This smoky winter morning -
do not despise the green jewel shining among the twigs
because it is a traffic light
Reznikoff*

Chorus (androgynous): 'Find me
So that I will exist, find my navel
So that it will exist, find my nipples
So that they will exist, find every hair
Of my belly, I am good (or I am bad),
Find me.'
Oppen**

In that this happening
is not unkind
it put to
shame every kindness

mind, mouths, their words,
people, put sorrow
on
its body

before sorrow it came
and before every kindness,
happening for every sorrow
before every kindness.
Zukofsky***

The Drinking Vessel

Strange that this glass cup
shaped like a trumpet
is of more interest
than the unknown Saxon
with whom it was buried.
Rakosi****

The simplicity of this last, for instance, as a statement of the truth that a man's art, if good enough, survives the life of which it is an extension, seems to me to be more effective than the many Victorian verses given over to the same basic truth. The reason is Rakosi has rooted his statement in the

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* By the Waters of Manhattan, New Directions Paperback (1962), p.26

** Collected Poems by George Oppen, Fulcrum Press (1973), pp.109

*** All the Collected Shorter Poems, 1923-1958 by Louis Zukofsky, Jonathan Cape (1965)

**** Ere-Voice by Carl Rakosi, New Directions Paperback (1971)

undeniable fact of a particular experience - that of looking at this Saxon burial site and knowing the artefact to be more interesting than the human remains: the Victorian poets, in contrast, presented the same truth in the generalised terms of Art and Reality conquering ineluctable Time, depriving the truth of its tangibility.

In a period when so many things conspire to convince one of the inauthenticity of his own experience this specificity in poetry, this demanding that the on-rushing film of life be stopped at a particular frame and that that frame then be engaged with, deeply, seems to me to be a fine achievement, a constant delight and a renewal of one's sense that he his alive.

5.

The Objectivists have just re-emerged from the silence to which they were condemned in the early thirties (Rakosi and Oppen literally stopped writing for thirty or so years, though they seem not in that time to have stopped thinking of themselves as poets) and, as a result, much of their poetry has not been issued by British publishers. However, of the more readily available texts, I would recommend making a start with the following:

Amulet, poems by Carl Rakosi (New Directions Paperback 1967)

Ere Voice, poems by Carl Rakosi (New Directions Paperback 1971)

By the Waters of Manhattan Selected poems of Charles Reznikoff (New Directions Paperback, 1962)

All the collected short poems 1923-58 by Louis Zukofsky (Jonathan Cape, 1965)

All the Collected short poems 1956-64 by Louis Zukofsky (Jonathan Cape, 1967)

Collected Poems of George Oppen (Fulcrum Press, 1973)

A new British poetry magazine called Prospice appeared last month and the first issue contains seven delightful new poems by Carl Rakosi.

Apart from some recent and very excellent writings on Louis Zukofsky (see the last issue of Maps, No. 5 & Agenda, Vol. III, No. 6), the only essential discussions of Objectivist writings are those of the poets themselves and consist, most usefully, of the following:

Prepositions, the collected essays of Louis Zukofsky (Jonathan Cape, 1967)

Contemporary Literature, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1969. Interviews with Rakosi, Oppen, Reznikoff, and Zukofski

Chicago, European Edition No. 1, October 1973. An interview with George Oppen and Ted Berrigan

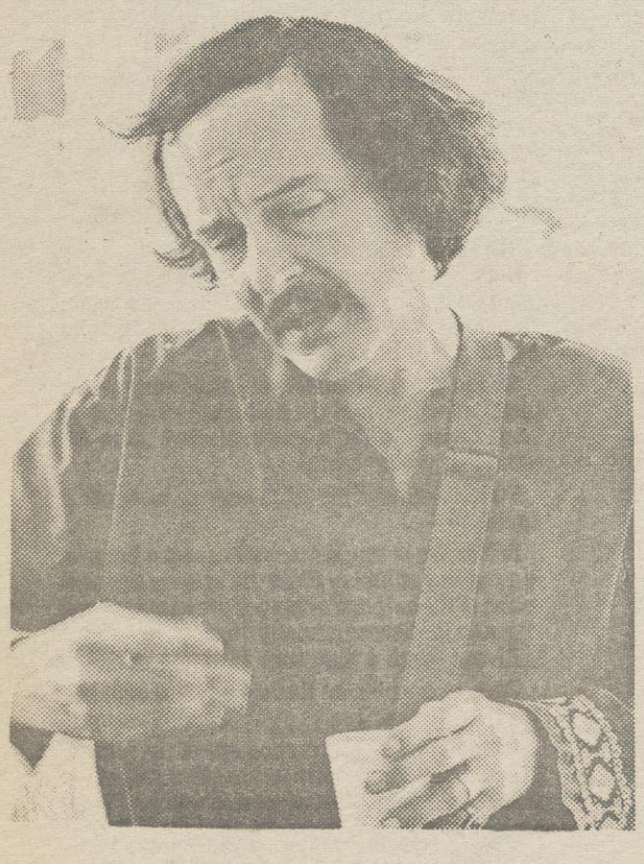
Stony Brook 3/4, 1969. Various poems and statements by the principal Objectivists

Some of these materials are in the Library, and all can be ordered through Bogus Bookshop.

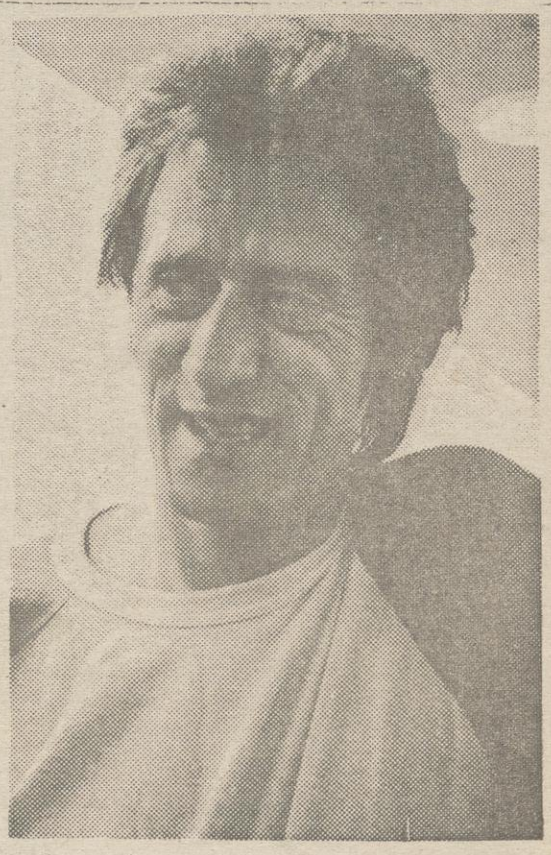
Student poet Gerry Porter gets a critique from Robert Vas Dias

Poet Judith Minty of North Muskegon hears George Economou expound

Carl Rakosi, right, makes a point on a stroll with, left to right, Robert Duncan, Basil King (Grand Valley art professor) and Theodore Enslin



Jane Augustine mixes in some guitar music. Left, poet-editor David Meltzer, and at right, Edward Dorn



A pride of poets

For 10 days in June, Grand Valley State College was alive with the concerns and cadences of modern American poetry

by Gerald A. Elliott

CHARLES REZNIKOFF is volatile, mildly profane, highly opinionated, and entirely loveable There is something almost birdlike about him He is small and in sharp contrast to most of the male poets who assembled for 10 days last month at Grand Valley State College, his head is almost hairless.

He's 79 now. When he was 33, he wrote a poem which went like this:

How shall we mourn you who are killed and wasted.
sure that you would not die with your work unended.
as if the iron scythe in the grass stops for a flower?

That's called Objectivism, wnere the object of the poem dictates the form.

At one workshop, held outdoors behind Seidman House to the accompaniment of a chainsaw not far off, Reznikoff told the gathering, "the start of a poem is the emotional reaction . . . then the task is to express the emotion in words." Later, he said, "You don't work out of a form, you work into a form."

Someone asked him where he found the materials for his poems. "The subject," he said, "is something that burns you up, or freezes you."

As an Objectivist, Reznikoff is one of that group of elder statesmen of contemporary American poetry which came into prominence in 1932 with the publication of an anthology put together by one of them, George Oppen. Others involved were Carl Rakosi, the late William Carlos Williams and, I thought, Louis Zukofsky.

One noon Reznikoff and I spent almost two hours over lunch, his consisting of a large plate of lettuce, without dressing.

"I don't know where the word (Objectivist) came from," he said. "Maybe (Ezra) Pound. But we wanted to publish our poems together, because we all had the same rules for, or the same convictions about, poetry. Someone told us that we would have to have a name, to incorporate. We picked that one."

"Zukofsky also was an Objectivist, wasn't he?" I asked.

Reznikoff arched his eyebrows and, with that and a muted "humph," read Zukofsky out of the Objectivist movement.

THE OBJECTIVISTS AND, overarching them, the small, frail ghost of Ezra Pound, provided the poetical nucleus for the meeting at Grand Valley, the Second Biennial National Poetry Festival.

"My idea," said Robert Vas Dias, poet in residence at Grand Valley who planned, supervised and worried over the festival, "because the Objectivists had been an influential group, as the Imagists were before them, was to get together a festival that would represent that locus in poetry, and a younger generation of poets who had been influenced by the older one.

"There also were poets who had spun off from that central concern, poets like Rochelle Owens, Victor Hernandez Cruz, George Economou, Edward Dorn, David Meltzer. Perhaps the person who has reflected a very direct influence of the Objectivists, as well as others, is Allen Ginsberg. He is a generation behind Oppen, Rakosi and Reznikoff, but already there are several noted poets who are a generation behind Ginsberg."

It must be said that Vas Dias did very well in putting together this kind of mix. Besides Reznikoff, George Oppen and Carl Rakosi of the Objectivist group were there, and of the "spin-off" group, Ginsberg, Owens, Cruz, Economou, Dorn and Meltzer. Also on hand were Robert Duncan, from the famed Black Mountain School; Kenneth Rexroth, an original contributor to the 1932 Objectivist anthology and now, at 67, a sort of senior overseer of the San Francisco movement; Diane di Prima, playwright as well as poet, and Theodore Enslin who is engaged in writing what may be the longest poem in history.

Counting Vas Dias, that made 14 major American poets to share their words and wisdom with 101 registered students and practitioners of poetry. Fewer than half of them came from Michigan; the rest came from all parts of the country, including New York, Texas and California. For the evening readings by the guest poets, as many as 400 persons paid their way into the Louis Armstrong Theatre in the Calder Fine Arts Center.

THE HOPE WAS, said Vas Dias, that "there would be a genuine interaction among the people involved. Not persons flying in for a day to lecture and then flying out again, but poets staying long enough to provide a real dialogue and exchange of ideas."

English-born Vas Dias is an old hand at running poetry bashes. Before coming to GVSC two years ago, he directed two series of poetry readings at New York City's Dr. Generosity's and the St. Adrian Company. He prepped for those events by running a writers' workshop for several years at Aspen, Colo.

The idea for a poetry festival at Grand Valley grew out of a conversation Vas Dias had with T. Dan Gilmore, dean of Thomas Jefferson College at Grand Valley at which Vas Dias is now a tutor. That was before Vas Dias was even hired for his present position. They talked about the nine-week course at Aspen which attracted writers of poetry, drama and fiction from all over the country. Gilmore and Arthur Hills, GVSC vice president, agreed that something on a more modest scale would be a fine thing for Grand Valley.

The first National Poetry Festival at the Allendale campus was held in July, 1971, and had 28 nationally-recognized poets. Another 100 paid their money to attend and learn. The festival ran nine days.

Reznikoff, as well as anyone, perhaps, represents the poet in American society who does not strive for popularity but writes from inner necessity. He never made much at it. At one time or another he has supported himself and his family as an editor of law books and as a salesman. He was a good salesman — selling products produced in a factory owned by his father. "To sell," he said blandly, "you have to have a good line."

At our long lunch, Reznikoff, who was born in Brooklyn, told me that he started out trying to learn to write at the school of journalism at the University of Missouri but soon discovered they weren't teaching his kind of writing. He switched to law school, mainly because of pressure from his parents, and in due time passed his bar examinations.

"There was little for new young lawyers to do in those years," Reznikoff said. "A few collection cases, someone stumbled on a broken sidewalk and wanted to collect damages — things like that. You couldn't make a living at it.

continued next page

Pride

continued

"SO MY COUSIN, MY second cousin, gets arrested and spends a night in jail. She was walking along a street where some strikers were picketing and the police were moving in on them and she stopped to see what was happening. And she was bustled off to jail with about 25 other women.

Relatives called on the young barrister to take his cousin's case. "I went down to see her the next morning," he said. " 'Plead her guilty,' a seasoned attorney advised me. 'The judge doesn't like strikers and if she is tried and found guilty — and she will be — the judge will take it out on her.' But I protested that she was innocent. 'Never mind, plead her guilty,' the older lawyer said.

"But I couldn't do that. So I cross-examined the arresting officer and he said she had been obstructing justice and the court found her guilty. The judge fined her $5. All of the other women who had pleaded guilty, he fined $25 or $30. I don't remember which. So much for experience."

This ended his professional career as a lawyer. But his interest in the kinds of people who come before the courts, and why they do — which is the chief reason Reznikoff succumbed to his parents wishes and studied law — never languished. He read cases from all over the country and began to put them into a very long poem.

"I changed the names, and the names of the places, but I kept the facts," he said. "I planned to compile three volumes of these cases. The first one was published and I started on the second. But when it was done, my publishers wanted no part of it. The first book didn't sell. The publishers delivered 200 hard-cover copies to me one day. I said, 'What am I going to do with these?' They said, 'Give them to friends.'

"I published the second volume myself, but gave up on the third one. It was becoming repetitious."

The first volume has been reprinted by New Directions. It is titled "Testimony," and is a fascinating document.

Reznikoff, in his year at the University of Missouri, couldn't get comfortable with journalism literature. Another poet at the festival, however, David Meltzer, is at ease with all forms of writing. He wrote and edited a superb collection of his own interviews titled "The San Francisco Poets" (Ballantine Books 1971). Meltzer also makes records, edits books and magazines and puts together anthologies. His most recent book is "Hero/'Lil" (Black Sparrow Press 1973) which opens with this:

"Both LIL & HERO are offered as starting-points to be added onto until, in time, these beloved demons can be reconciled &, as the tale goes, live happily ever after."

At Reznikoff's workshop, Meltzer and Reznikoff tried answering a protest from a student to the effect that poets often use words and phrases which are terribly obscure.

"It's the burden of the reader to understand the symbols — the foreign words, phrases and so forth," Meltzer said.

Reznikoff was characteristically blunter. "The poet has expressed himself; the rest is up to the reader."

THE POETS SEEMED to be running into the question often. Robert Duncan had a go at it at another time and place at the festival. "People ask," he said, "Why do you have these things in your poems that people don't know about, and I reply that if I put in only what all of them knew, the time would come when I wouldn't be able to write about a cow because no one would know what a cow looked like."

Then, there's that other point, the odd arrangements of words and lines which contemporary poets — most familiarly, e. e. cummings — employ in their works.

There's an illustration from a poem called "wild man & the contemplation of lunar incest," by Rochelle Owens, which appears in her most recent book, "Poems from Joe's Garage" (Burning Deck 1973), which is part of a larger work in progress:

there's almost no limit
to thinking in terms of miscellaneous Blood
Groupings
WILD-MAN!
WYLD-MAYN!
WILDE-MAHN!
WHILD-MANE!
& so to radio-iodide
multi-movements & shortness
clear causes/culture in
artificial energy fueling, excess
of grueling unknown streaming blood conditions
VIVA WILD-MAN!

Robert Vas Dias talked about design of words on a printed page as a means of achieving a "pleasing appearance." But, it seems, there is much more to it.

"When you talk about experimenting with format and line length, there seems to be a really dominant esthetic at this time, in terms of the work of people like Pound, William Carlos Williams, Charles Olson and Robert Creeley, and not only the work but the theoretical statements, a form for poetry that arises out of the physical necessities of the person who is writing it. The physical necessities, for example, of breath as reflected in the language; the physical necessities proceeding from the body, the body of the particular poet. That is one reason why Walt Whitman is so influential today; he was a poet who believed in the extension of the body in the art.

"The esthetic really proceeds from the physical sense of the poet, the physical presence of the poet who is making the poem. It attempts, I guess, to be ultimately as honest and as sincere and as direct as possible in terms of the person who is writing it. And it takes it out of the realm of a literary idea and into the realm of life . . ."

Miss Owens, incidentally, is the wife of George Economou. She is a playwright and writer of fiction as well as a poet. Her most recent dramatic work, "The Karl Marx Play," had a scheduled five-week run at the American Palace Theatre in New York, starting in March. Michael Smith of the Village Voice described it as "a feast of delirious logic."

Just before coming to the poetry festival at GVSC, Miss Owens concluded arrangements with New York publisher E. P. Dutton to publish the play in a hard-cover edition.

One of her earlier plays, "Futz," won the OBIE Best Play Award in 1967. Her dramatic works have appeared at a number of playhouses in this country and in Europe.

She is also one of the most anthologized of America's contemporary poets.

Miss Owens, who was born in Brooklyn in 1936, spoke of the agonies of writing plays, specifically "The Karl Marx Play."

"I wrote this play," she said, "Feeling that every word was right, was necessary. Yet when we came to the play-event, we cut ruthlessly. I hurt. I wanted all of those words in there. Maybe there should be both reading and acting versions. Because, for me, a play is a poem. But sometimes actions, movements of the actors, eliminate the need for words."

MISS OWENS PROTESTS mildly if one dwells inordinately on the humorous qualities of her plays. "But they are serious, intellectual, too."

In any event, most of the poets at the poetry festival, Miss Owens included, exhibited a strong sense of the comic, and many of them have written humorous poetry.

Vas Dias, a wholly serious poet, nonetheless reveals a delicious antic sense in several of his poems, for example, "Saturday Poem," from his newest work, "Speech Acts & Happenings" (Bobbs Merrill 1972):

This poem goes well with ham & swiss
on a hard roll with mustard and draft beer on
a Saturday afternoon, the kind of poem
you don't think about but suddenly
it comes to mind as the idea of a sandwich
so you stop in & find yourself getting into
a discussion with a friend on the terrible state
of American jurisprudence, its subservience
to political expediency, after which there's
nothing
more to be said, thinking maybe I will &
why the hell not, ordering the poem
& when it comes, smelling it
surreptitiously before the first bite, not so anyone
would think I thought it bad, but
to savor it, that instance
of an idea I can taste.

Of all of the poets at the festival, possibly the most irrepressible, and certainly one of the most loquacious, was Allen Ginsberg. Despite the fact that he had his right leg in a cast and had to get around with the aid of a crutch, he was the blithe spirit, singing and laughing, and, apparently, only occasionally taking himself seriously.

I asked him how he had broken his leg. "I slipped on the moon," he replied with a wide grin. Then he quickly added: "On the ice. The moon was reflected by the ice and blinded me. But I don't mind." He refused to enter WGVC-TV's studio by the ramp but insisted that he easily could walk down the stairs. And he proved it.

When Ginsberg wasn't lecturing or reading, he was attending someone else's workshop. At one conducted by George Oppen, a young poet read what he called a dream poem, a poem he had dreamed, and, on waking, had committed to paper.

Ginsberg, resting on the grass in the audience, listened intently. When the young poet came to the end of his poem, Oppen nodded approvingly and, in his quiet voice, said: "What's nice about that poem is that it breaks every rule." Ginsberg wasn't willing to let it go at that.

"That last part, those last lines, did you dream that part, too?" Ginsberg prodded.

The young poet rather sheepishly replied, "No, I added it on."

"Ah — go back to the dream," Ginsberg advised.

The poem was about death.

Ginsberg, who was born in Newark, N.Y., and educated at Columbia University, is a marvelous entertainer and a talented improviser. He improvises verses on a blues pattern — the traditional I-IV-V chord structure — while he accompanies himself on a boxlike reed organ that resembles in shape and size a woman's vanity case.

A man who has traveled, he speaks of talking with and learning from Australian aborigines, Tibetan monks and numerous other peoples. At one afternoon blues improvisation session he started by singing an Australian aborigine chant to his own accompaniment on clap sticks (which give off the sound of wood blocks) and explained that the chant was the oldest form of poetics he knows. With some disgust, he reported that Columbia University did not offer a course in the blues.

Although Ginsberg has a prodigious memory, he confessed that he couldn't remember all of his most famous poem, "Howl." That, he declared, "is really a telling criticism of a poem — the poem is not totally memorable."

One of his fellow poets at the festival said, at the end of a Ginsberg performance, "He comes across, he really does. He projects. And you know something? Two weeks from now they won't be able to remember a thing he said — but they will remember him."

Even though they may not remember what he said, they will have ample opportunity to renew their impressions of this tall, bearded, bald-headed man with the bright eyes peering from behind thick lenses, for vast quantities of his poetry are in print.

Typical of Ginsberg's latest work is "The Fall of America," subtitled, "poems of these states 1965-1971" (City Lights 1972). Dedicated to Walt Whitman, to whom Ginsberg acknowledges his debt, the volume offers hundreds of memorable lines, including these from "September on Jessore Road":

What should we care for our cities & cars?
What shall we buy with our Food Stamps on Mars?
How many millions sit down in New York
& sup this night's table on bone and roast pork?
How many million beer cans are tossed
in Oceans of Mother? How much does She cost?
Cigar gasolines & asphalt car dreams
Stinking the world & dimming star beams—

Most of the poets at the festival referred frequently and almost reverently to Ezra Pound, that strange, whisp of a man who died last year, and with whose blessing the Objectivists were launched, as well as many other kinds of poets.

Robert Duncan, in one of his Grand Valley lectures, alluded to Pound — almost as an act of faith — as "our hero."

Vas Dias explained. "Pound is the figure which lurks in the background of the National Poetry Festival, if you want to put it that way. And I don't want to use the word 'lurks.' He INHABITS the background.

"You can look at Allen Ginsberg or Ed Dorn and you will see Ezra Pound. I'm not trying to say that he is the direct cause of their being poets, naturally, but that his influence has been enormous on the ways that people put poems together these days, both from the example of the 'Cantos' and Pound's theories in his various books, 'The ABC of Reading,' 'The Guide to Kulchur' and so forth. And his pronouncements on images really have been enormous.

"With Pound, there is William Carlos Williams, who has had a tremendous influence on modern American poetry. Williams in his theory of the variable foot, for example, anticipates Charles Olson and his theory of composition of field and Robert Creeley, who closely follows Olson in this respect, and therefore also Dorn, David Meltzer, Gary Snyder, Denise Levertov and others.

"I WOULD SAY THAT if there is a direction in modern poetry it is that direction that is represented by the knowledge that everything can be brought into the poem that operates on the poet's consciousness while the poem is being made. It is while the poem is being made that its form is going to become apparent. We come back to this business of form. Form cannot be thought of separately from the poem's content. You start with one perception and immediately it suggests something else and when it becomes incorporated into the construct, that is, the field of the poem, the poem is there.

"It's a different way of going about things from what used to be the case. This is one of the liberating forces that have made American-poetry a very vibrant and alive art today."

How the new poets sometimes look at the old is expressed in a poem titled "Codicil" by Kenneth Rexroth, another of the towering figures — both physically and in the literary sense — at the festival.

The poem appears in "The Collected Shorter Poems of Kenneth Rexroth" (New Directions 1966) and begins like this:

Most of the world's poetry
Is artifice, construction.
No one reads it but scholars.
After a generation
It has grown so overcooked,
It cannot be digested.
There is little I haven't
Read, and dreary stuff it was.
Lamartine — Gower — Tasso —
Or the metaphysicals
Of Cambridge, ancient or modern,
And their American apes

In addition to poetry, Rexroth writes scholarly essays on "The Iliad," "The Odyssey," "Beowulf," "Job," "The Mahabharata," "The Kalevala," "The Oresteia," Rimbaud's "Poems," Ben Jonson's "Volpone" and Mark Twain's "Huckleberry Finn." These and essays on 50 other major works of history have been collected in "Classics Revisited" (Avon Books 1969).

Rexroth is something over six feet tall. His large head looks even larger because of a receding hairline. The hair is gray, as is his bristling mustache. When he reads he puts on horn-rim glasses, but immediately takes them off when he is done. He has a sizeable paunch, which is the more obtrusive when with the warm air blowing over him, he takes off his coat and reveals the expanse of his torso, held in place, as it were, by suspenders.

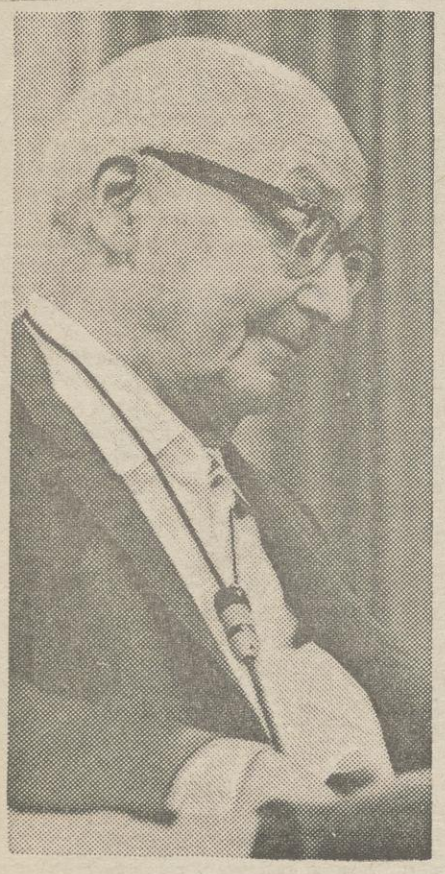
He laughs heartily and, when he speaks, his voice undulates like waves on Lake Michigan. One has to listen closely to catch the nuance and the word itself. He was talking about the rise and fall and rise of American poetry.

"Poetry between the wars dried up," he said. "This poetry became academized — which is a lot like being macadamized.

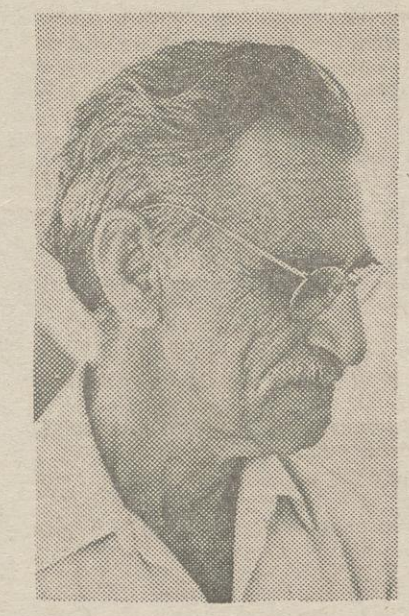
"The human mind has extraordinary powers of resistance and recuperation. You don't hear about it because they shoot those guys."

Just who "those guys" are, or were, he didn't bother to say, but raced on to the next thought:

Allen Ginsberg advising a student



Photography by Craig Vander Lende



Objectivist poets George Oppen, above, and Charles Reznikoff, left

Victor Hernandez Cruz at work

Kenneth Rexroth, poet, translator, editor

"Advertising is the reduction of all human values to commodities."

But we were talking about poetry.

Poetry started coming back in World War II years, Rexroth noted. There were readings, especially in San Francisco. Jazz music sort of adopted poetry. Modern jazz, he said, is chamber music. That is, the best of it. Small jazz groups playing in small rooms, though definitely not bars, created the proper setting and attracted the proper audiences for the new poetry. Ferlinghetti, Ginsberg, Rexroth and others read their poetry to small audiences. Poets all over were going back to the ancient practice of saying their poems to live people.

"One of the things that I did, and still do," he told David Meltzer in 'The San Francisco Poets,' "is done against Eric Satie's 'Gymnopedic No. 1'. It is called 'This Night Only.' People always think it is a George Shearing number. I used to do a thing with a Neruda poem to a 12/8 samba rhythm . . ." He has written many poems to music, some of the music of his own composing. And when he talks or reads his poetry the music is there, suggested by the rhythms, cadences, rises and falls of the voice.

STILL DISCUSSING THE changes that have come over poets and poetry, Rexroth says: "Now poets are a little like midgets, magicians, acrobats, performing all over, going from campus to campus to read, meeting other poets at the airports, the new crossroads of America."

He pauses, looks ruminatively into a darkened corner of the room, and says: "There is relatively little American poetry that projects, that projects like actors project. There are, of course, the Projectivists," and he leaves it at that. He is back on the subject of reading poetry. "But that stuff doesn't go over anymore. It's too corny."

Suddenly he observes that "the mortal sin in writing poetry between the wars was to use the personal pronoun, I, we. It had to be he, they, them."

A scholar, translator and critic as well as poet, Rexroth admits that he has been immensely influenced by the poetry he has translated, expecially the poetry of China and Japan and of the French writers in the first quarter of this century.

But he insists that he has been little influenced by the poetry of his contemporaries, even though he esteems many of them — especially the Objectivists Oppen, Reznikoff, Rakosi, Zukofsky — highly. Finally he gets around to one of those poets most studiously ignored at the poetry festival. "When I was young," he says, "the poem all poets read was T. S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land.' Which, of course, now is read only in school."

Theodore Enslin is as reticent — or perhaps the word is shy — as Rexroth is voluble. Enslin is short but sturdy, quizzical but almost professorial when he puts on horn-rim glasses. His long hair is gathered in the back, like a pony tail, giving the impression, when you face him head-on, that his is a conventional haircut. He is bearded, and when talking, though not while reading, he sometimes clenches a pipe between his teeth.

He is talking about the functions of a long poem, specifically about his long work in progress, "Forms," three volumes of which have been published. A fourth volume is due this year. It will be longer than any of the first three. Then will come a fifth volume.

Enslin is writing not a stream-of-consciousness work but a stream-of-life, his life.

" 'Forms' was started in 1950," he said. "I had no idea what I was going to do with it. The form of 'Forms' changed a great deal in the first 10 years . . . I'm writing my own textbook as I go along . . . The end of the poem will come when I stop writing, for one reason or another . . . The three portagonists in the first part are Thoreau, Mahler, Joshua Slocomb."

He is half-apologetic about the length of his poem and seems on the verge of admitting that it might be a better poem if some things were left out. Rochelle Owens, whose feeling for words is that of the poet-philosopher, comes to Enslin's rescue. "A poet's ramblings," she says, "are still an authentic litany of truth."

Enslin continues: "A fellow poet told me, 'Tighten, tighten,' but I answered, 'You also have to know when to loosen.' "

Someone asks him if he ever revises his poems and he replies by quoting Robert Duncan: "You do not revise until you have a re-vision" (and the "vision" part of the word is heavily accented).

Another student asks Enslin how one starts to write, but before he can formulate his answer, Diana di Prima, says "You get to your own life, then you jump in. Isn't that the way we all begin writing?"

The flavor of Enslin's work is captured in his most recently published book, "Views" (The Elizabeth Press 1973). The following lines from one of the "views," "View Beyond My Bridge," are exemplary of his style:

Look there
often
as I have looked
these past
twenty years —
see.
instead of the white falls,
white,
the dress of a woman
whom I have never met,
nor will I,
unless something
other
changes the sighting.

Theodore Enslin is an Easterner, born in Chester, Pa., in 1925, a resident on Cape Cod for 14 years, and now of an even starker landscape which he describes in this way: "I live and work between two old farmhouses in Temple, Maine, as quiet and uncluttered a life as possible."

At the other pole, geographically and emotionally, is Robert Duncan. Born in Oakland, Calif., in 1919, he is usually identified as a San Francisco poet. One of the most prolific of today's poets, he obviously is a compulsive worker — one who is about to publish a 1,400-page book on the Imagist poet H. D. (Hilda Doolittle) in seven volumes.

Duncan, who readily confesses to being manic (he is almost constantly keyed up and suffers — or perhaps benefits — from high blood pressure), discloses that he was much pleased when, on his mother's death, he discovered in some notes she had left the brief comment: "Robert, 7, very nervous."

She would have no reason to change her diagnosis today.

continued next page

Pride

continued

Widely read and completely at home in the literature of all ages and most countries, Duncan has opinions on almost any subject.

On the respective merits of the French symbolists and the translating of Verlaine, he says: "Verlaine can fink out of a poem." He discusses the indignity of conferring a prize on Rimbaud, the point being that to create a good or great poem is reward enough. Duncan elaborates on the point: "You kiss a girl and it's wonderful — and you're given a prize for it! Who needs a prize for that!"

A little later he declares, almost pedantically, that "no one has made a poem better than 'Hickory, dickory dock' — not becuase it has lasted, but because everything is in there, it is complete. Homer never did it better." . . . Again he startles with the comment: "There were only two American poets in the 19th century — Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman."

"MY FATHER WAS AN architect," Duncan said, "and his father before him. And of course I was going to be, and started working in my father's office when I was a boy, making all of those pretty architectural drawings. Daddy was a compulsive worker — 16 hours a day. And I was compulsive, too — but I wanted to find something at which I wouldn't have to work so hard. So, at age 16, I announced that I was going to be a poet."

Duncan acknowledges the debt of today's poets to the man who wrote "The Waste Land," "The Hollow Men" and "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." In a poem titled "Orders Passages 24," which appeared in Poetry in April 1966, Duncan confessed:

and now that Eliot is dead. Williams and H.D. dead.
Ezra alone of my old masters alive. let me
acknowledge Eliot was one of us. I was
one of his. whose "History has many
cunning passages. contrived corridors"
comes into the chrestomathy.

Like all of the poets at the festival, Duncan impales the listener when he reads from his own work. Reading poetry aloud — for audiences — is indeed much in fashion these days.

"And not only reading it," said Robert Vas Dias. "I should say also, hearing poetry. One of the reasons for the revival, if you want to put it that way, for the great interest shown particularly by young people today stems from the work that a number of people did in the early 1950s to make poetry accessible in terms of being heard.

"A great deal of the revival of interest was due to the activities of the Beat poets in the 1950s and also to the immense popularity of Dylan Thomas on college campuses in this country. Thomas was a great reader of his own poetry — brilliant, really — an actor."

Two other poets participating in the festival impressed their listeners with their obvious knowledge, essential humility and masterful technique. They were the two other Objectivists in attendance, Carl Rakosi and George Oppen.

Rakosi is a small, frail man, born in Berlin, who has had to work at many things to support himself while writing poetry. Now about 70, he has been a mess-boy on a freighter, a newspaper reporter, a teacher in Houston schools and the University of Texas and a social worker.

He was talking about "The Psychology of the Poet": "Society," he said, "doesn't take responsibility for the creative arts. The arts are the only place in which the imagination is being fully expressed — although society seems not to realize this."

A moment later, a student volunteered the opinion that "Proust's defense of Dreyfus added immeasurably to his standing as an artist."

"I don't think," Rakosi says, "that it added one inch to Proust's stature as an artist; it did add to his honor."

Rakosi's philosophy on human nature is perhaps accurately, as well as succinctly, expressed in the poem "The Drinking Vessel" from his "Ere-Voice" (New Directions). It reads:

Strange that this glass cup
shaped like a trumpet
is of more interest
than the unknown Saxon
with whom it was buried.

George Oppen, who seems singularly restrained among an otherwise generally exuberant conclave of poets, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1969 for his "Of Being Numerous" (New Directions 1968), in which this poem, "Route," appears:

Cars on the highway filled with speech.
People talk, they talk to each other:

Imagine a man in the ditch.
The wheels of the overturned wreck
Still spinning —

I don't mean he despairs. I mean if he does not
He sees in the manner of poetry

Oppen, at 67 the youngest of the three Objectivists, is tall and spare. His hair is unruly and his face seamed and weatherbeaten, as if he had spent years on the windswept plains of the West.

At 24, Victor Hernandez Cruz is the youngest of the guest poets at the festival. Soft-spoken, polite, deferential, he was born in Puerto Rico and moved with his parents to New York when he was four. Proud of his Spanish-American heritage, he writes, primarily, in English, but his poems often are sprinkled with Spanish words — perhaps a patois, idiomatic. "They sometimes say I write in Spanglish," he says, soberly.

His poems are of the people. But he resents their being identified as "people of the streets." "We all live on streets, wherever we are — even in Allendale," he insists. "But would anyone think of describing the people in Allendale as 'street people'?"

Cruz ordinarily speaks with a marked Latin-American accent. Yet he is a remarkable mimic who, when he reads his poetry, shifts easily from the speech of Spanish Harlem to the accents of the Lower East Side.

I chanced to see the typescript of some new poems he had put on paper while at GVSC and was mildly surprised to note that they were free of strikeovers, erasures and the other blemishes that characterize the typescripts of other writers. No newspaper writer ever turned out such impeccable copy.

His recent books are "Mainland" (1973) and "Snaps: Poems 1969", both published by Random House. Particularly affecting, I think, is the poem titled "ALONE'december/night" from the latter volume:

it's been so long
speaking to people
who think it all
too complex
stupidity in their eyes
&
it's been so long
so far from the truth
so far from a roof
to talk to
or a hand to touch
or anything to really
love

it's been so long
talking to myself
alone
in the night
listening to a music
that is me.

Rexroth has a secure reputation as a translator of poetry. So also does George Economou, born in 1934 in Great Falls, Montana, educated at Colgate and Columbia universities, editor of the influential magazine Trobar, published in the early '60s, and teacher of English and Comparative Literature at Long Island University.

Economou is tall and slim, his eyes masked by dark glasses and his head crowned by a mass of dark, wiry hair. He responds readily to questions and easily engages in rather involved conversations. A poet in the romantic tradition, he is a Medievalist and a translator who confines his attention to the works of 18th and 19th-century poets. He is of Greek ancestry, and his speech and poems reflect a wedding of Greek culture and Western United States philosophy and attitudes.

Economou also has translated from Latin but does not profess to be comfortable in any languages other than Greek and English. He is married to Rochelle Owens, and when they were not active participants in the festival's proceedings they were seen sitting side by side, often engaged in earnest and lively conversation. Each appears to show the other marked consideration, although I should not say that either is patronizing towards the other.

Characteristic of George Economou's poetry, I think, is "JAMESTOWN, N. D." from "Landed Natures" (Black Sparrow Press 1969).

The instant the breeze
that blew over rivers and pig pens
through kitchens and cottonwoods
hanging over the street
blew through my car stopped at a red light
and on through a dozen other towns
it seemed like a nice place to live in.

In some ways Edward Dorn, whose poetry reminds me of Economou's, seems to be the antithesis Economou, although Dorn also is a translator of note (of Latin-American poetry) and inhabits a campus, Kent State University, as poet in residence.

Dorn is lean and leathery, like a character out of his long, and still uncompleted epic poem, "Gunslinger." He is also shy and modest, though friendly. He begged off appearing on a television panel with a half-dozen other poets because, he intimated, he didn't think he was in the same league with them.

It would be presumptuous to try to suggest the scope of his poem "Gunslinger" with a fragment. But some of its flavor can be extracted from a part of Book III (Frontier Press 1972), titled "The Winterbook." Here is a brief section of it:

For some while we parallel the train
whose shining rails are closed at both horizons
and this group in which our brain
is contained speaks in the excellent tones
of the beginning of an ascent. feel them rising
into the realm of the surprising
bent over what they say
along the river Rio Grande
tearing the low chordes of the foothills
spitting the seeds of the Sandias
out of the corners of their eyes
as they rise
towards the land of the crazy Utes
over and thru the mordants
of the bridges and the buttes

The archaisms — "speakes" and "chordes," etc. — are not typographical errors or aberrations. Mixed, in the poems, with street words and the hallmarks of contemporary American speech, they give the illusion of time telescoped.

I have left to the last one of the most enigmatic, yet dynamic, of the poets assembled for the festival — Diane di Prima. Although not yet 40, Ms. di Prima has a long list of accomplishments, including 14 volumes of poetry, short stories and translations; the founding and editing of two important literary magazines, as well as the Poets Press in New York City, and the founding, with several other notable poets, of the New York Poets Theatre. She has received two awards from the National Endowment for Arts and Letters, and, although she will have four more books published this year (one a play titled "Monuments"), she finds time to study Buddhism as Zen Center and Sanskrit at the California Institute of Asian Studies. Her slim figure suggests that she trains for her literary labors with the diligence of a long-distance runner.

A rather cryptic note I made at one of her sessions reads: "The many faces of Diane di Prima — playwright — poet — revolutionist." The last word appears to have been inspired by a reading of her "Revolutionary Letters" (City Lights Books 1971). Here is one of the shorter "Letters" — #10:

These are transitional years and the dues
will be heavy.
Change is quick but revolution
will take a while.
America has not even begun as yet.
This continent is seed.

There is another side to di Prima the poet, as exemplified in her "Kerhonkson Journal 1966" (Oyez, Berkeley 1971), which includes the superb "Ode to Keats":

Had you lived longer than your 26 years
You, too, wd have come up against it like a wall

That the Beauty you sought was bought
At too great a price
Even in those days:
The weavers, Ireland, the misery in dark streets
The earth torn up
The rich loam thrown aside

Shacks mushrooming everywhere to house
The children of the poor.

Of whom I am one.
Of whom you are one.

One of the students attending the festival, Joy Walsh from the University of Buffalo, said toward the end of the event: "I see so much of the poetry explosion that I told someone once that I might think of becoming an agent, just to sell the stuff that other people are writing!"

And there does seem to be a poetry explosion in this country. Robert Vas Dias had some thoughts on the subject.

"First," he said, "there is no market for poetry, with very, very few exceptions. There never has been — let's face it — in terms of money. Now let's proceed to the fact that there is a large proliferation of poetry magazines, underground papers, ephemeral kinds of publications which publish and disseminate a great deal of poetry, when it comes right down to it.

"When I say there's no market for poetry I am emphasizing the fact that the first book of poems published by a trade publisher in this country will have a printing of a thousand or maybe 1500 which, in terms of a market, or marketing, is nothing to speak of.

"But there is a great deal of activity. Now I relate the kind of activity that is involved in the making of a poem to the popularity also of rock, jazz, country music, blues and so forth. Poetry and lyrical utterance have usually been defined in one and the same breath; there is the lyric point, and now we seem to think of the song lyric as being distinct from a poem that is written as a poem. Whereas, I think, there is a much closer relationship than we have observed. For example, someone like Bob Dylan is closer to our poets than a number of academic poets are who publish an occasional poem in the literary quarterlies."

Vas Dias paused to reflect for a moment, and then concluded: "So again we come back to the auditory significance of poetry: This is an art that can be appreciated by groups of people sitting around, digging on the sounds, as they say; whereas the short story, the novel is a solitary kind of activity. That, I think, is responsible for the large increase in poetry being dealt with in groups. By the same token, I hope that we never get rid of the activity of reading, because then we all will be out of business — because poetry does function on the page as much as, if not more than, a unit of sound. So poetry needs print."

THE STUDENTS AND TEACHERS who attended the festival at GVSC's Thomas Jefferson College came for many reasons. One of the most important was expressed by Geraldine Porter, a student at Empire State College, a division of State University of New York, at Rochester. "I came to this workshop," she said, "because I am in an educational program in which we do independent studies and one of the things I find lacking is a kind of feedback from other people who are trying to write, who are struggling as I am."

Her friend Joy Walsh came because she gets plenty of opportunity to discuss writing with her peers and instructors but few opportunities to listen to professional writers.

But perhaps the most gratifying reaction, so far as Vas Dias is concerned, came, by mail, from Selma Porter of Suffern, N.Y., who referred to him as "the Sol Hurok of poetry." "I feel," she wrote, "as though I've come back from the longest party of my life — a feast of poetry — and I want to thank you. The experience was so rich and varied that it will continue to shower me with sparks for a long time."

Written like a true poet. ■

Gerald A. Elliott is retired chief editorial writer and critic of The Grand Rapids Press.

other country.

The bank works this way: Say an American conductor should want to do a quality composition by a contemporary Finnish composer but he hasn't had time to keep up on Finnish music. He writes to the music bank in Finland. It makes three or four recommendations and sends him tapes and scores.

"The whole thing got its start about 10 years ago," Buketof said, "when someone in this country connected with the Norwegian government asked me if I would be interested in doing some Norwegian music. I said yes, and he gave me this gigantic list of everything that had been written by Norwegian composers in the last 50 years.

"It was impossible for me to make a selection from a list like that and I told him so. He happened to know something about music, so I said, 'Who are your six best composers? What are their best works?' He told me, we had it narrowed down to about 12 pieces, and all of a sudden the idea was workable.

"So then I thought why

ed by Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Portugal, Belgium,

What's Doing
Continued on Page Six

the Second World War when [illegible] people came from Europe

Continued on Page Six

Campus Poet—a Man Reunited With His First Love

By SAM MARTINO
Minneapolis Tribune
Staff Writer

MADISON, Wis. — Carl Rakosi, a Minneapolis poet whose sense of duty to his job and family kept his pen still for about 30 years, is sharing his talent and enthusiasm with students at the University of Wisconsin.

Rakosi, whose real name is Callman Rawley, retired last year as the executive director of the Jewish Family and Children's Service in Minneapolis. He worked as a social worker in the city for 23 years. Rakosi is a pen name.

The discovery by English writers a few years ago of some of Rakosi's popular Objectivist poems during the 1920s and 1930s inspired the poet to write again.

He produced "Amulet," a volume containing both old and new poems, two years ago. Last fall he received the National Endowment for the Arts award to become the University of Wisconsin's writer-in-residence.

The diminutive (5-feet, 6-inch) Rakosi talked last week of his internal conflicts as a former Marxist attempting to write lyric poetry and his long absence from the literary field.

He regrets having set his pen down, although he doesn't think the gap between the periods when he was writing has crimped his style.

"Maybe I would not have been a better poet in the sense of quality. But what I regret is that I lost an awful lot of time — a huge chunk of my life," he said. "There is much that I had to say, that I never will say now."

Rakosi, 66, believes that his career as a social worker has added to his understanding of people's

CARL RAKOSI

problems and directed him to a new avenue of poetry.

"It (his former job) has made me more of a humanist in my writing. My primary interest, and where I place my greatest value, is on the experience of each individual. My whole personality is geared to the individual," he said.

Rakosi illustrated his feeling about himself and others as individuals back in a 1920 winter poem he called "The Gnat."

"The subject matter really is winter," he said. "If you will imagine the rigors and enormity of winter (the winter is especially enormous in Minnesota). And what is one person? He's really a gnat. That's me, a gnat in winter."

His desire to deal with people as individuals influences the way Rakosi conducts his small poetry and fiction-writing classes at the University of Wisconsin.

He rarely lectures. He draws from his students their feelings and expressions about a poem or a piece of fiction.

"The thing that happens in a small group is that they open up to each other and there is an atmosphere of free dialogue. I think it is very helpful. Students can learn as much from each other as they can from a professor. I encourage them to speak freely and openly of their work," Rakosi said.

He thinks there is a "brilliant future" for young poets.

"For the first time in the history of our country, there is a reading public and it is young. Students have just as good a perception and feel for language as the writers of my era. Another thing is that an awful lot of young people are writing. They don't have very definite plans for a vocation. They are not committed to an occupational activity. They are freer to write," Rakosi said.

This was not the case for Rakosi during the Depression. He could not afford to be a poet and pursue a job as a social worker at the same time. He also was caught up in the Marxian movement in New York City.

"I took very literally the basic Marxian ideas about literature having to be an instrument for social change, for expressing the needs and desires of large masses of people. And believing that, I couldn't write poetry, because the poetry that I could write could not achieve these ends," he said. He added:

"I lost respect for poetry. This Marxian idea had me over a barrel. I couldn't write what they felt a socially responsible person should be writing. The communist attitude toward the arts is absolutely deadly. The communist view that a writer must be someone who promotes political ideas and rallies the masses is for the birds."

Rakosi also said he dropped out of the literary field because of his job.

"The writer's imagination for poetry keeps him hopping all the time. I would be awake all night and I couldn't work the next day. This is one of the reasons I had to suppress my work," he said.

Rakosi said he is surprised by some of the attitudes of the students because some students "are thoroughly Marxist."

"There is no question that Marxism has had a real revival among some of these students. In fact," Rakosi said, "they act as if they discovered it."

Rakosi, whose Minneapolis address is 4451 Colfax Av. S., commutes on weekends from the University of Wisconsin campus to his home. He lives during the week in a small apartment in an off-campus neighborhood and said he enjoys mingling with the students.

Says Carl Rakosi

Young reading poetry

"There's a fantastic number of poets writing today — literally thousands — and the people who read them are young people," Carl Rakosi, social work administrator, poet, and University of Wisconsin writer-in-residence, contends. "These young people gobble up the poetry paperbacks . . . the cloth editions go to the libraries."

And survival opportunities for poets are far greater than they used to be, according to this gentle, twinkling man, now beginning the second semester of a one-year appointment to teach creative writing in the Madison campus English department.

In his 60s, Rakosi speaks from a literary perspective of more than 40 years, from an experience of both lean and fat times, of writing and not writing, of two loves and two wills. He speaks with the authority which two published volumes, "Selected Poems," 1941, and "Amulet," 1967, provide. He also speaks with the sweet sound of a second recognition in his ears.

* * *

"WHEN I WAS YOUNG, there wasn't much chance for a poet to survive, marry, and raise a family," he recalls. "But now a man can write, publish, make records, and even get teaching assignments . . . And there's a great interest among young people for oral poetry. You can find a huge audience for readings on any campus."

Born in Germany, the son of Hungarian-Jewish parents, the poet came to America when he was six and had lived in several midwestern towns before his family settled in Kenosha. By 1924, Wisconsin's adopted son had earned a first degree in English from the University of Wisconsin; two years later he held a UW master's degree in psychology.

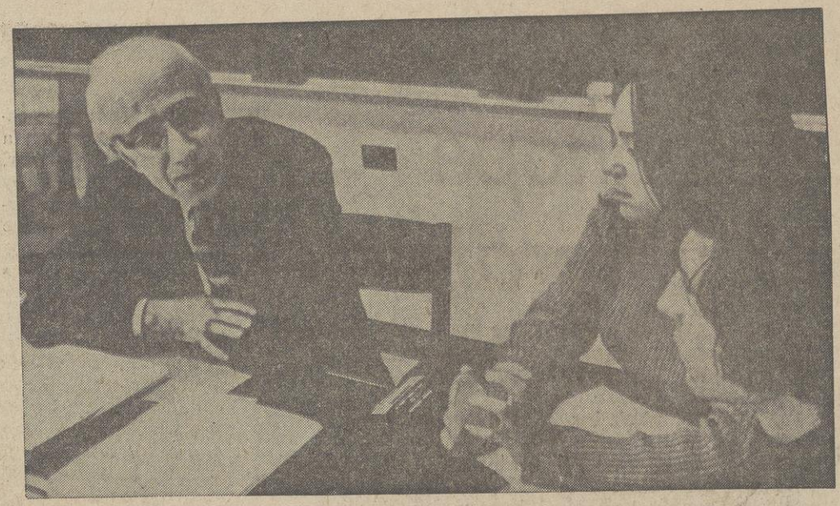
Wiriting poetry and contributing to the campus literary magazine — these were a vital part of the college experience, Rakosi says, "but I was writing a lot of confused things then."

It takes time for young people to find their creative way, to learn to express themselves clearly, this seasoned writer stresses. That's why he works above all to develop in his students their powers of self criticism.

"One person can't affect another's imagination — that comes from the writer himself," Rakosi explains, "and a teacher can't set himself up as an arbiter of what a student should write, but he can help that student to analyze his work and reject what isn't good."

* * *

ONE RAKOSI APPROACH to the goal of analysis and careful selection is through encouraging the students in his informal workshop sessions to criticize the writings of their classmates. At first all were protective of each other, wouldn't criticize adversely, but finally the breakthrough came.



There is an exceptional give-and-take in the workshop sessions of Carl Rakosi. Long years of experience in social work, in psycho-therapy, are an asset in his teaching role, Rakosi points out, particularly in the workshops in prose writing "since fiction is the field of human relations."

There are talented writers in the workshops, "more than I expected," according to the visiting poet, and they are now accepting his approach to insight.

There are no truly great young American poets today, in his opinion, "but there are many competent ones" including Philip Whalen, James Wright, and John Berryman. "And then there is Robert Duncan, who may turn out to be great."

First recognition for his own talents came while the memory of the Wisconsin college years was still fresh. His work began appearing in the Little Magazines. Identified with the Objectivist poets, Rakosi was published together with Louis Zukofsky, George Oppen, Charles Reznikoff, and others in an Objectivist anthology, and an Objectivist issue of Poetry Magazine also pointed to Rakosi among the movement's leaders.

But poetry, no matter how enthralling, and recognition for his contributions could promise little as a total means of support in those days — and even less than that if the poet married.

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"I WANTED MARRIAGE and a family," Rakosi says, "but there was only the Guggenheim fellowship for poetry — and nothing beyond that."

The young poet took a wife and a job in social work and found himself in love, not with one but with both. He also studied medicine and took another degree in psychiatric social work. For a time, writing poems as well as fulfilling his job were both attempted, but finally the voice ceased.

"I had to close my imagination," Rakosi explains. "If you didn't, it kept you up nights and interferred with your professional work." There was another influence operating in those depression years, too. "I was a Marxist then and had become convinced there was no place in our society for a personal lyrical poetry."

Social work can be a highly satisfying occupation, Rakosi is convinced, and his long years of family and marriage counseling were truly rewarding ones. They even produced published writings in the form of some 60 professional papers under the signature of Callman Rawley, Rakosi's legal name.

Who knows how long the will toward creating poetry might have been suppressed if a bright, young English poet had not become interested in Rakosi's early works, hunted them in books and magazines, make a bibliography for the lot, and finally ferreted out the "lost" poet himself.

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"IT WAS THAT LETTER from Andrew Crozier and knowing of his great interest in my poetry that really started me writing again," Wisconsin's visitor recalls.

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By all appearances, Wisconsin't poet-in-residence and his students are savoring every moment of one man's poetic revival. The teaching, too, "came along just in time."

Please Return

Rakosi: 25-year break makes writing harder

Few writers have survived the kind of decision Carl Rakosi made more than 30 years ago.

A known and published poet in the 1920s and 1930s, Rakosi forced himself to stop writing, and for 25 years successfully conducted a separate career under a different name.

"I really didn't think I would write again," he recalled recently. But a letter and "a coincidence" in the mid-1960s brought him back to poetry.

Rakosi, 68, was born in Berlin where his father had a business. His family moved to Hungary shortly after his birth, and, when he was 6, to the United States, settling eventually in Kenosha, Wis. Rakosi grew up and started writing there and was graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a bachelor's degree in English.

"I just didn't want to prepare for a vocation," he said. "It worried my folks—they didn't see how I could make a living. They were right, of course."

His poetry was being published in literary magazines (including Ezra Pound's Exile), but "I had married and had a family and could not support myself" by writing, he said.

There followed a number of jobs—industrial psychology for a New York department store and for the Milwaukee Electric Railway and Light Co.; teaching high school in Houston, Texas; working on a ship docked in New York; a year of medical school at the University of Texas; a few months in a law school.

Then "someone told me there were some openings in social work," Rakosi said. He got a job with a family service agency in Cleveland, Ohio, although his knowledge of the social work field was so limited "I couldn't have defined the term."

It turned out to be "the most alive profession one could go into. I fell in love with social work," he said. It, too, took him all over: New York, Boston, New Orleans, Chicago.

Along the way he earned a master's degree in social work at the University of Pennsylvania, and a master's degree in psychology; he trained in psychotherapy in New York's Lebanon Hospital and later practiced part-time ("I fancy myself a very good therapist," he said).

He taught social work at Tulane and

Rakosi continued on page 6D

Staff Photo by Regene Radniecki

Poet Carl Rakosi will conduct University of Minnesota seminar.

RAKOSI: Scholar showed interest

Continued from Page 1D

Washington Universities and wrote more than 60 articles in the field, mostly on family counseling.

Also along the way, he legally changed his name to Callman Rawley—which became to social work what "Carl Rakosi" had been to writing.

He and his wife, Leah, and their two children settled in Minneapolis in 1945, and he became executive director of the Jewish Family and Children's Service. By then, he was no longer a writer.

He had begun "a gradual tapering off" of his writing in the late 1930s. "I found I had more and more difficulty trying to do both" poetry and social work, he said.

"Social work took too much out of you. It was not like a job in a factory when your mind can be on something else. You have to be very deeply and intensely involved," he said.

"In the evenings, I'd had it. Nevertheless, ideas (for poetry) were coming through my mind and kept me awake all night. I just had to stop."

He cut all associations with other writers "because I didn't want to be tempted," and inhibited his imagination: "That was the most awful thing I had to do in my life. I almost broke down." But after a while, he found, "you get habituated" to that kind of repression.

So things stayed until about 1965 when a letter from a young British scholar reached Rakosi. The scholar had become interested in Rakosi's early work and had tracked down more poems than the poet had records of.

He then tried to track down the poet himself — a difficult task because almost "no one who knew Callman Rawley knew Carl Rakosi," and since Rakosi's publisher "was under the impression I had died," Rakosi said.

Finally, through Rakosi's friend, poet George Oppen, the scholar found out Rakosi's new name and city and wrote to him — in care of the Minneapolis water department. By coincidence or luck, someone forwarded the letter to the Hennepin County Welfare Department, where people knew Callman Rawley.

"It was that letter that made me decide to write again," Rakosi said. "The idea that someone from England and from that age group would be interested was overwhelming. I was eager for my retirement."

Since he began writing again, he has published — under his original name — two collections of poems: "Amulet" (1967) and "Ere-Voice" (1971). ("Poems," published in 1941, was his only volume before his self-inflicted silence.)

He received a National Endowment for the Arts Award in 1969, was writer-in-residence at the University of Wisconsin in 1969-1970, and has lectured on poetry at the University of Minnesota Graduate School of Education since 1968.

This spring, he will take over the late poet John Berryman's seminar, The American Character, at the University of Minnesota.

Rakosi is continuing with poetry and trying prose. Some of his new work will appear this summer in the magazine Chelsea, and this fall in the anthology, "New Directions 25."

It has been difficult to return to writing after so long an absence, he said:

"A young man's motivation in the creative arts is different from an older person's. Young people very often write because they have to . . . from some deep inner anguish or conflict or problem . . . The writing is a way of dealing with it, of trying to reduce it and resolve it.

"When I started again, that was not there."

Now he finds he is "a terrible procrastinator:" When he was a young writer, "you couldn't tear me away from my desk. Now you can't get me to it."

Rakosi tries to do most of his work in the mornings and revises endlessly, sometimes "boiling poems to death" in the process.

He does his best work, he said, at Yaddo, an artists' retreat in upper New York state, where he's spent the last four summers, and in a room of Temple Israel, "which has the monastic stillness I seem to need."

Poet recalls Kenosha

'I learned I had courage'

Back when crackers still came in the barrel and jars of penny candies lined the variety store counter, and each neighborhood supported a house of worship, a grocer, a tailer, a barber, and other establishments vital to community life, Leopold and Rose Rakosi, settled in a flat above a jewelry store on Main Street in Kenosha. Of Hungarian-Jewish heritage, their son, Carl, learned to be tough in the intensely anti-Semitic neighborhood. Today he is a lauded poet and well-known social worker, the author of three volumes of poetry and more than 60 profesional articles on family and marriage counseling.

Rakosi, who retains that name as a poet and has changed his name to Callman Rawley in private and professional life, commented on his early experiences in the city in a recent letter to the Kenosha News.

"These days it is hard to understand how a whole neighborhood could be anti-Semitic but these were children of German and Polish stock whose parents had brought over the most virulent form of Jew-hatred from the old country. I had to stand and fight, and I did, time after time."

* * *

Rakosi explained, "There were anxious moments but it was a good experience. I learned that I had courage and that, to my great surprise, I could lick kids twice my size and weight simply by remaining cool and determined. Since I was fighting for my integrity, it never occurred to me that I could lose. And I never did."

The teacher, creative writer, social worker, and father of two grown children, reminisced about his high school days. He graduated from Kenosha High School in 1920 with a B-plus average.

"That meant I was conscientious but not obsessively hung up on grades. I had a good English teacher in my senior year. Her name escapes me although I remember her rather seductive smile and something physically quite electric about her body."

"She was crucial to my development as a writer," Rakosi noted, "because she was the first to show that she valued my tastes in reading and admired the grasp and depth of my responses to literature. Her comments on a paper I had written for class on George Eliot made me realize for the first time that there was something special in me, something that meant I could become a writer perhaps."

Although Rakosi was a quiet teenager, he was not a loner. His two best friends were Louis Consentino, "a boy with an iron grip," and Joe Kessler who lived on the north side.

While in high school, he worked at several summer jobs. The sensitive boy hated picking up the shavings of hair and was fired from his first job after only one day. His prospects improved though. The chair department of Simmons bed factory hired him.

* * *

"My best job was as a meter tester for the electric company. Meters in those days were in the basement, and one day, Joe Kessler, with whom I sometimes worked, and I were given an order to test the meter of a big ice cream parlor downtown. Imagine our amazement when we discovered, quite by chance, that the stacks of tin boxes along the walls were not empty but full of sweets of all kinds. It took us an unusually long time to test that meter!" he exclaimed.

Working as a meterman was not all fun. Ocassionally, the discoveries the teenagers made were quite unpleasant. For example, Rakosi recalls, "Once we were working on the dirt floor of a basement. It had rained the night before. As I was bent over, setting up the instrument, Joe grasped the conduit of lead wires to unhook the meter."

"He let out a terrified cry, 'I'm dying!' "Instinctively I grabbed him around the waist pulling as hard as I could, but he was stuck to the 220 voltage like rubber. I couldn't yank him off. "

"In desperation finally I pulled so hard that the whole circuit box was ripped off the wall and an electric arc shot all the way across the room. That released him and he bolted out of the basement running down the street. "Oh! My God! you saved my life!," he yelled." I ran after him kind of embarrassed, trying to reassure him, 'Wait, Joe, it's all right, it's all right,' I kept shouting. Had I touched his skin when I grabbed him, we would both have been electrocuted."

After graduating from high school, Rakosi went to the University of Chicago but "I felt lost in the big city and transferred in my second year to the University of Wisconsin."

While at Wisconsin, he developed his poetry skills. and published in the "little" magazines. After publishing a collection of poems in 1940, he became disenchanted with writing poetry. By that time he had graduated from the University of Wisconsin—Madison with a B.A. in English and M.A. in psychology. He also picked up a master's degree in social work from the University of Pennsylvania and later trained in psychotherapy in New York's Lebanaon Hospital.

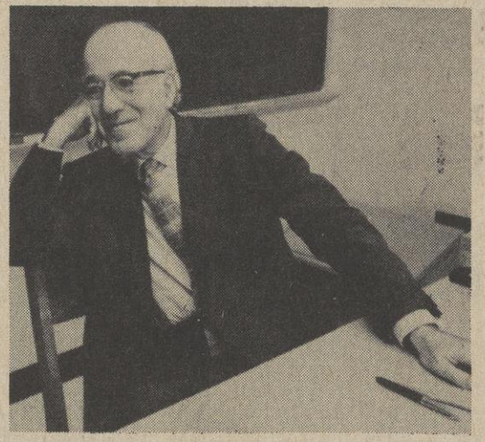
* * *

As a college student, the aspiring poet became acquainted wiht other writers including Zona Gale, Kenneth Fearing, Emily Hahn, Horace Gregory, Margery Latimer, and Marya Zaturenska.

His poetry has been considered by critics to be a part of the Objectivist movement which sought to make poetry harder, less rhetorical, freer from restrictions in form or content and more concrete in description so the readers could make their own judgements about the piece's meaning.

The promising poet was also a Marxist and thought that in the milieu of the Depression and World War II, his extremely intensive lyricism was irrelevant. Besides, he had married and needed a means of supporting his family.

And so the artist turned away from creating verse and for more than 25 years kept this side of his soul silent. During those years, he became an ardent social worker and contributed many scholarly papers to the field. In 1945, he accepted the post of executive director of the Jewish Family and Children's Service in Minneapolis. He has lived in that city since.



Carl Rakosi (Callman Rawley) at his desk.

The interest of a British student in his work inspired Rakosi to come back from the depths of silence and in 1965 he published a second volume, "Amulet." "Ere-Voice" followed in 1971 and currently he is completing "Exe-Cranium, Night."

In addition to leading a very successful life as social worker and writing several volumes of poetry, Rakosi has guest lectured in Europe and taught seminars in poetry at universities.

Two National Endowment for the Arts Awards number among his recognitions as an outstanding poet. New York Times Book Review critic Jim Harrison commented on the poet's reawakening in 1968 after "Amulet" was printed, "Rakosi begs our attention with these fine poems; he has not sought the art of landing without first being intimate with the art of flight. Rakosi is a maker, not a bearer, and should be read and saluted by those who care for the life of the poem."

Writer-in-Residence Has Returned to His First Love

U. Students Are Savoring One Man's Poetic Revival

By VIVIEN HONE

"There's a fantastic number of poets writing today — literally thousands — and the people who read them are young people," Carl Rakosi, social work administrator, poet, and University of Wisconsin writer-in-residence, contends. "These young people gobble up the poetry paperbacks . . . the cloth editions go to the libraries."

And survival opportunities for poets are far greater than they used to be, according to this gentle, twinkling man, now beginning the second semester of a one-year appointment to teach creative writing in the Madison campus English department.

In his 60s, Rakosi speaks from a literary perspective of more than 40 years, from an experience of both lean and fat times, of writing and not writing, of two loves and two wills. He speaks with the authority which two published volumes, "Selected Poems," 1941, and "Amulet," 1967, provide. He also speaks with the sweet sound of a second recognition in his ears.

"When I was young, there wasn't much chance for a poet to survive, marry, and raise a family," he recalls. **"But now a man can write, publish, make records, and even get teaching assignments . . . And there's a great interest among young people for oral poetry. You can find a huge audience for readings on any campus."**

* * *

Born in Germany, the son of Hungarian-Jewish parents, the poet came to America when he was 6 and had lived in several midwestern towns before his family settled in Kenosha. By 1924, Wisconsin's adopted son had earned a first degree in English from the University of Wisconsin; two years later he held a U.W. Master's Degree in psychology.

Writing poetry and contributing to the campus literary magazine — these were a vital part of the college experience, Rakosi says, "but I was writing a lot of confused things then."

It takes time for young people to find their creative way, to learn to express themselves clearly, this seasoned writer stresses. That's why he works above all to develop in his students their powers of self criticism.

"One person can't affect another's imagination — that comes from the writer himself," Rakosi explains. **"And a teacher can't set himself up as an arbiter of what a student should write. But he can help that student to analyze his work and reject what isn't good."**

* * *

One Rakosi approach to the goal of analysis and careful selection is through encouraging the students in his informal workshop sessions to criticize the writings of their classmates. At first all were protective of each other, wouldn't criticize adversely, but finally the breakthrough came.

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First recognition for his own talents came while the memory of the Wisconsin college years was still fresh. His work began appearing in the Little Magazines. Identified with the Objectivist poets, Rakosi was published together with Louis Zukofsky, George Oppen, Charles Reznikoff, and others in an Objectivist anthology, and an Objectivist issue of Poetry Magazine also pointed to Rakosi among the movement's leaders.

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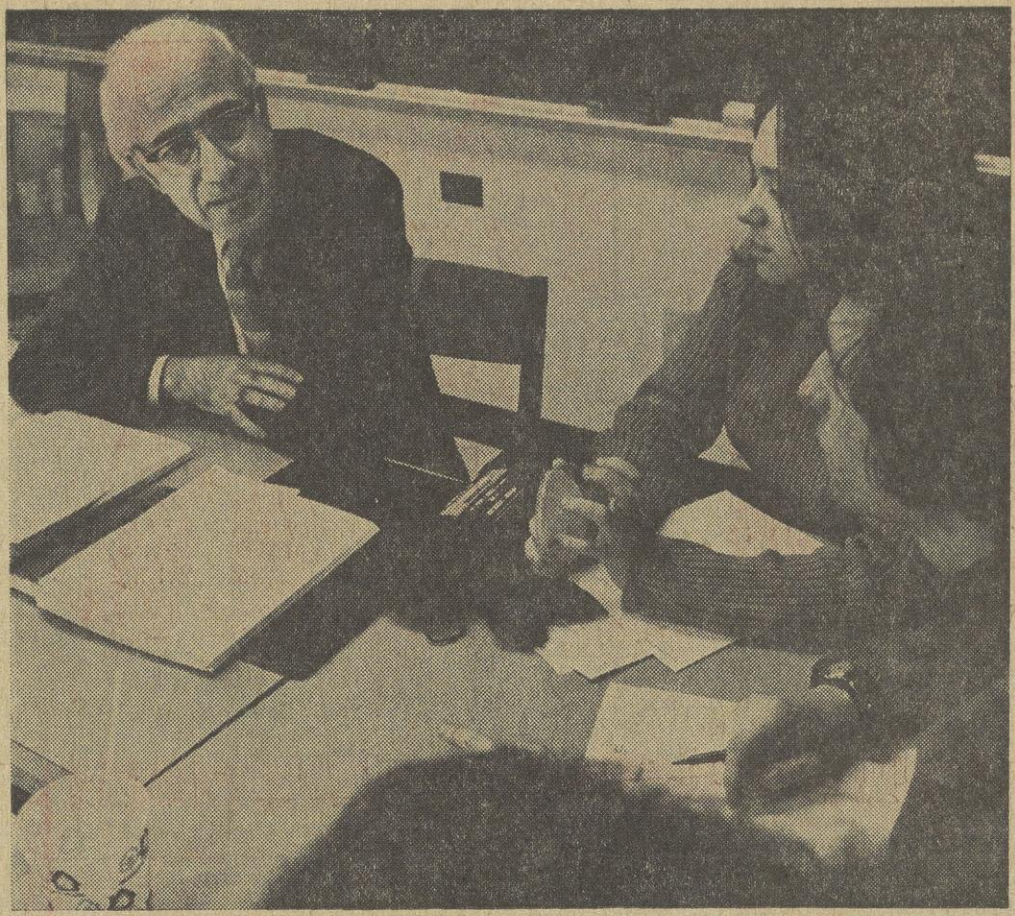


There is an exceptional give-and-take in the workshop sessions of Carl Rakosi, Objectivist poet, University of Wisconsin writer-in-residence, and retired social work administrator. Students are encouraged to criticize the work of classmates and thereby ultimately gain critical judgment for their own writing. (Photo by Dell Brown, UW Photographic Laboratory)

The Capital Times

GREEN

MADISON, WIS., Wednesday, Feb. 4, 1970

The Minneapolis Tribune

Entertainment • Arts • Books

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN., SUNDAY, APRIL 5, 1970

Minneapolis Tribune Photo by Earl Seubert
Contralto Gwendolyn Killebrew and conductor Igor Buketof

'Banks' Aid Exchange of Musical Treasure

Igor Buketof, the RCA recording conductor who is in the Twin Cities to conduct the St. Paul Opera's production of "The Rape of Lucretia," is also a banker, dealing in high musical finance on an international level.

Buketof, whose RCA recording of Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture was on the best-selling list of classical records for 60 weeks, is the founder and chairman of an organization called the International Music Bank.

The purpose of the bank is to make it easier for a conductor in one country to be able to select and perform what he can be confident is the best contemporary music from another country.

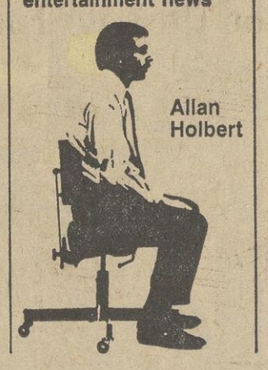
The bank works this way: Say an American conductor should want to do a quality composition by a contemporary Finnish composer but he hasn't had time to keep up on Finnish music. He writes to the music bank in Finland. It makes three or four recommendations and sends him tapes and scores.

"The whole thing got its start about 10 years ago," Buketof said, "when someone in this country connected with the Norwegian government asked me if I would be interested in doing some Norwegian music. I said yes, and he gave me this gigantic list of everything that had been written by Norwegian composers in the last 50 years.

"It was impossible for me to make a selection from a list like that and I told him so. He happened to know something about music, so I said, 'Who are your six best composers? What are their best works?' He told me, we had it narrowed down to about 12 pieces, and all of a sudden the idea was workable.

"So then I thought why

What's doing?
entertainment news



Allan Holbert

can't conductors have information like this available from more countries? We're still growing, but so far the bank is represented by Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Portugal, Belgium, Holland and the United States.

"The composers and music to represent each country are selected by a distinguished group of composers, conductors, critics and musicians from that country. They do not get together to make their decisions, but it has been amazing how much most of them usually agree."

Among the composers who represent the United States in the music bank — and this means someone thinks they are the best composers in this country — are Aaron Copland, Elliot Carter, Samuel Barber, Roger Sessions, Charles Wuorinen and Charles Ives.

"I know Ives is dead,"

What's Doing
Continued on Page Six

'Bums' for Sons? Not Really...

Adlers Are Proud Parents Off-stage

By ALLAN HOLBERT
Minneapolis Tribune Staff Writer

You don't have to be Jewish to like Henrietta Jacobson as the Jewish mother in the Stockton Briggle production of "Come Blow Your Horn" at the Friars Dinner Theater.

Neither do you have to be Jewish to like her as Henrietta Jacobson, the Jewish mother in real life.

During an interview the other day with her and her husband, Julius Adler, also her husband in the play, she worried around her kitchen table in a way that made you feel like her own son.

"Your coffee warm enough, darling? Do you want cream or sugar, dear? You should eat another piece of cake, honey, you're looking too thin."

As is the case in the play, the Adlers have two grown sons, but they are quick to point out that their sons are not at all like those two playboy "bums" who worry their parents in the play.

Stanley, the elder son, is a doctor, a molecular biologist, Adler explained. "Hurry and become a doctor, I used to tell him. I'm not feeling too good because it's costing me so much for you to become a doctor."

The other son, Bruce, is a young actor working in New York.

"He's a fine actor and nice young man," Miss Jacobson said. "When he came back from the service, we expected he would move into his own apartment in New York. But no, he came back to our apartment. He said the price was right. We don't bug him and he doesn't bug us. We get along because all three of us are actors and we speak the same language.

"We have a fine relationship with the big boy, too, but we don't know anything about what he's doing. We just repeat like parrots all those medical terms he tells us."

To have those two fine sons, you've got to be a good Jewish mother. You hear about them in plays. There's a book that tells you how to be one. Just what is a Jewish mother?

"Well, I'll tell you something, darling," said Mrs. Jacobson. "Hal March had a colored valet and he brought him to see me in 'Come Blow Your Horn' and he said to him, 'Doesn't she (me in the play) remind you of your Aunt Tessie?' You can't tell me that's a Jewish mother.

"I don't know where the term came from. Maybe it's because we're demonstrative and doting and emotional towards our children. Maybe we worry about them too much. But you'll find these qualities in any mother that loves her children. I don't care if she's Italian or Polish or German or what. Children are entitled to know that you love them. You just can't let them assume it."

Miss Jacobson was born in Chicago into a theatrical family.

"My father and mother were Jewish actors and they pioneered the entire west of this country with Jewish theater. My brothers, Heimie and Irving, who later created the part of Sancho in 'La Mancha,' were a dance team. I first appeared on the stage at the age of 3. That's how long I am in the theater."

Adler was born in Europe and came to this country when he was 11. The two met and married while working in the Yiddish theater in New York.

"You want to know how he proposed to me? This is a very funny thing. He was song and dance and I was choreographer. We fell in love, I suppose, but the guy never talks about marriage. I'm waiting and waiting. You'd think it was some kind of contest we're playing.

"Then in 1938 we got an engagement to go to Belgium to do Yiddish theater. So he says, 'Henrietta, let's get married. We can get a family passport for half-price.' I said 'OK, Julius, let's get married.' "

Both the Adlers are proud of their training and experience in the Yiddish theater and disappointed that it hardly exists any longer.

"The Yiddish theater flourished," Adler explained, "after the Second World War when a lot of people came from Europe to New York and they couldn't speak English, only Yiddish.

Minneapolis Tribune Photo by Mike Zerby
Henrietta Jacobson, Julius Adler of "Come Blow Your Horn."

"Yiddish theater was just like Broadway theater except for the language. We would do Shakespeare, 'Hamlet,' regular repertoire, during the week, and on the weekends we would do the current hits. We had good directors and they were stern and strict with us, and we worked every night in a different play and that's how we learned.

"It entailed every school of acting you can think of, from method on down. The only difference was the language.

"But it declined because the audiences eventually learned English. The people coming here from Europe began to know English by the time they got here. The old Yiddish actors started dying off, and the younger ones could speak English and they aspired to get up on Broadway.

"And it was always very clean legitimate stuff," said Miss Jacobson. "Nothing risque, no vulgarity at all. This nudity stuff on the stage is very strange to us. We can't get accustomed to it.

"Sometimes these young directors—they get very cute, these young ones—will ask me if I will do anything in the nude. I say 'If you want to lose customers.' "

The Adlers left the Yiddish theater in 1962.

"A director heard me make a little speech in English in a Yiddish play and he said, 'You can speak perfect English; what are you doing in the Yiddish theater?' "

She accepted his offer to be in "Come Blow Your Horn" in Florida, was later in the show on Broadway, and the two of them have been doing "Come Blow Your Horn" and "Don't Drink the Water" in dinner theaters around the country ever since.

The couple has done "Horn" together more hundreds of times than either can count. It would seem there could be a

Adlers
Continued on Page Six

Campus Poet—a Man Reunited With His First Love

By SAM MARTINO
Minneapolis Tribune Staff Writer

MADISON, Wis. — Carl Rakosi, a Minneapolis poet whose sense of duty to his job and family kept his pen still for about 30 years, is sharing his talent and enthusiasm with students at the University of Wisconsin.

Rakosi, whose real name is Callman Rawley, retired last year as the executive director of the Jewish Family and Children's Service in Minneapolis. He worked as a social worker in the city for 23 years. Rakosi is a pen name.

The discovery by English writers a few years ago of some of Rakosi's popular Objectivist poems during the 1920s and 1930s inspired the poet to write again.

He produced "Amulet," a volume containing both old and new poems, two years ago. Last fall he received the National Endowment for the Arts award to become the University of Wisconsin's writer-in-residence.

The diminutive (5-feet, 6-inch) Rakosi talked last week of his internal conflicts as a former Marxist attempting to write lyric poetry and his long absence from the literary field.

He regrets having set his pen down, although he doesn't think the gap between the periods when he was writing has crimped his style.

"Maybe I would not have been a better poet in the sense of quality. But what I regret is that I lost an awful lot of time — a huge chunk of my life," he said. "There is much that I had to say, that I never will say now."

Rakosi, 66, believes that his career as a social worker has added to his understanding of people's

CARL RAKOSI

problems and directed him to a new avenue of poetry.

"It (his former job) has made me more of a humanist in my writing. My primary interest, and where I place my greatest value, is on the experience of each individual. My whole personality is geared to the individual," he said.

Rakosi illustrated his feeling about himself and others as individuals back in a 1920 winter poem he called "The Gnat."

"The subject matter really is winter," he said. "If you will imagine the rigors and enormity of winter (the winter is especially enormous in Minnesota). And what is one person? He's really a gnat. That's me, a gnat in winter."

His desire to deal with people as individuals influences the way Rakosi conducts his small poetry and fiction-writing classes at the University of Wisconsin.

He rarely lectures. He draws from his students their feelings and expressions about a poem or a piece of fiction.

"The thing that happens in a small group is that they open up to each other and there is an atmosphere of free dialogue. I think it is very helpful. Students can learn as much from each other as they can from a professor. I encourage them to speak freely and openly of their work," Rakosi said.

He thinks there is a "brilliant future" for young poets.

"For the first time in the history of our country, there is a reading public and it is young. Students have just as good a perception and feel for language as the writers of my era. Another thing is that an awful lot of young people are writing. They don't have very definite plans for a vocation. They are not committed to an occupational activity. They are freer to write," Rakosi said.

This was not the case for Rakosi during the Depression. He could not afford to be a poet and pursue a job as a social worker at the same time. He also was caught up in the Marxian movement in New York City.

"I took very literally the basic Marxian ideas about literature having to be an instrument for social change, for expressing the needs and desires of large masses of people. And believing that, I couldn't write poetry, because the poetry that I could write could not achieve these ends," he said. He added:

"I lost respect for poetry. This Marxian idea had me over a barrel. I couldn't write what they felt a socially responsible person should be writing. The communist attitude toward the arts is absolutely deadly. The communist view that a writer must be someone who promotes political ideas and rallies the masses is for the birds."

Rakosi also said he dropped out of the literary field because of his job.

"The writer's imagination for poetry keeps him hopping all the time. I would be awake all night and I couldn't work the next day. This is one of the reasons I had to suppress my work," he said.

Rakosi said he is surprised by some of the attitudes of the students because some students "are thoroughly Marxist."

"There is no question that Marxism has had a real revival among some of these students. In fact," Rakosi said, "they act as if they discovered it."

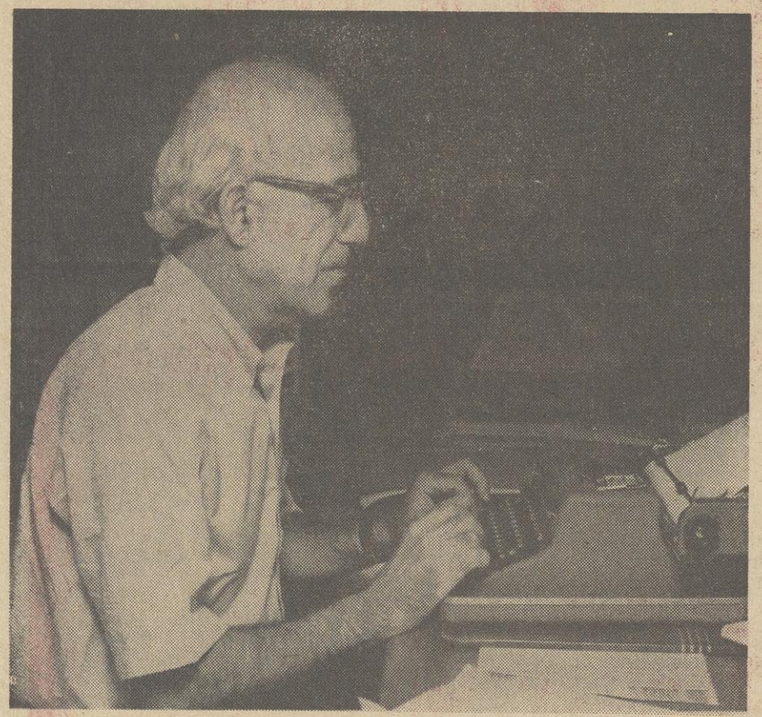
Rakosi, whose Minneapolis address is 4451 Colfax Av. S., commutes on weekends from the University of Wisconsin campus to his home. He lives during the week in a small apartment in an off-campus neighborhood and said he enjoys mingling with the students.

Poetry: Unprogrammed Tranquility

"An ulcer, gentlemen, is an unkissed imagination taking its revenge for having been jilted. It is an unwritten poem, a neglected music, an unpainted watercolor, an undanced dance. It is a declaration from the mankind of the man that a clear spring of joy has not been tapped, and that it must break through, muddily, on its own."

—John Ciardi, "An Ulcer, Gentlemen, Is an Unwritten Poem."

Words of meaning, these, for every one of us who, through today's society, has become a "programmed" individual.



—Pioneer Press Photo by Don Church

POET CARL RAKOSI Believes That Poetry Is One of the Few Things Not Programmed Into Society.

By Roger Rosenblum

Staff Writer

Poetry can be a striking factor in helping us find the mental tranquility which a programmed life helps prevent through its sometimes-hidden, yet insidious drain on our intellect.

That is the firm belief of one of Minnesota's leading poets, Carl Rakosi of Minneapolis. Rakosi's most recent book, Amulet, has received rave notices from such highly respected publications as Saturday Review, Contemporary Literature. The New York Times and England's Grosseteste Review.

With Amulet, Rakosi broke a poetic silence of more than two decades.

Rakosi had been a member of the Objectivist Group of the early 1940s, and his works appeared regularly along with those of William Carlos Williams, Louis Zukofsky, Charles Reznikoff and George Oppen.

He suddenly dropped from literary sight, disgusted with society and with a firm conviction his intensely individual lyricism was irrelevant and impossible to continue.

Rakosi, 65, resides at 4451 Colfax Ave. S. During his hiatus from the literary scene he was executive director of the Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis for 23 years. Those who worked with him there knew him as Callman Rawley, his real name. Rakosi is his pen name.

Carl considers himself a member of the "Avant Garde" school of poetry today. "The Avant Garde poet," Rakosi feels, "is breaking with literary tradition, and also breaking new ground in forms and subject matter.

"It is a complete de-romanticizing, nibbling away at the ideas and scenes of the 19th century. The person who turns to Avant Garde," Rakosi said, "is going to be shocked, but that makes it more appealing to the young.

"The variety and range of subject matter is greatly enlarged. If you don't have to be a romanticist you can think at will," he added.

To Rakosi the most inspiring part of today's poetry is the enthusiastic involvement of young persons. "The young are the biggest poetry readers we have now," he said. "At a recent three-hour reading at the University of Minnesota we had more than a thousand young people and about 100 adults.

"The young are vitally interested, simply because they have a great many questions and many dissatisfactions with society. They are looking for new and fresh ways of relating to our new realities. They also are extremely involved and interested in ethics. Poetry can provide an answer for them," Rakosi explained.

"Because there are new feelings, new readers can tune in to our wavelength. There seems to be developing what you might call a spiritual kinship."

Aside from the encouraging youth involvement in poetry, Rakosi feels an even greater potential exists for poetry in the daily life of the "programmed" adult worker.

"The individual today is expected to function in certain ways within industry. He has a restricted fate and destiny. People will go to great lengths to avoid this regimentation, YET at the same time they cannot tolerate being alone," Rakosi went on.

"Poetry, I feel, can enlarge a person's humanity. It can be potentially of great social significance — and that is true of all the arts," Carl said.

"The reader identifies himself with the compassion or intellectuality of the poet. I think men like W. H. Auden and William Blake are the finest examples of being able to enlarge the power of compassion in people," he said.

Rakosi believes poetry, like many other of the fine arts, is not programmed into society. "The arts seem left out. There is no programmed role for the arts in society. The poet, too, also is an idealist and therefore never programmed.

Not only converts among the young are realizing the value of poetry. The significance has been identified among the persons who are responsible for the curriculum, training and (hopefully) idealism of the high school students.

Dr. Samuel Popper of the University of Minnesota's College of Education, who is a specialist in conducting humanization seminars for school administrators, has presented Rakosi to some selected personnel.

Can a person like Rakosi transmit an impact to the high school people of today, through the school?

An enlightening answer came from Walter Hard, 1454 W. Roselawn Ave., Falcon Heights. Hard was superintendent of the Cook County School District at Grand Marais, and now is working toward his Ph.D., degree under Dr. Popper.

"As a school administrator I feel we are formally oriented. The area of arts, generally, is a strange one for us. It's been pretty tough to relate a school budget, which we administer, to the arts, Hard said.

"After I was exposed to a seminar with Rakosi," Hard continued, "I felt I was much better prepared to work with our people in the finer arts areas of the schools. It gave me a better sense of evaluation and the inter-action of arts as related to the world of the young people today."

Rakosi breaks down the world of poetry today into three schools: The conventional, the avant garde and the social.

"The Conventional poet (associated mainly with the 19th century) has no innovation in subject matter," Carl said. "The conventional poet expressed personal feelings and wrote little in relation to the external world."

He feels the social poet can be either conventional or social. This anomoly, Rakosi says, "comes about because most poetry today does not have much social significance — something which society can pick out and use in the daily life of the programmed people."

Rakosi admits he attempted to be a social poet in the 1930s. "I failed miserably," he concedes. "I was too much influenced by socialist thinking. But today, our thinking leans to the left, and only a year ago I did some poems opposing the Vietnam war and they were very successful."

The "Review" scanned Amulet as something of an unexpected pleasure to those readers who have been so bullied by academic theorists, and anti-academic theorists, that they approach objectivist poetry with the foolish solemnity of society matrons attending a light-show. This is the stuff of Rakosi which we can enjoy:

"THE POEM
comes in
like an ocean
blow
into my head
and goes out
as a small model
into the world,
smelling
like a rose,
hm?"

Rakosi's work has been described as "humane, attentive to the ordinary until the ordinary ceases to be so."

Perhaps, the ordinary of today should cease to be.

Named to Faculty

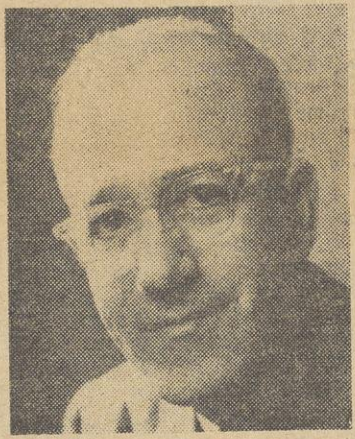
Carl Rakosi, the subject of the accompanying article, last month was named "Writer in Residence" at the University of Wisconsin for the fall semester

Rakosi, a Minneapolis resident for the past quarter-century and a former Badger student, will succeed Isaac Bashevis Singer, a Polish novelist.

In his new capacity Rakosi will work, in seminar form, with aspiring poets and writers to develop styles and stimulate ideas. — ROSENBLUM.

IF SOCIAL WORKERS have trouble getting people into that field, they might borrow some recruiting posters from the navy.

Callman Rawley



The navy's most famous attraction—the chance to see the world—applies also to the field of social work, it would seem from the experience of Callman Rawley, executive director of Jewish Family & Children's Service.

Before he came to the local Community Chest agency 10 years ago, he had worked or studied variously at Cleveland, Ohio, New York, Pittsburgh, Pa., Boston, Mass., Chicago, Houston and Austin, Texas, Milwaukee, Wis., New Orleans, La., and St. Louis, Mo.

Berlin born, Rawley came to this country in 1910 at age 6. The family's first American home was in Chicago, but most of his growing years were spent in Kenosha, Wis., and he earned B.A. and M.A. degrees at the University of Wisconsin. Originally a teacher, Rawley was on the faculties of Tulane and the University of Texas. After the professional change he went to the University of Pennsylvania for a professional degree.

He was married in 1939 at New York, where he was on the staff of the Jewish Family Service association. His artist wife, Leah, has contributed to one of the chief Rawley hobbies, art collecting. His current No. 1 hobby—hi-fi—satisfies musical taste from A to A, classical Aida to jazz Armstrong.

Although Rawley's first work was as an industrial psychologist, most of his professional attention has focused on research and counseling youngsters.

That, possibly, is why the forthcoming annual meeting of

Rakosi Enraptures Audience

By CYNTHIA SIMPSON

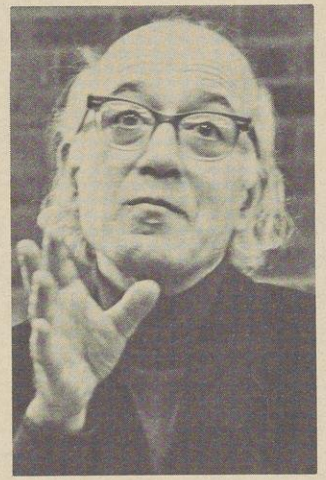
When Carl Rakosi reads his poetry, even the traffic on Snelling is silent.

Not a sound could be heard in room 201 of the library Tuesday afternoon except the thin, high, slightly raspy voice of the poet. The audience of 45 people sat enraptured for an hour as Rakosi read from his two books, **Amulet** and **Ere Voice.**

Before reading a poem, he would explain both what it meant to him and any unusual words he had used in that poem. His poetry ranged from the profound, "How To Be With A Rock" through the amusing, "The Husband" to the downright ridiculous. His subjects are equally varied; he writes on war, nature, psychology and things like the origin of the word "okay."

Rakosi was asked why he used such unusual words in his poems. He finds a fascination in words; it is gratifying to him to search for and find "a new and different reality in language."

Rakosi doesn't encourage writing and admits it's tough. He looks rather sceptically at contemporary poetry. It lacks, he says, a certain cadence or inner rhythm



Rakosi

which is responsible for the magic of a poem. Many poets should be writing prose, he said.

Hamline

Minnesotans Produce Books

Among the books published by Minnesotans in 1967:

The Limits of Power: America's Role in the World, by Eugene J. McCarthy (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, $5.95). Minnesota's senior senator thinks his country is on the wrong track in a lot of places around the world. The major contribution of his book is not in the answers it offers so much as in the questions it raises.

The Riot, by Frank Elli (Coward-McCann, $4.95). A milepost in prison fiction, it moves with a primitive, elemental thrust that conceals a professional craftsmanship unusual in a first novelist. The author is a former inmate of Stillwater prison.

Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920, by Allan H. Spear (University of Chicago Press, $7.50). An exciting historical narrative with a chapter showing a parallel between the turn-of-the-century ghetto and the Negro situation in Chicago today.

Poems: New and Selected, by Reed Whittemore (University of Minnesota Press, $4). A selection from the poems of 20 years by a former English professor at Carleton College.

From Zero to the Absolute, by Reed Whittemore (Crown, $4.95). This book about poetry is unified by its insistence on the negative effects of seeking too much freedom.

Newspapers on the Minnesota Frontier, 1849-1860, by George S. Hage (Minnesota Historical Society, $4.50). An enlightening, engaging study of the first 11 years of Minnesota newspapering.

Why Call Them Back From Heaven? by Clifford D. Simak (Doubleday, $3.95). One of the small handful of unarguably good science-fiction writers describes a world that promises unlimited life by freezing the human body.

The Werewolf Principle, by Clifford D. Simak (Putnam, $3.95). An engrossing novel whose hero is faced with the need of reconciling his three selves and finding a solution to his aching loneliness at being different from other human beings.

The Zest (and best) of Klobuchar, by Jim Klobuchar (Mark Zelenovich, $3.95). A collection of fine columns and articles by a Minneapolis newspaperman.

Amulet, by Carl Rakosi (New Directions, $4.50 hardcover, $1.50 paperback). There is much that is colorfully subjective in this collection by an objectivist poet.

The Politics of the Common Market, by W. Hartley Clark (Prentice-Hall, $4.95). A Carleton College professor contributes a terse summary that attempts to explain the functioning of the Common Market as well as put it in historical and global perspective.

Soldier, Ask Not, by Gordon R. Dickson (Dell, paper, 60 cents). An exciting science-fiction tale set 400 years in the future.

The Negro in Federal Employment: The Quest for Equal Opportunity, by Samuel Krislov (University of Minnesota Press, $5). A University of Minnesota professor outlines the history of Negroes in federal employment, looks at the organizational techniques being used to end discrimination and lays the groundwork for future comparisons of results.

In the Clutches of Homo and Sapience, by Mark Graubard (Denison, paper, $2.45). Satirical novel set in a mental hospital. Inmates symbolize the futility of modern man's secular schemes for salvation, and his inability to admit any serious faults in himself or his reason.

Minneapolis Sunday Tribune, Nov. 19, 1967

Begin at Middle and Meet a Poet

CARL RAKOSI

Turn to page 45

AMULET, by Carl Rakosi (New Directions, $4.50 hard-cover, $1.50 paper-back).

Reviewed by R. P. JOHNSON

What more fitting than a photograph to introduce an objectivist poet?

We are introduced to his poetry with this:

"The Poem/comes in/like an ocean/blow/into my head//and goes/out as a small model/into the world, smelling/like a rose/hm?"

From salty ocean breeze to the smell of a rose—a discouraging wrench indeed, evoking an overweight, highly scented dowager strolling the windy upper deck, flirtatiously begging a compliment from the young first mate.

AND WHAT does the poet mean? That his poems sprout full-blown? That he has no second thoughts?

Carl Rakosi is a 64-year-old Minneapolis poet and social worker whose real name is Callman Rawley. "Amulet" is his first published collection since "Selected Poems" in 1941.

Advised that a reviewer was skeptical of a dust-jacket statement that he actually quit writing in 1941, Rakosi chuckled and said: "Well, he weaves a very nice fantasy, but it really has no relation to the reality, which is more complex. I just couldn't keep up the hard business of writing and continue to do my professional work. I didn't start writing again until 1965."

The early pieces bear him out. They're objectivism to its extreme, to the mere recording of things, the simple sharing of observation, with no shared feeling, no word, image, peculiar rhythm to intimate his personal attitude, a reaction to share, nothing to suggest that a poetic imagination is receiving and judging and passing on its special view and knowing. He shows us nothing we cannot see for ourselves.

"Lamp/with goddess,/ ivory-carved/Japanese lady,/hands crossed/over breast, holding/on her head/electric bulbs / and batik/lamp shade."

It's half the book before all skepticism passes.

NOT THAT all the first part lacks the color of personality. There are tints of humor, satire, affection, shades of longing, displeasure, anger — in short, much that is colorfully subjective.

After the low ebb of that sea-born rose smell, floating up through the lingering doubt, expectations rise.

Open this volume beyond the middle—page 45 will do very well: "Antonio, a special breed of existential cat: / a Christian, merchant, friend,/ yet suffers from an enigmatic melancholy..." One of the longer poems, it's a commentary and more on "The Merchant of Venice," and, of course, more for some than for others. But everyone should know he has entered the company of a poet.

READ ON to a solid acquaintance, then turn over to page 2. Then even the verbal photos will hold your interest. Nothing a friend says, not even the time of day, is ever purely objective.

Carl Rakosi, it is said, stopped writing in 1941. "He had become disillusioned with the state of our society . . . began to write again three years ago . . ."

Don't you believe it. The artist produces, whatever the hard times, worldly, personal, real or imagined. Emily Dickinson — surely her days were dark, for 30 years in unconsummated love. If Frost hadn't left New Hampshire, he may never have seen his poems in a book, but among his effects we'd have found "Stopping by Woods."

MEN WERE starving and the poet gave us "The People, Yes." They were wallowing in an orgy of legalized murder, and he gave us "Four Quartets." And Rakosi, those years until now, when he repaired to the privacy of a wooded glen, a room, a crowded bar, there they were — he couldn't help himself — the pen in his hand, and, beneath the inked nib, a note pad, a journal, a paper napkin.

Poets will write, until science endows the machine with a soul. Then men will be gods, under President Zeus and First Lady Hera. And the computer will compose hymns of praise.

R. P. JOHNSON is a novelist.

William Carlos Williams

The American Background

MIKE WEAVER

Lecturer in American Literature, University of Exeter

CAMBRIDGE

At the University Press

1971

as to what degree of aesthetic agreement there was among the shareholders. George Oppen summarised it as follows:[1]

> We were all very much concerned with poetic form, and form not merely as texture, but as the shape that makes a poem possible to grasp. (Would we all have thought that a satisfactory way to put it?) 'Objectivist' meant, not an objective viewpoint, but to objectify the poem, to make the poem an object. Meant form.

Zukofsky's Program offered 'sincerity' or clarity of detail on the one hand, and 'objectification' or the making of the poetic object on the other. The first was related to Imagism's unblurred image; objectivism also stressed the visual apperception of reality. The second was related to the geniunely new concern with aural movement as the configuration of a poem.

Photographic Imagism

In the Objectivist Program the first lexical definition of 'objective' was taken from optics: 'The lens brings the rays from an object to a focus.'[2] The process by which images are produced on specially prepared surfaces, by means of an *objectif* through which light passes, provided an underlying analogy for the new poetry. Photography as an art, as well as a mechanical process, played an extremely important part in the revived emphasis on the image.

Williams' relations with the 'straight' photographers of the Stieglitz school had always been close. In 1923 he had met Charles Sheeler, the photographer and painter, for the first time, at Matthew Josephson's house,[3] in Grantwood days, when the influence of Stieglitz at the famous Photo-Secession Gallery at 291 Fifth Avenue was at its height. But in 1929 there was a new, and special opportunity for Williams to review the work of Stieglitz and Paul Strand in the very gallery which Stieglitz had told Williams he had named for *In The American Grain*. In the spring of 1932 a Stieglitz retrospective show and a show by Strand were presented at An American Place, which was opened in 1929. In July 1932 Williams recommended to Zukofsky the Stieglitz show and one of the European photographers at the Julien Levy Gallery.[4]

[1] Letter from George Oppen to Mary Ellen Solt, post-marked 18 February 1961.
[2] *Poetry* XXXVII, 5 (February 1931), 268.
[3] Letter from Matthew Josephson to the author, 29 January 1964.
[4] Letter to Louis Zukofsky, 17 February 1932 (CtY).

two local Democratic candidates.[1] As the campaign of 1931–2 approached he dug into his files once more and sent his poem to Louis Zukofsky, who chided him for his naivety in believing in a mythic democracy. Williams defended himself claiming that he had at one time considered an ironic ending for his poem, and had rejected it: 'I wanted to say "If this is all impossible, as you may see at once that it is, what then?"–.'[2]

His younger friends, however, were of another mind. They believed that a perfect political system was a matter for intellect not emotion. There was a clear note of determinism in that part of the Objectivist poetry programme which expressed a 'Desire for what is objectively perfect, inextricably the direction of historic and contemporary particulars.'[3] Zukofsky's acceptance of Marx at that time was an expression of his interest in dialectics. As Carl Rakosi wrote later: 'The quotations from Marx and Lenin in his work always seemed to me to be there for a literary purpose, somewhat like Thomist ideas in a religious poet.'[4] But, nevertheless, the Objectivist anthology in *Poetry* contained a poem by Whittaker Chambers. Of the other Objectivists, George Oppen had a Populist grounding in Sandburg, and Charles Reznikoff's subjects were often taken from the Lower East Side.

Just how swiftly Objectivism as a minor aesthetic sensation gave way to the rise of proletarianism in American writing can best be judged by the fate of the second series of Williams' *Contact*. When the publishers became interested in the new radicalism, and Norman Macleod undertook the editorship of a fourth issue of *Contact* on proletarian writing, Williams became positively unconcerned in the magazine's future. According to Macleod, he was just not interested in proletarian literature.[5]

It was just at this point that Fred Miller had first begun to correspond with Williams. At once Miller asked him to produce, against a deadline, a short story for each issue of his new magazine *Blast*, named not for the London magazine edited by Wyndham Lewis, but

[1] Letter to Ezra Pound, 16 October 1936 (CtY).
[2] Letter to Louis Zukofsky, 15 July 1931 (CtY).
[3] *Poetry* XXXVII, 5 (February 1931), 268.
[4] Letter to the author, 3 December 1966. Williams himself spoke of 'the poetic and theoretical solidity of Marxist teaching' (*Selected Essays*, p. 216).
[5] *Golden Goose* III, 4 (May 1952), 161; *A Year Magazine*, Section Two (1933), 14.

If Williams saw the first issue of *The Glebe*, the book magazine which published Pound's *Des Imagistes* in 1914, he would have found ample precedent for his own strike passage in 'The Wanderer'. Adolf Wolff, the proletarian poet, had self-explanatory titles like 'On Seeing the Garment Strikers March', 'To Arturo Giovannitti', 'Elizabeth Gurley Flynn', and 'The Revolt of the Ragged'.[1]

As an egoist Williams was committed to owning himself by the thoroughly middle-class habit of working for money and acquiring property. In the early twenties he was sending sums of money to a destitute writer, Emanuel Carnevali, as was Harriet Monroe, to whom he wrote:[2]

> Give all your goods to feed the poor! It is a subtle hypocrisy which the world has not yet explored. I myself have been the subject of charity in small ways, the charity of fate etc. that were it not for a yellow dog's constitution I would be all dead instead of moribund. Bah.
>
> Then again there are those who pose as mighty because they have nothing. Pride will find a coat somewhere. Intelligence is a bible in itself. Debs is the only hero.

Debs was in jail having just polled nearly a million votes as presidential candidate of the Socialist Party. He was in prison because he refused to support entry into the First War. Williams himself was evidently in two minds although, unlike Debs, he took the Allied position as soon as war was declared; an action he repeated in the Second World War.[3] When he said that if war came America would have to fight (as fight Williams' sons did), he nevertheless toasted the memory of Eugene Debs.[4] Debs, it seems, was doubly associated in his mind – with non-interventionism and socialism.

As we have seen, Williams wrote a 'Democratic Party Poem' in support of the campaign of 1928–9. In his letters he exhorted his friends to vote for Al Smith. Later, in 1936, he acted as campaign manager for

1 *The Glebe* I, 1 (September 1913).
2 Letter to Harriet Monroe, 13 January 1921 (ICN).
3 Williams signed the League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism's manifesto against entry into the war (*Partisan Review* VI, 5 [Fall 1939], 125–7). A few months earlier he had favoured a military alliance with 'the democratic powers, England, France and Russia' (*New Republic* LXXXXIX, 1828 [28 June 1939], 209), but this was before the infamous Russo-Nazi pact, which thoroughly disillusioned the liberals.
4 *Partisan Review* VI, 4 (Summer 1939), 44.

he had not read Whitehead at that time,[1] although he omits to mention that Williams, with whom he was then corresponding on poetic matters, had. It is interesting to note that of all the poets represented in the anthology, including the editor himself, so far as we can now tell only Williams had a first-hand knowledge of Whitehead's term.

Nevertheless, there was some degree of acquiescence among the poets of the anthology in *Poetry*. Carl Rakosi says that the title was approved by him before it was used,[2] and it may be assumed that in the short time available before the deadline of publication Zukofsky cleared it with some others. For most of the poets concerned it was an embarrassment to be associated with an aesthetic programme at all, although Zukofsky had clearly offered one; they tended to regard the anthology exactly as Miss Monroe had wished, as a sign of collaboration.

Before long objectivism became associated with this spirit of collaboration in the practical form of a press. When George Oppen returned from France, where he had had experience of private presses publishing among other things Williams' *A Novelette in Prose* and *An 'Objectivists' Anthology*, he agreed with Reznikoff that if they were to launch a new series of books from New York it would be wasteful not to take advantage of whatever momentum the name had gathered. Thus the various suggestions made during the summer of 1933, 'The Writers-Publishers Inc.', 'Writers Extant', 'Cooperative Publishers', were rejected in favour of The Objectivist Press.

The first book to be issued under its imprint was, fittingly, Williams' *Collected Poems* in 1934. The author advanced 250 dollars towards the cost of production and was later repaid in full; Rakosi, Oppen, René Taupin, Tibor Serly, and a Frank Heineman, one of Zukofsky's students at the University of Wisconsin, contributed between them a comparable sum. Reznikoff contributed the heavy postage, and Zukofsky the heavy labour. Thereafter, the poets paid individually for their own books.[3]

The Objectivist Press was therefore a co-operative publishing venture rather than an aesthetic movement. But still the question remains

[1] A remark volunteered at a talk given at Yale University, 8 March 1967.
[2] Letter from Carl Rakosi to the author, 3 December 1966.
[3] Letter from Louis Zukofsky to Mary Ellen Solt, 24 February 1961.

William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound, photographed by Richard Avedon, Rutherford, N.J., July 1958

Donatello, or of deChirico, or of Kenneth Shopen "mean" a more novel and still unconventionalized grouping of qualities, some of which are shared with the dictionary concept *horse*, others with the perceptual qualities of live horses that the artist has seen, while some have closest affinity with subtle forms of emotion otherwise inexpressible.

Thus the platitude that great art is universal, although true in a special sense, is misleading: for the integral meaning of a work of art (whatever its component meanings may be) cuts across experience in a different dimension from that of any logical universal whatever, and establishes its own quality of universality—a more concrete and more alive universality than that represented by any dictionary definition. An analogous distinction may be observed between the concrete universality of the cross as an integral religious symbol and any theological exposition of what the cross represents; or between the ideal of justice as it appears to men who are sacrificing their lives to uphold it and the idea of justice as employed in a discussion of theoretical ethics.

6. *Principle of assertorial tone:* that statements—for we here consider the molecular order of meanings—vary with respect to the manner in which they are susceptible to affirmation and denial, ranging all the way from "heavy" assertorial tone—which characterizes the literal statement, the proposition—to "light" association or semiaffirmed tension between two or more symbols. A poetic statement differs from a literal statement not, as Dr. Richards used to maintain, in that the one has a merely subjective, the other an objective reference—at least this is an unnecessary and generally irrelevant difference; but in their manner of asserting. There are differences of what may be called *assertorial weight*. A literal statement asserts heavily. It can do so because its terms are solid. It must do so because we are practical busy creatures who want to know just where we stand. A poetic statement, on the other hand, consisting as it does in a conjunction or association of plurisigns, has no such solid foundation, and affirms with varying degrees of lightness.

A stanza from Carl Rakosi's *A Journey Far Away* offers a syntactical illumination of the principle.

> An ideal
> like a canary
> singing in the dark
> for appleseed and barley

Is the poet making a statement here or is he not? If so, the syntax is not quite adequate: the copula *is* needed for its completion. But try inserting it, and see how fatally that little word destroys the original quality of affirmation! "An ideal is like a canary singing in the dark for appleseed and barley." Note what has been done. Not only has the reader-response been altered through a lessening of the pleasure with which the utterance is received: more than that, the very nature of the affirmation has been changed. This prose version, we feel, overstates its case, it affirms too heavily: no ideal can be so much like a canary as all that! Rakosi's way of singing the matter did not belabor the point; it suggested only that between an ideal and a canary there might be a slight and lovely connection, too tenuous to be expressed by the harsh little word *is*. So delicate an affirmation does not seriously jostle our other beliefs; we can accept it as true without mental inconvenience. But the literal statement, by reason of its assertive heaviness, falsifies.

Assertorial weight should not be confused with the strength or force of a poetic statement. Take, for instance, Christina Rossetti's well-known quatrain:

> My heart is like a singing bird
> Whose nest is in a water-shoot;
> My heart is like an apple-tree
> Whose boughs are bent with thick-set
> fruit . . .[6]

If some literal-minded reader should object to the second comparison on the ground that the differences between hearts and apple-trees are more pronounced than their resemblances, we might justly dismiss him as unduly obtuse. In terms of the present analysis he would be making a statement of full assertorial weight which is nevertheless ridiculously weak, contrasting painfully with the simple eloquent force of Miss Rossetti's assertorially lighter statement.

Suppose, again, that the graceful compliment to a lady expressed implicitly by Herrick—"Her eyes the glow-worm lend thee, / The shooting stars attend thee . . ."[7] were made explicit and that the lady's charms were set forth with descriptive literalness. Not only the grace, but more subtly the central poetic meaning of the utterance, would be destroyed.

[6] *A Birthday*, 1–4.
[7] *The Night-Piece, to Julia*, 1–2.

About People

By LOUIS GREENE

WHO SAID POETRY, JEWISH SERVICE DO NOT MIX?

Callman Rawley, 4451 S. Colfax, is well-known in Minneapolis as director of the Jewish Family and Children's Service, which he has headed for 23 years, but thousands of poetry lovers throughout the United States and England know him as a first-rate poet who has had two volumes published and is working on a third.

Callman Rawley

Rawley uses the pen name of **Carl Rakosi** when he publishes poems, and his second volume, "Amulet," came out in October. It was published by New Directions, in $4.50 and $1.50 editions. To the publishers' pleasant surprise, it has sold 1,550 copies, 300 of them overseas, and is still going well. Rawley's retirement from his social work post is set for Dec. 1, after which he plans to devote full time to writing. "I may try my hand at play-writing in addition to poetry," he said, "but I hate novels."

His first book, "Selected Poems," was published in 1941, after which, as a New York Times reviewer put it, "he dropped from sight in disgust with society and a dedication to his family and social work." It went on to credit "Rakosi" with "intensely individual lyricism impossible to continue in the wake of the depression and World War II."

An Englishman, Andrew Crozier, induced Rawley in 1964 to resume poetry writing. He had checked with James Laughlin, the "Rakosi" publisher at New Directions, who had lost track of Rawley after mailing him a check in St. Louis and picked up a rumor that the poet had died behind the Iron Curtain. But Rawley was very much alive and, at the urging of English readers who valued his work of 25 years before very highly, he went to work on "Amulet." His third book, Rawley said, will consist of 50 per cent older poems to be revised and 50 per cent new ones.

Fortunately for Minneapolis, Rawley did not die behind the Iron Curtain. He went from his home in Kenosha, Wis., to earn a bachelor's degree at the University of Wisconsin, followed by a master's in educational psychology and another in social work at the University of Pennsylvania. He has completed class work for a doctorate at the University of Minnesota. In his early years, Rawley knocked around Chicago and New York and worked on a ship.

"Social work was the only job available," he said, so he joined the Cleveland Family Service, then took a post with the New York Jewish Board of Guardians, a clinical agency for Jewish delinquents. "I wanted to write," Rawley said, "and for a year I struggled to do both, but in 1939 I stopped writing to devote full time to social work."

He admitted "I dropped from sight" in a literary sense, but in 1965 Rawley resumed writing poetry. Last April he was invited by Prof. Lawrence Dembo, editor of the scholarly "Contemporary Literature" journal, to go east to address a graduate seminar and give a two-hour taped interview. Dembo also spoke for two hours, and an article will be published from the tapes. In August, Rawley will go to Yaddo, near Saratoga Springs, for a five-week retreat where writers and artists can work alone. "I can't even take my wife, **Leah,** along," Rawley said.

HIS WORK with the JFCS has been very rewarding, Rawley said. "Our staff," he said, "is about the same as when I took over in 1945. The Jewish people are unchanged. We have five case workers, one director of case work, a vocational service director and a counselor, a workshop manager and a clerical staff.

"The refugee load was tremendous in 1945. We received two or three families to absorb each year, and only one was sent back. Those were Egyptians who spoke French and were encouraged to settle in France. Others from Egypt left because they couldn't stand our rigorous climate.

"But for those who stayed, we obtained paid and volunteer teachers to instruct them in English, then found housing, jobs and a synagogue and social life for each one. They improved themselves by finding new jobs at a very early date, and most of them now live in suburbs. Some went to California and some moved south. Our Egyptian Jews are now in Georgia." Rawley said Hebrew came in handy with Romanian refugees and French was needed to talk to some, as many did not know Yiddish.

"Now," he said, "there is a strong trend toward marriage counseling. Couples are coming in with severe problems. Up to now, children had been our leading problem. We now take whole families in for counseling. We tape the interviews, then play them back so the family can hear what it is doing to each other. Group counseling also is very exciting."

Rawley writes more than poetry. He has published more than 50 papers in Social Work journals. He is a past president of the National Association of Social Workers' Southern Minnesota chapter, and the Family Service Association of America named him chairman of its committee on long range planning for social agencies.

Last summer, after three British poets reviewed "Amulet" in the literary magazine, "Grosseteste Review," Rawley went to England to spend two days as guest of a Cambridge professor. They tape-recorded Rawley's reading of nearly all the poems in his book and are now circulating it among British writers who add their own comments to the tape. One copy will remain at Cambridge and Rawley will receive one.

Mrs. Rawley is an artist and sculptor who attended Hunter College. Her sculpture decorates their home. The Rawleys, who are members of Temple Israel, have one daughter, **Mrs. John (Barbara) Ebin,** 5021 Schaefer Road, and a son, **George,** who is a sophomore in the University of Minnesota Medical school. Barbara, while studying humanities at the University, was chosen Miss Minneapolis and ROTC queen in 1960. She is now the mother of two daughters —**Jennifer,** 3, and **Julie,** 1. Barbara and George graduated from Washburn High and the Temple's religious school.

After December, Rawley will switch his attention from social ills to rhyme and reason.

*

A poem entitled "I Had to Pull the Little Maple Tree," written by **Callman Rawley** under his pen name of Carl Rakosi for "Stony Brook," a new international poetry magazine, has won him a $500 cash award from the National Endowment for the Arts. The award also includes designation of the poem for publication in volume 3 of The American Literary Anthology, to be printed by Viking Press early next year. Rawley wrote the poem, with others which he is planning to include in a forthcoming book of his poetry, at Yaddo in Saratoga, N. Y., a summer retreat for writers.

Mr. Rawley

Another honor which has come Rawley's way is his appointment by the University of Wisconsin as writer-in-residence for the fall semester. Rawley was executive director of the Jewish Family and Children's Service in Minneapolis for many years until he retired last January to devote full time to writing poetry and giving public readings at universities.

OPEN PLACES

Number 23 Spring/Summer 1977

Carl Rakosi, *Ex Cranium Night.* Black Sparrow, 1975. $4.00
Charles Reznikoff, *Poems: 1918-1936.* Black Sparrow, 1975. $4.00.

Carl Rakosi's *Ex Cranium Night* and the late Charles Reznikoff's *Poems 1918-1936* are strong collections by two of the strongest voices associated with Objectivism. Beyond their association with Objectivism, Rakosi and Reznikoff have in common the ability to notice and report both events of history and events of speech in a language almost without ornament, and in a voice that represents a classical Judaic point of view in contemporary American language.

Ex Cranium Night, a selection of recent poems and prose, is Rakosi's third volume since he began writing poetry again in the middle 1960s. Rakosi's prose — especially the "Day Book" sections on poetry and the writing of individual poems — provides some valuable notes on this poet's point of view and laconic style:

> The special characteristic of the very short poem is that the reader has to be hit before he realizes he's been shot. But for this to happen, the author, in the writing of it, also has to be hit before he realizes he's been shot.

The short, quick poems are very often successful because Rakosi is unusually good at making public events out of his observations of ordinary things and the extraordinary ways that people talk about them. Rakosi makes his most lasting impressions by quickly engaging the eye and ear; impressions very much like the one he describes in "Poetry":

> Its nature is to look
> both absolute and mortal,
> as if a boy had passed through
> or the imprint of his foot
> has been preserved
> unchanged under the ash of Herculaneum.

"The Weightlifter," one of Rakosi's "Americana" poems, is a quick humorous statement about a sport that conjures up associations with slow strain and bulk:

> When a man's
> sweat
> is strong
> enough to repel
> mosquitoes,
> boy,
> that's character.

What I like best about these poems is the clear sound of language and experience meeting when they are read out loud. The language is so precise that even the most laconic poems take on a dramatic voice that I would not have believed possible when I first saw them on the printed page. In "Israel," and in many other poems in this collection, the voice is powerful not because it is talking about an event or in a language that the reader has never heard before, but because it is speaking the unadorned truth:

> I have stumbled on the ancient voice of honesty
> and tremble
> at the voice of my people

Seamus Cooney has collected the early poems of Charles Reznikoff, from *Rythms*, which appeared in 1918, to *Separate Way*, which the Objectivist Press issued in 1936. The early poems come from Reznikoff's observations of Jewish immigrant life in New York, but the tone of these poems is so strongly Judaic that the scene might just as easily be a Russian village or the Wailing Wall:

> Showing a torn sleeve, with stiff and shaking fingers the old man
> pulls off a bit of the baked apple, shiny with sugar,
> eating with reverence, food the great comforter.

Reznikoff's attention to detail and grave tone of voice turn many of the poems into powerful family and historical dramas:

> Since Potiphar made you his overseer,
> he has been blessed in house and field;
> all that he has is in your hand,
> and he knows of nothing but the bread that he eats.

In other poems, the spare language and the depth of observation, speak out with a wisdom that seems to place the ancient and the contemporary in one final space:

> How shall we mourn you who are killed and wasted,
> sure that you would not die with your work unended,
> as if the iron scythe in the grass stops for a flower?

The historical poems are set in ancient Israel, Poland, Spain, and other countries, including America, where Jews were set apart from the rest of the population. There is a sense in these poems of the poet as story-teller or teller of the history of his people. The poem "Samuel" contains the lines printed as an elegy for Reznikoff at the front of this volume:

> Whatever unfriendly stars and comets do,
> whatever stormy heavens are unfurled,
> my spirit be like fire, in this, too,
> that all the straws and rubbish of the world
> only feed its flame.

Those lines, I think, point to the central difference between Rakosi and Reznikoff. Where Rakosi seeks to preserve the imprint of a sound, or observation, or a moment of time, Reznikoff collects many details and voices into one long sequence, built poem by poem, until the individual observations seem to become part of the same work.

Seamus Cooney's editor's note announces the intention of Black Sparrow Press to bring the bulk of Charles Reznikoff's work back into print, and one hopes they will continue also to make Carl Rakosi's new work available. They are two poets who deserve a far larger audience than they have so far received, and their work will have something of value to say for generations to come.

Bertram H. Minkin

Town Toppers

HERE'S A QUICK LOOK AT:

IF SOCIAL WORKERS have trouble getting people into that field, they might borrow some recruiting posters from the navy.

Callman Rawley

The navy's most famous attraction—the chance to see the world—applies also to the field of social work, it would seem from the experience of Callman Rawley, executive director of Jewish Family & Children's Service.

Before he came to the local Community Chest agency 10 years ago, he had worked or studied variously at Cleveland, Ohio, New York, Pittsburgh, Pa., Boston, Mass., Chicago, Houston and Austin, Texas, Milwaukee, Wis., New Orleans, La., and St. Louis, Mo.

Berlin born, Rawley came to this country in 1910 at age 6. The family's first American home was in Chicago, but most of his growing years were spent in Kenosha, Wis., and he earned B.A. and M.A. degrees at the University of Wisconsin. Originally a teacher, Rawley was on the faculties of Tulane and the University of Texas. After the professional change he went to the University of Pennsylvania for a professional degree.

He was married in 1939 at New York, where he was on the staff of the Jewish Family Service association. His artist wife, Leah, has contributed to one of the chief Rawley hobbies, art collecting. His current No. 1 hobby—hi-fi—satisfies musical taste from A to A, classical Aida to jazz Armstrong.

Although Rawley's first work was as an industrial psychologist, most of his professional attention has focused on research and counseling youngsters.

That, possibly, is why the forthcoming annual meeting of Jewish Family and Children's Service will have a quartet of teen-agers on its program April 17 at Adath Jeshurun synagogue. The youths will present their slant on life's problems, and a panel of social workers and psychiatrists will answer.

Daughter Barbara, 14, and son, George, 10, make up the Rawley family. Their home is at 4451 Colfax avenue S.

RaKosi's legal name is Callman Rawley

Letters

Dear Editor:

What a pity that a man of Carl Rakosi's (June *Preview*) potential and audience holds such a restricted view on today's poetry. His thoughts can only limit and confine one of the most rapidly expanding forms of literary expression.

He seems to be of the idea that poetry is of no use except as a purveyor of beauty: that its only measureable use is in the classroom where it can be studied as to its period, type and structure. He gives the distinct impression that poetry is only good unto itself; that it has no influence to reach out and become a means to an end beyond itself.

When expounding on the value of poetry, Rakosi mentions only beauty as that which draws poetry readers. He goes on to say that this beauty is esthetic as compared to functional, and when asked whether poetry affected society or not, he emphatically replied ". . . that it has absolutely no affect whatsoever." He insists that poetry must not meddle in contemporary events, because ". . . that's not what poetry is about." "Poets are not supposed to be guides to the world," says he.

Why not? Are poets supposed to remain behind the garden walls writing about the beauty of trees, just as are women to stay in the kitchen, blacks in the ghetto, Indians on the reservation?

Is it the case the poetry is valuable only as an *oject d'art?* Haven't we had enough of *art for art's sake* yet? Are there still many who deny art's potential for shaping our societies? *Paris n'est pas une musée.*

And neither is poetry something to be put up on a pedestal where only the esthetically beautiful dare go.

Poetry has infinite power to express beauty and warmth and all of what is warm and pleasing. But no less is its prowess in illustrating cold-hearted hatred, lies and disgust. It can fill the hearts of angry men and street fighters as well as lovers and gentle holders of tenderness. Its potential is limited only by those who use it.

Poetry today, in its every form, is a vital link in our chain of social communication, and we must not allow it to be hampered by anyone's short-sighted and antiquidated visions of its power and scope.

Drew Darling Mpls.

Dear Editor:

The quotations in the profile of me in the June PREVIEW have given reader Drew Darling the impression that I want to keep poets on the old reservation. Not at all. I myself am not there. Poets should indeed write about **whatever** moves them, but if they're going to write poetry that people will want to read more than once, they have to meet certain criteria. Beauty is one; depth of significance is another. By beauty is not meant pretty subject matter, however, but beauty of the poem **as a poem** . . . i.e., beauty of expression, of form, of imagination, of tone, of cadence, of the poem's voice, etc. I used the tree as an analogy only to show that beauty is perceptible before any mental extrapolations are put on it. It follows that when beauty is defined in this way, the subject matter can be **anything** . . . provided the poet can endow it with depth of significance. I have never believed that beauty by itself is enough.

When I said that poetry has no effect on society, I was referring to the fact that a book of poetry normally sells less than two thousand copies in all and these go, in the main, to other poets and would-be poets and to public libraries where they are drawn out by other poets and would-be poets.

Should poets have an influence on society? Only if their poetry shows an extraordinary intellect and an extraordinary social maturity and judgment, a combination hard to find. The fact that a person writes fine poetry does not endow him with anything special in that line. Suppose the world had listened and shaped its course by the poetry of Pound, Eliot, Cummings, Stevens, Jeffers, Crane, Rilke, Cavafy, Valery, Plath, Ted Hughes, etc., etc., what kind of guides would they have made? God help us! Luckily for them, they are not judged on that basis. On the other hand, the world would have benefited greatly if it had listened to Whitman. And there was also Bertolt Brecht, whose poetry meets Mr. Darling's requirements nicely: it does, in his words, illustrate "cold-hearted hatred, lies and disgust" and could have, if it did not, in its time, "filled the hearts of angry men and street fighters." But what makes Brecht's poetry worth re-reading today is not that but its excellence as poetry and the brilliant clarity with which it proves the existence of cruelty, cynicism and corruption. It is this precision which gives it depth of significance. In other words, his poems meet the criteria for durable poetry and are art objects in the strictest sense.

So I agree with Mr. Darling that there are all kinds of subjects in poetry. Furthermore, if there are young people today . . . and I would not put it past them . . . who are neither poets or would-be poets and who read poetry seriously and derive from it a significance that "fills the hearts of angry men and street fighters," I would be delighted. It has not been my good fortune to meet such people. As for the idea that poetry is "a vital link in our chain of social communication," I'm afraid that's merely a theoretical projection.

Carl Rakosi
Minneapolis

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CARL RAKOSI

CARL RAKOSI

Q. I wonder whether we could begin, Mr. Rakosi, with biography. You consider yourself a Midwesterner, don't you?

A. Actually, I was born in Berlin, Germany. My parents were Hungarian Jews who happened to be living there at the time. When I was a year old, the family moved back to Hungary and I lived in Baja, a small town in the south, until I was six. And then my father, my brother, and I came to this country—that was in 1910. We came first to Chicago, then moved to Gary, Indiana, and finally wound up in Kenosha, Wisconsin. So Kenosha was really my hometown. That's where I was brought up and went to school. Then I went to the University of Wisconsin and got a degree in English and a master's in educational psychology.

Q. How did you end up in social work?

A. It was sheer accident. This was a period of severe economic distress and it was extremely difficult to get a job anywhere. I happened to be talking to somebody who was also looking for a job and he said, "Why don't you go into social work?" I didn't even know what it was. He didn't either, but he told me there was an office in Chicago where they were hiring people, so I went down there. This was the American Association of Social Workers office, and if you were alive and had a degree, they hired you, there was such a shortage of personnel. And if you were a man, they spread out the red carpet for you. I started out with an agency in Cleveland. I had not by any means given up the idea of writing; I thought I could do both. But I fell in love with social work and that was my undoing as a poet, in a sense. I didn't actually give up the idea of trying to write poetry until the

late 'thirties when I was fooling around with different things. I left social work for a while and came back to the University. . . . I thought maybe if I went into psychiatry, this would give me something I could do and still write. Anyhow, social work just drew me very strongly. But it wasn't until the late 'thirties that it seemed impossible for me to be a social worker and to write at the same time.

Q. That's very interesting because the dust jacket on *Amulet* states that you stopped writing because you were disillusioned with a world in which poetry no longer had a place.

A. That is another element, too. During the 'thirties I was working in New York—this was during the very depth of the Depression—and any young person with any integrity or intelligence had to become associated with some left-wing organization. You just couldn't live with yourself if you didn't. So I got caught up very strongly in the whole Marxian business. I took very literally the basic Marxian ideas about literature having to be an instrument for social change, for expressing the needs and desires of large masses of people. And believing that, I couldn't write poetry, because the poetry that I could write could not achieve these ends.

Q. Perhaps we can talk for a while about the kind of poetry you had been writing. I know that your work appeared in Louis Zukofsky's *"Objectivists" Anthology* and that you are presently considered to be one of the objectivists *per se*. Williams mentions in his *Autobiography* that he got together with Zukofsky, Charles Reznikoff, George Oppen, and Basil Bunting to launch the movement around 1928 or so. I was wondering whether you participated in any of the discussions.

A. That is not correct. Williams did not get together with those men to found the objectivist movement. And I doubt whether it is a movement in the sense in which that word is generally used. The term really originated with Zukofsky, and he pulled it out of a hat. It was not an altogether accurate way of designating the few people assembled in the anthology and also in the "Objectivist" issue of *Poetry*. But he wanted some kind of name, and he checked out the term with me and, I assume, with some of the other people. The name was all right, but I told him I didn't think some of the poems in the anthology were "objectivist" or very objective in meaning. He said, "Well, that's true," but I've forgotten the reasons he gave for sticking to the name. It didn't matter. But Williams had very little to do with it. He was included, but it didn't come from his initiative.

Q. I see. Well, in any case, would you say that you could write poetry that was "objectivist"—whatever it meant—whereas you couldn't write poetry that was Marxist? And that finally because objectivist poetry had no social implications, it became meaningless to you, and that was perhaps one of the reasons you simply gave up poetry?

A. No, no. I never took my association with Zukofsky and the others that seriously. After all, I was living in the Middle West, except for a brief period in New York when I was seeing Zukofsky, and I didn't even know any of the other people.

Q. Did Zukofsky himself make an impression on you?

A. He came along at a time when it was very important for me to have someone like him around. I'd send him something to look at and it would come back with just a few comments, but they were always right on the nose. He seemed to know better than I what was true Rakosi and what was not. I really have a very warm feeling for Louis for this critical feedback. We had a most interesting correspondence. I still have his letters, incidentally, although I don't think Louis would want them revealed. They're very short, like some of his poems. If Louis could get something on a postage stamp, he'd do it.

Q. What about Zukofsky's poetry?

A. I believe it has a strong sense of form—it is very firmly structured; the interstitching, you might say, is extremely fine and stands up remarkably well. I also feel, however, that there are some self-defeating things in his work; his personal self, his humanity, seldom comes through the way it really is. I find this regrettable because fundamentally I think he is a warm person. The many ellipses in his work bother me because they represent, perhaps, his subconscious way of preventing this human part from coming out. On the other hand, there is a real dignity there and a compact solidity. I wish, however, that Zukofsky had never met Pound. I think that maybe his direction would have been different.

Q. How so?

A. First, I had better admit that I believe that Pound's critical writing—particularly the famous "Don'ts" essay—is an absolute foundation stone of contemporary American writing. But in his own work I think he's been disastrous as a model, totally disastrous to younger writers. I'm thinking particularly of the *Cantos*, of its epic tone. What

was this based on, after all? On man's experiences? Certainly not. The experiences of men in the *Cantos* have only a highly specialized, idiosyncratic interest. On his view of the nature of man? Ridiculous! In Pound's view he is a boob or a crook or something equally bad. On his theoretical systems? His choices here are not even interesting. Why then an epic tone? Because of Pound's own personal need for supremacy, grandiosity. One has the feeling that everything was fed into his exciting lyrical machine to serve this purpose. It's not honest. He pretends that his material is epic when it is only a device to achieve grandiosity at the expense of the reader. All that pretense and double-dealing are nauseating to me. And irrelevant. People today are not heroic, and modern human nature is not epic. It's just human, and anything else is just playing games.

Q. And you believe that Zukofsky is grandiose?

A. No. Actually the long form of *A* is better suited to Louis than the shorter forms, since more of him comes through in it. But Pound has provided him with a large-scale model of unconnected fragments and has led him to believe that it's all right to make the most recondite, specialized references, as if it could be taken for granted that a literate reader would be familiar with them and have Pound's attitude towards them. If I'm reading a poem by Pound, why should I care what he read somewhere? It's of absolutely no interest to me.

Q. Don't you think he's able to make it interesting to you by putting it into a poem?

A. No, he's not. He pretends to know what he does not know and is contemptuous of all the boobs who don't understand his references and have not realized what is obvious to him; for example, that Confucius had all the answers. The final image that comes through in the *Cantos* is of a master of language and cadence, but the man who is speaking, the person, is preposterously grandiose. And a terrible example to others, who have a hard enough time keeping their own streak of grandiosity under control so as to be able to have an authentic encounter with a subject, without having a Lorelei chanting to them what they yearn to hear but know cannot be, that the road to greatness lies in grandiosity. But that's Pound's song, and once a person has been exposed to Pound's aura, it is difficult not to succumb. After all, who doesn't want to be great?

But there's a lot of this stuff around. Poetry gets judged, for

example, as great; greater than; not so great as; good but not great, etc. Also, from Pound's grandiosity it is only a short step to the bewitching notion—which, incidentally, Zukofsky is far too selective to fall for—that everything that comes into the mind is precious. The long poem thus becomes a necessity for some writers. Before they have learned how to write an authentic short poem, it is announced that they are at work on a long one—meaning they're on something really big. Which leads to an irrational, philistine system in which one had to feel apologetic about "Brightness falls from the air, / Queens have died young and fair" because it is only two lines long.

Q. Getting back to my original question, what kind of poetry did you hope to write?

A. Well, at first I was very much seduced by the elegance of language, the imaginative associations of words; I was involved in a language world—a little like the world of Wallace Stevens, who was an idol of mine during a certain period. But at the same time, another part of me did not get away from social reality. You'll find in the *Youthful Mockeries* section of *Amulet* a lot of scorn for what was going on in the social world. In my recent work I'm doing something different and for me very difficult, and that is to take something quite personal and turn it into poetry. After all, nobody is interested in Rakosi as a person; why should they be? It's a tremendous challenge, therefore, to see whether the person Rakosi and what is happening to him can be turned into poetry. Now *Americana* is different. In these poems I was fascinated by folklore and I was searching there for basic American types that have really influenced our thinking—and these types are in all of us in a way. I'm sorry I petered out on *Americana;* I was hoping to go on.

Q. I'd like to get back to the problem of an "imagined language world" in a moment, but in the meantime could you elaborate on what you were just saying about the *Americana* poems? Perhaps you could comment on *Americana 1* [*Amulet*, p. 38], that short piece about a pioneer who is asked why he's taking his gun into Indian country, since "If your time has come, you'll die anyway," and replies, "I know that, but it may be the Indian's time."

A. Well, who was the American settler, what was he really like? It seemed to me the truth about the pioneer was not that he was romantic, but that he was practical. His reply is very primitive and shrewd.

This is my own personal concept of what the pioneer must have been like, not in the way he appears in American folklore, of course, where he's made heroic.

Q. I had the idea that the poem was simply based on a punch line. But you are actually saying that one should reflect on the speaker who has made the utterance, rather than on the utterance itself.

A. Well, I think so. Although it's true I tried to pack a lot into that last line.

Q. But to get back to the main body of your poetry, in "Shore Line" you wrote, "This is the raw data. / A mystery translates it / into feeling and perception; / then imagination; / finally the hard / inevitable quartz / figure of will / and language." It seems to me that this is an indication of how you view the poetic process in general. Wouldn't this passage be in accord with what you were saying about an imagined language world?

A. I think that's true, though it's not the whole thing. The first draft of what I want to write will be pretty much raw data that's been changed around. Then I keep changing it around some more, but it's still raw data. It hasn't been converted yet to a . . . I would say a mystery changes it. I really mean a mystery because I don't know what it is that makes the conversion possible. I only know when I haven't done it. What is it in a person that doesn't let him be until he has transformed an experience, certain feelings and observations that are related to each other and suddenly strike him as important subject-matter? I don't know the answer.

Q. Well, actually I had in mind the state of some of the perceptions and images in the finished poem. "The Lobster," for instance, seems to be presenting raw data, although if you look at it carefully, it's not raw data by any means: "Eastern Sea, 100 fathoms, / green sand, pebbles, / broken shells. / Off Suno Saki 60 fathoms, / gray sand, pebbles, / bubbles rising. / . . . The fishery vessel *Ion* / drops anchor here / collecting / plankton smears and fauna."

A. Well, there are a lot of details here, but they're certainly not just raw data, they add up to the sea, the mystery and coldness of the sea. By the way, this poem has been reprinted more than any other; for some reason people have liked it. I really don't know why; in a way, it's less Rakosi than almost any other of my poems because it doesn't

have people in it. What I was trying to project here is a depersonalized something which is the sea.

Q. What about the person of the speaker as he sees each of these items brought up from the bottom? Isn't the reader viewing this "raw material" through the eyes of a man located on the fishery vessel?

A. That's so, but what I was trying to do was to write a poem without the poet.

Q. Do you believe that's possible?

A. It's possible (perhaps only relatively), though I really don't enjoy doing it that way.

Q. The poem called "Time to Kill" seems to raise the same questions. It seems to be giving raw data, objective description—though, when you consider it, the observations are clearly those of a man with time to kill, someone who is bored, perhaps.

A. That's right, up to a point. This was a hot summer afternoon and you know how everything thickens and slows up when it's hot, so that one's perceptions of what's going on become slower and denser. Then along comes an old man into the scene, and I felt and tried to convey a bit of pathos there.

Q. But you would say then that there is a human subject, a perceiver?

A. Oh yes, it's very different from "The Lobster" in that respect. And "Time to Kill" was written recently, whereas "The Lobster" was written thirty years ago. I couldn't have written "Time to Kill" as a young man.

Q. Why not?

A. I wasn't related to reality in that way then.

Q. What do you mean?

A. A lifetime of involvement with people in social work came between these two periods. This might make me a poorer poet in some ways because I'm not so completely subsumed by language as I was then. I'm equally interested in subject-matter.

Q. You mentioned Stevens before. By my calculations your poem

"Homage to Stevens" must be an early one since it seems to be chiefly a linguistic exercise.

A. Yes, very early. If I had had more poems to put into *Amulet* I would have left that one out.

Q. Why so?

A. It doesn't really say anything. I was just enjoying the pleasures of the images and the language. I don't know what kind of experience Stevens started with, but if you take one of his poems and try to understand it as a man saying something, you're lost. Its beauties are something utterly different. He's killed all subject-matter.

Q. Would you say that Williams has done the same thing?

A. Oh no, Williams had a great respect for subject-matter.

Q. Well, *Paterson* is concerned with a human subject and a human world, but I had in mind some of the earlier poems that were simply formal presentations, matters of perception again.

A. Perhaps, but with Williams you always have the feeling that there's a man there talking. With Stevens, you don't get that feeling. He's transformed himself into something wonderful and beautiful, but he's not a man talking.

Q. But you must admit that some of your own subjects are not always immediately apparent. That poem called "The Gnat," for example, or "The City, 1925."

A. I had a little trouble with the gnat poem, too, when I reread it. The subject-matter really is winter—if you will imagine the rigors and the enormity of winter (the winter is especially enormous in Minnesota). And what is one person? He's really a gnat. That's me, a gnat in winter.

Q. Well, what are the "six rivers / and six wenches / the twelve / victories" in the lines that end the poem?

A. I can't answer that. I may have left the subject of winter in the middle of the poem and gone on to something else, in which case the two halves may not go together, I'm ashamed to say. Or the six rivers and six wenches, which I would consider twelve victories anytime, anywhere, may have flashed through my mind because of the winter,

to triumph over it, as it were, and so on. In any case, I am not comfortable with the poem's ellipses.

Q. Don't you have another poem called "January of a Gnat," which repeats some of the images?

A. That is one of my first poems. It's all imagery, really. The subject is really my own imagination playing around with what winter felt like.

Q. What winter felt like from a highly imaginative point of view, not what it felt like literally.

A. Right, right.

Q. Does "The City, 1925" also have a subject, even though the images don't seem to have any logical connection between them?

A. Well, let me say this about it. I'm a young man of twenty-two, timid and lonely, and I come to New York from a small town and it's overwhelming—the immensity, the profusion, the infinite variety, the people. The poem is an effort to come to terms with this overwhelming impression. Since this is my first exposure, there are all kinds of objects to be described—objects which have no connection with each other. The connection is through my perception, through my receiving of them in their tremendous multiplicity.

Q. So once again the perceiver becomes the important element in the poem.

A. That's true. But intuitively I intended to keep these objects as intact as possible, to keep their integrity intact. So there is this element of an adherence to the integrity of the object that makes it different from mere description. At the same time, you are right. The real subject of the poem is not the objects themselves, interesting though they are, but what this young man is experiencing in their presence. What is important is that the integrity of both the subject and the object be kept. That is, I respect the external world—there is much in it that is beautiful if you look at it hard. I don't want to contaminate that; it has its own being; its own beauty and interest that should not be corrupted or distorted. But so does the poet have his own being.

Q. What would you say are some of the corrupting forces on perception of the actual world in its intrinsic beauty?

A. Well, here let me speak as a psychologist. There's the strongest

kind of pull in a poet against subject-matter—in fact, against writing a poem at all. No psychologist understood this as well as Otto Rank. He called this force the counter-will. This force is always around when the urge to write is felt, and is a match for it, and often more than a match. The fine hand of this counter-devil is evident, of course, in a writer's procrastination, but also operates behind the scenes in other more subtle and devious ways whenever one is evading subject-matter, by being rhetorical or elliptical, for example. On the surface this looks innocent, as if it were just a literary matter, but if the writer himself thinks so, it just means that its protective purpose has been achieved and he has been conned by his counter-devil. In the process, he may make something as good, or even better, but the fact remains that he did not retain the integrity of his original impulse, he had to appease or deceive his counter-will with a substitute. You can see this counter-devil is a very live fellow to me.

Q. What about the matter of abstraction? This brings us back to Pound's "A Few Don'ts."

A. Abstraction, of course, is the most common deadly offender. When you write about something as though it were a principle or a concept or a generalization, you have in that moment evaded it, its specificity, its earthly life. You are talking about something else. Really a different order of reality.

Q. Let me see if I understand you. You seem to be saying here that there are two kinds of corruption that are at the extreme of one another. One is a complete evasion of the subject by the use of formal devices in the poem, and the other is an excessively rational apprehension of the subject, so that the subject is transformed into the poet's conceptions about it rather than presented in its so-called inherent being.

A. If you change the word "conceptions" to "generalizations," you're right. It's extremely difficult to present the subject, the object that has been the cause of your experience, in its integrity—and you, the portrayer of it, in your full integrity.

Q. Actually, it is precisely this kind of approach that might be called "objectivist." Does this correspond to your idea of what the term really means?

A. I think so. It was the reason I thought the term was pretty good

originally, when Zukofsky thought it up. One way to see what it is is to see what it is not—how objectivism differs from imagism or symbolism, for example. You might think for a moment that, after all, objectivism is a form of imagism or naturalism. But imagism as I recall—and I haven't read any imagist poems in thirty years—was a reaction to the period immediately preceding, against literary affectations. So the imagists set out to do what the French impressionists in painting did: go out into the open and look, see what you see, and put it down without affectation of the then dominant literary influences. And that's as much as they did, but it wasn't complete. It was only the first step in a poetic process. That's why imagism is not altogether satisfying; the person of the poet is not sufficiently present.

Now symbolism, of course, is more in contrast with objectivism. It seems to me that the subject of symbolism is a poetic state of feeling and its aim is to reproduce it. It really didn't matter much what you started with—whether it was a flower or the moon. All the poet was concerned with was his own feeling. And for that subject, symbolism is suitable, but it's a very narrow subject.

Q. A state of feeling that was far removed from the object itself?

A. Simply his own state of feeling. He didn't care about the moon *really*, or about a flower, the real character of the flower.

Q. The radical difference then is between a state of feeling per se and one resulting from a direct perception of the object.

A. Let me put it this way. This was a generalized state of feeling that the poet carried around with him. An object was simply an occasion for him to project this feeling.

Q. This feeling that the symbolist possessed—his approach to reality —was in a sense a *priori* . . .

A. Absolutely.

Q. . . . whereas the objectivist has an a *posteriori* approach. He let his feelings depend upon the object and was faithful to the object.

A. Right. Now take my poem "To a Young Girl." The girl is not an abstraction; she remains real all the way through the poem. She's not the epitome of a young girl, she is not a beautiful ideal of a young girl, she is a real young girl. Now she becomes subjective in the sense that I, or the speaker, carry on a certain inner dialogue about her, but

that's my business, that's my reality which I project into the poem. But the girl is a real person. I respect her reality.

Q. This gets us back to "Shore Line," doesn't it? You begin with the raw data and then, being faithful to it, you transform it into perception and feeling and then into something imaginative.

A. I think so. I didn't realize when I wrote those lines that they were such a true expression of what goes on in me and of my view of poetry, objectivist poetry. But that's true.

Q. "To a Young Girl," then, while being based on an external object, really describes something that is going on in the mind of the poet; he's imagining what the girl herself might be thinking and he carries on an imaginary dialogue with her. It seemed to me that the point of the poem was the liveliness, to say the least, of the old man's thoughts and feelings.

A. Yes.

Q. In fact I was reminded of Humbert Humbert and Lolita. The nymphet turns out to be partly a creature of an old man's imagination.

A. I agree, I agree. You know, speaking of fidelity to the object, something else just occurred to me. *Amulet* was reviewed in a new British journal called the *Grosseteste Review* by a young poet who found a similarity between me and a young Czech poet named Holub. Holub is a physician and he's reported to have said that he was influenced by Williams, whom he read in translation. I have Holub's book at home and it's true that there are similarities. It seemed to me that maybe one reason Williams, Holub, and I have something in common is that none of us has been a professional poet nor an academic person; we've all had similar professions and perhaps our experience in them has led to a similarity in our poetry. Williams always had a feeling of respect for the object. Actually, as a pediatrician, his work was as much psychological—establishing a rapport with mothers and children, being reassuring and understanding—as it was medical. And this is true for the social worker. I don't know which medical specialty Holub was in, but he may also have had this kind of experience. Williams, of course, never stopped writing, as I did; I suspect his first response to experience may have been like mine, but that he was more in the habit of transforming it into literary material.

Q. An interesting idea. So you feel that your poetry is closest to that of Williams?

A. Well, no. I would say the one who is closest to me is Charles Reznikoff.

Q. From what you've been saying, I can see what you mean.

A. I think that Reznikoff comes through in his earlier poems as a thoroughly compassionate man. He comes through as a person. When he's observing something, you're inside him.

Q. Your *Americana* poems seem reminiscent of some of the things he was doing in *Testimony*.

A. I was fascinated with that book. But what he was saying there is that the raw data can speak for itself. It was what happened, what was in the law books and court records, and it's poetry.

Q. So he's looking at reality from his own professional viewpoint, as a lawyer.

A. Not exactly. He's simply recording it with the homely specificity and phraseology of legal language in the way it would be done in a good court record. That book did not get good reviews, as I recall. I think the critics said he hadn't done enough with the material. But my first reaction when I read it was that maybe Reznikoff is right. Maybe the material can speak for itself. But my assumptions in the *Americana* poems are different. I don't assume there that the raw data is the poetry. One thing that is similar though is that Reznikoff seems to have been fascinated with legal language and let it stand that way. In *Americana* I was fascinated with the unique flow of colloquial language, and I kept it that way.

Q. Would you call Reznikoff an objectivist?

A. Yes. I would think he goes about writing a poem pretty much as I do. Not so much in *Testimony* as in the earlier poems. Years ago Zukofsky told me that I must get together with Reznikoff because we had a lot in common. We've never met, though.

Q. Did you ever meet George Oppen?

A. No. But I respect his poetry. It can come through with brilliant

perceptions of reality, in which the self is interesting, as well as the object. But I can't warm up to it. It's stripped down too much.

Q. I wonder whether I might change the subject completely now and ask you a personal question. What made you decide to start writing poetry again after a lapse of over two decades?

A. Well, that's a very good story. I got a letter one day that had gone the rounds of a number of different cities, before it finally reached me, from a young Englishman named Andrew Crozier. He said that he had run across my name in an article by Rexroth, had looked up my work in magazines, and copied every single poem I had written. He had made a bibliography and wanted to know whether I had written any more. Well, the thought that somebody his age could care that much for my work really touched me; after all, there were two generations between us. And that's what started me.

There's an amusing bit to that letter. You know my legal name is Callman Rawley, not Carl Rakosi, and Crozier had a great deal of trouble tracking me down. Fortunately he was not discouraged by a letter from my publisher saying that he doubted if I was alive and that he had heard that I may have been a secret agent for the Comintern and died behind the Iron Curtain. However, this was only a rumor and Crozier must not breathe a word of this to anyone! I can guess where this rumor might have come from. My publisher must have gotten to someone who knew my old friend, Kenneth Fearing. Fearing and I had been roommates at the University. This is just the kind of prank he would play. I can hear him laughing like hell over it.

Q. Well, at least the letter reached you and that was fortunate. One final question. Did you revise any of the earlier poems that were included in *Amulet*?

A. Actually I made a lot of changes in the magazine versions I incorporated into my first book, *Selected Poems*, in 1941. Zukofsky said I had ruined some of them. He was right. I cut out too much. In *Amulet* I changed some of them back closer to the original, and others forward, as it were, to the 1960's. But I'm never satisfied. I could keep rewriting them all my life. It's a good way to get nowhere, because a person is constantly changing, and what satisfies him one day is bound to dissatisfy him the next. Unless one's critical judgment has improved, therefore—and there is no reason for that to happen after a certain age—the third version is apt to be as good as the fourth, or

even better, because it's closer to the original stimulus. But it's no use telling myself that. I can't keep hands off. There's a dunderhead in me somewhere that persists in believing that a fresh perception of a poem is more right than the old. The oaf refuses to face up to the fact that every new occasion is a new situation and has to have a new poem. What a battle I'd have with my counter-will if I ever adhered to that!

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"AND REALITY IS ALWAYS PARADOXICAL": AN INTERVIEW WITH CARL RAKOSI

— George Evans

The poet Carl Rakosi was born in Berlin in 1903, and came to the United States in 1910. He grew up primarily in Kenosha, Wisconsin, and his first poems appeared in The Little Review *and in Ezra Pound's* The Exile *in the 1920s. Louis Zukofsky included his poetry in the 1931 "Objectivists" issue of* Poetry *magazine, and his work has since been associated with the diverse group of poets who have come to be known as Objectivists: George Oppen, Charles Reznikoff, Lorine Niedecker, and Louis Zukofsky.*

His Selected Poems *appeared from New Directions in 1941, followed, after a long hiatus, by* Amulet *(New Directions, 1967), the* Ere-Voice *(New Directions, 1971). Black Sparrow Press published* Ex Cranium, Night *in 1975, and there have been several smaller collections published over the past few years.* The Collected Prose of Carl Rakosi *was published by The National Poetry Foundation (University of Maine at Orono) in 1983, and his long-awaited* Collected Poetry *is scheduled to appear from the same publisher in the fall of 1986.*

His professions of social worker and psychotherapist took him to many parts of the United States, but most of his professional life was spent in Minneapolis. For the past several years he has lived in San Francisco with his wife Leah. The following interview was conducted in San Francisco on 6 July 1986.

EVANS: *You were born in Berlin, spent several years in Hungary with your grandparents, and grew up in Kenosha, Wisconsin. You were seven when you came to the United States (in 1910).*

RAKOSI: Six.

EVANS: *Therefore American, essentially. Do you have any recollection of learning English? And what did the experience of learning English mean to you?*

RAKOSI: Well, that is the strangest thing, and this bears on how American children too learn the language, their own language. I came to Chicago—that's where my father was, had settled—and I didn't know one word of English. As a matter of fact, at Ellis Island, when we were being examined by the doctor and the papers were being examined, my stepmother said to the immigration official: "The children don't speak any English." Well, we didn't, and so one day I enter school, I don't know one word of English . . .

EVANS: *This is in Kenosha now?*

RAKOSI: No, this is in Chicago. I'm six years old, I go to school, I don't know one word of English, and the next thing I know I'm talking just like everybody else. I have absolutely no memory of learning the language. I simply soaked it up. It seems to me I learned it in a day or two, but it could've been months. I do have a good ear for languages . . . that's true because I still remember German, the German accent, and Hungarian accent, although I don't know Hungarian anymore.

EVANS: *What was your first job?*

RAKOSI: That was a training job in social work.

EVANS: *This was after you finished undergraduate school?*

RAKOSI: Yes. I finished the university without any vocation really. I just got a degree in English, but I wasn't thinking of teaching. I had no vocation, and I really was scared. I thought I'd have to go back to Kenosha and depend on my parents, which would have been awful, simply awful. Try going back into your past and you'll find it's a dreadful thing. But the American Association of Social Workers was looking for people to train in social work because social work, at that time, had no graduate curriculum and faculty at universities. The social agencies themselves were beginning to develop courses, so I started in Cleveland there.

EVANS: *This was in the twenties?*

RAKOSI: I began writing poetry in 19 . . . I know exactly when. I can date it. In 1920 I entered the University of Chicago as a freshman, and got into a class with a couple of young fellows who were writing poetry at that time. Up to that time I really had not been much interested in poetry. My reading was entirely in the novel, and in essays, and philosophy. Our assignment was really to write some poetry, and it was there that I discovered that poetry was a better medium for me than prose.

EVANS: *Were you contemplating writing at that point?*

RAKOSI: Yes.

EVANS: *What were you reading? What sort of books were you reading? Can you recall one that was really important to you?*

RAKOSI: Dickens. I read all of Dickens, in the wonderful original Scribners editions with the drawings. And the great Russians had a powerful influence on me. Maxim Gorky had a tremendous influence on me . . . his autobiography called *My Life*. You might say that Dickens and the Russians present a whole life, the tragic and the comic, but they are both strongly social. There's nothing excessively introspective in them, and yet you feel that both of them had great powers of observation and reflection.

EVANS: *In your own work there seems to be that dual interest, both the social and, of course, the humorous.*

RAKOSI: Yes. Oh, yes.

EVANS: *Swift came to mind as another writer which might be of interest to you, after you mentioned Dickens.*

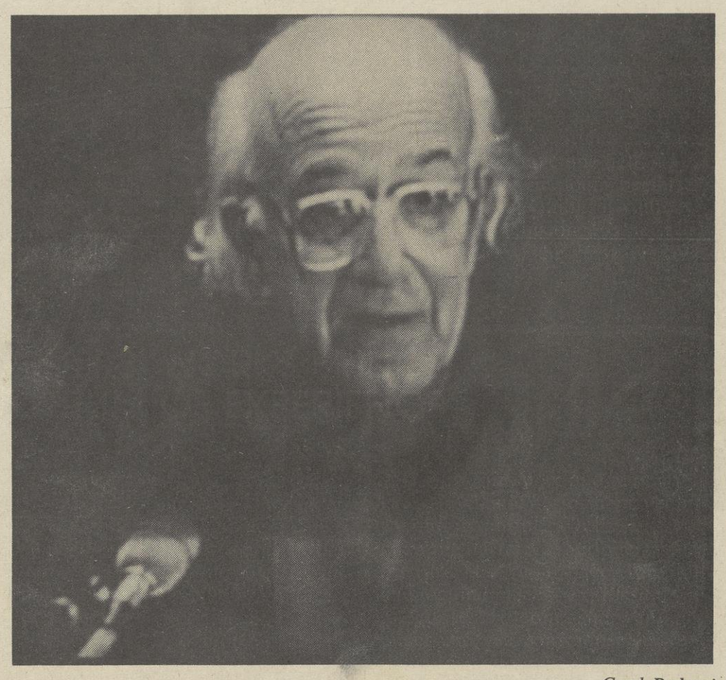
RAKOSI: Well, this is something purely personal, I don't want to knock Swift, but, see, Swift pulls back from his own life experiences, and the prose that you get is, in its way, quite perfect, but it's cold, and a little too distant for me. In the Russians you feel—these particular great Russians, including Chekhov of course—you feel that they're free of a great deal of the literary. And, of course, Tolstoy was not a teacher, he was well to do, an aristocrat. Chekhov was a doctor. Maxim Gorky was not . . . as I recall he never went to a university. These are not, primarily, literary men, and that tells you something about their power. I just finished writing a brief autobiography, and in that series (the Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series, Gale Research Company) I read two autobiographies by other poets—I won't mention their names—they're well written, but then compared to what I came up with finally, when I'd finished my autobiography, I suddenly discovered their autobiographies consisted of literary relationships, contacts, events. Mine didn't consist of that at all. I even excluded the literary events because I very naturally talked about what happened to my life experience outside of writing.

EVANS: *What do you think is the function of a poet in our society?*

RAKOSI: He has absolutely no function. Which doesn't disturb me necessarily. See, the language in which you asked the question, "function," presupposes that everything we do in life has a function in relation to society. Absolutely untrue. The most intimate things we do do not have a "function" in society, don't need to have a function in society, they have an existential reality of their own, and it doesn't bother us that they're not useful in society. Not everything has to be useful in society. Our relationship to society is one in which, above, beyond, being moral, there's no need to be related to the rest of society.

EVANS: *Can you say that historically, I mean looking back a couple of centuries, three or four centuries, could you say that three hundred years ago, or do you think this is a modern situation?*

RAKOSI: No, quite the opposite. I think the *question* is modern. I'm not enough of a social historian to say, but it came definitely into prominence with Marxism, that particular question, the function of poetry, the function of everything in relation to society. The Marxists, or at least the Marxists that I've known, insist on seeing everything that happens in life as being related to society, and as having to be useful in some way to society. Well it's a false way of looking at things, and it doesn't serve the Marxists, even. What's happened in the communist countries is that they have a very poor literature and art.



Carl Rakosi

EVANS: *Because they're looking for the utility of it.*

RAKOSI: Yes, you know, you have to write something that's going to be useful.

EVANS: *What about the poet as one who really has an effect upon the language, maintaining the language?*

RAKOSI: I don't think poets affect language.

EVANS: *What do you think poets affect?*

RAKOSI: They don't have to affect anything. When you say "affect," that is a word related to "function." When you're writing poetry, you're in a state of feeling, and imagination, and conceptualization, you're making something up, and that's the reality of that experience of writing. Now, you hope that the reader will be able to find himself, when he reads this, in that, or in a somewhat similar state of feeling and imagination, and so on. The reader even builds on top of what he is reading. And that's it. That's it. To go beyond that is really to contaminate the whole thing.

EVANS: *What about poetry as political comment? That, in fact, is a situation in which you are stepping beyond simply trying to elicit an emotion to build upon, and one is really trying to make some particular political statement as if, as poet, one had a role.*

RAKOSI: Poetry can make political statements, but if its motivation, the poet's motivation, to start with, is to make a political statement, he's going to have one hell of a time writing a decent poem because he hasn't built anything, it's already a foregone conclusion. He has it in his mind already. he hasn't evolved

7 WRITERS' WORKS BRIDGE SPECTRUM OF EXPERIENCE

— Catherine Diamond

San Francisco—The Poetry Center at San Francisco State University recently hosted a reading of two mainland Chinese poets, and five local Chinese American writers.

The visiting Chinese poets represented the two ends of the Chinese literary spectrum, from a classically refined style to a fervent contemporary mode.

Zheng Min, who studied in this country during the early 1950s, uses traditional Chinese poetic illusions as well as references to European artists. Both her reading and her poems exuded warmth, gentility and the elegiac quality of Rilke, the poet who most influenced her work. She read a series of poems about women's lives in history, most of which were based on women in Western paintings, such as Renoir's "Portrait of a Girl" and Modigliani's "Woman with a Necklace."

Her last poem, however, was inspired by the excavation of the first century tomb figures in Xian, who to her symbolize the revitalization of a people long buried. Exulting in the dramatic changes in China's recent past, she addresses the figures, "Except for the sun, everything you see is new."

Shu Ting, her young counterpart, is a prodigy of the post-Mao underground movement. Unable to speak English, she read her words in tandem with a translation. She also enthusiastically upholds a bright future for China, yet her imagery is less culture-bound and more stridently individualistic.

"You will hear my singular sound," she states in a long fervent poem to her country, while in "To the Oak," a love poem, she expresses her refusal to be subservient or dependent, avowing that true love abides only in equality.

The five local writers exhibited an equally large spectrum of Chinese American literary expression.

Carolyn Lau read several poetic meditations on Chinese characters, in which she explored their anti-reductive quality, relating their components to experiences in her life. She dedicated a poem to Zheng Min, who afterward said, that even though she didn't understand all the vocabulary, she delighted in the joyful spirit of it. Mixing Mandarin and English throughout, Lau ended the poem with her own version of Rilke's famous line," *Wo men Da Jia* (we must all) change our lives."

Genny Lim, poet and playwright, gave a dynamic performance behind the microphone. Delivered in a chanting narrative, her poems surge forward at a rapid pace, forcefully cataloguing places, expressions and anecdotes. In one she vents her anger and self-consciousness about the color yellow, in all its varied applications and implications, culminating with the color blindness of her daughter whose favorite color is green because it is the color of life.

Her mocking sarcastic humor and social criticism throughout the poems were two qualities noticeably absent in the China mainland writers' works. Despite her aggressively American tone she selected a Chinese violin to symbolize her dual identity as an Asian American. "I am an erhu, an erhu played on two strings."

She finished with a take-off on the "Lord's Prayer" entitled "Peoples' Prayer," that interpolated a litany of horrors in modern life from state-perpetuated crimes to chemical additives, into the traditional words, leading to an air raid siren crescendo of "A- men."

Ruthanne Lum McCunn read a lyrical passage from her latest book,

The American Poetry Archive, a project of the Poetry Center, is located in Room 117 of the HLL Bldg. on the San Francisco State University campus. It houses some 650 videotapes and 2200 audiotapes of poetry readings. In addition to selling and leasing these tapes, the Archive willingly makes these resources available to the public. Anyone interested in using the tapes or in finding out more about them should call the Archive at (415) 469-2227.

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Rakosi continued

anything. I think some poets can still, if they have enough passion about it, make a political point. And if they're willing to use their imagination enough. It's possible, but I myself am wary of its possibilities. Take Dante. Dante starts with a very distinct Christian theology, and a view of the world that is the view of his time, his church, and he wrote great poetry, and he may actually have started with the idea that he was going to project this concept, but in a way he makes it his whole world, it is his whole world, and he forgets about it it's so much a part of him, and he evolves something great and imaginative out of it. But that's the hardest way to write poetry.

One of the things that I find constantly missing from literary criticism is an intelligent perception of the reader. All the emphasis seems to be on the poet and the poem, and none on the reader, the psychology of the reader.

EVANS: *How would one approach that?*

RAKOSI: You have to forget what brought about the poem, the process of writing the poem, and simply put yourself in the shoes of the reader, which you can do because you also are a reader of other people's poetry, and you know perfectly well when something, when a poem, is a poem that you would be interested in reading a second time, and a third time, and a fourth time, and forever. There are little lyrics in Shakespeare that you can read five hundred times.

EVANS: *We are living in a society which is becoming more and more illiterate by the day, and what does that do to poetry, and how do you view what's happening to the reading world? Where is the reader?*

RAKOSI: Well, I find the scene terribly confusing . . . confusion all over the place. I don't know who reads poetry any more. Yet, there are four or five thousand poets, and they must be reading. For a while I thought that it was only they who read poetry, but I find there are some other people who read poetry. I don't know who the reader is anymore. It's become too complex, and too diffused. It's all over the place. The situation was not that complex and diffused when I was young. For one thing, let's take the little magazines that were in existence in the 1920s. Well, there's only one magazine that used only poetry, and that was the one in Chicago, (*Poetry*). There was another one, I've forgotten the name, but it had such a tiny list of readers that you could just forget about it. Alright, you see, (on that small scale) it's all there, and that has both its advantages and disadvantages, but, at any rate, it's not confusing, it's not spread out all over the map. (These days) you have a situation in which anything goes. Meaning, anybody can write anything, and it will always be accepted somewhere.

EVANS: *Describe the poetic impulse to me. For example, you began writing poems as an assignment in school. What kept you writing?*

RAKOSI: By that time I was sixteen going on seventeen, I knew I wanted to be a writer, and my mind was full of things to express. There are examples of poets who unquestionably have poetic impulse. (Robert) Duncan has a powerful poetic impulse, you can never question that . . . it just lifts you off the ground the minute you start reading him. There again, you can recognize it when you see it.

EVANS: *How could you explain it to someone who really didn't know what you were talking about? You describe yourself as an ironist. Would you like to explain that a little bit?*

RAKOSI: Well, that's just the way I am in life. I never perceive things simply in one way, because if you look at anything with any depth, or if you let yourself think about it, immediately two or three other aspects appear. And reality is always paradoxical.

EVANS: *It's never what it seems?*

RAKOSI: Well, no, I'm not saying it's never what it seems. It is what it seems, but it's much more than it seems. All kinds of complex systems of thought are built around perceiving things in one way, but it simply isn't so in my experience.

EVANS: *So, is it your practice, and your perception of the world, to try to really view it from different angles, to view the paradox . . .*

RAKOSI: I don't try, I don't try . . . that's the way I perceive it, it's a quality of my mind, and I hope it gives what I have to say a certain clarity and scope that it wouldn't have without it.

EVANS: *How do you view poetry as humor. That's a pretty flat, one- dimensional perspective.*

RAKOSI: Humor is not itself paradoxical. Humor is not the same as irony, and some of my poems are humorous because I happened to catch a view of a particular reality which struck me as funny.

EVANS: *Like in your* Americana *poems. There is a lot of humor in them that's just flatout comical.*

RAKOSI: Right, it's single dimensional.

EVANS: *Your* Americana *poems are very popular amongst your readers, and certainly they are in England as well. The* Americana *sequence is an easy way into your work, after which a reader discovers that it's much deeper, that your main preoccupations, are philosophical and meditative.*

RAKOSI: Just like in real life, humor is only a small part, and it's quite occasional, and more or less accidental, in the sense that you don't plan it, it suddenly happens. But the others are more of a *way* of life, the meditative, and the lyrical too, so that when I'm not in a humorous mood I will just naturally be meditative. And, I must say, the lyrical: that never leaves me. In other words, if I have the time, and nothing else is on my mind, I look at the world in a lyrical way.

EVANS: *Which means that you can afford elation?*

RAKOSI: That I'm free.

EVANS: *What's the alternative to that? The longer forms, the more ruminative . . . ?*

RAKOSI: I was never interested in the long form. I've always had the intuition that, at least for modern man, since my interest has been the lyrical, that the lyrical just can't be stretched out into a long poem. And that also the long poem involves a great deal of thinking and planning beforehand, which is alright, some poets find that congenial and in character, but I don't think it's in my character.

EVANS: *In an historical context, do you see the movement of poetry as some people do, say in the academic world, as a series of progressions . . .*

RAKOSI: Oh god no, that is the silliest damned idea . . .

EVANS: *How about as a series of changes, like in the evolution of an organism evolving?*

RAKOSI: Well, it will naturally change because generations change, sure, but the idea that somehow poetry and the arts—it has a vicious form in painting and sculpture—the idea that it keeps getting better and better all the time, progresses, and that the thing of highest value is the latest progression . . . ahh, it's asinine. It's a corruption that seems to have . . . in the arts, of course, it starts with the museum directors, and people who teach the history of art. I don't know where it starts with (poetry) . . . well, it certainly is an academic product. But, you see, that's peculiarly in the American character . . . it'll always get better and better and better. (Laughter)

EVANS: *As a person who has lived through many historical periods—not to emphasize your age, but, of course, you are of advanced age—where do you see America going at this point? Are we going backward in time, are we becoming more enclosed, nationalistic . . . ?*

RAKOSI: That's a big question. One of the reasons why it's difficult to answer that is that we are so besieged by the media, and we think that what is actually happening in society is what the media is reporting. But what the media reports is necessarily only a small, tiny part, and it's a biased part because they report what's going to be interesting. And it's a tremendously hard thing to answer for quite another reason, and that is that the world is becoming what I didn't think it would become, actually. More and more, nations are almost disappearing, well they *are* disappearing as economic entities. In other words, the American capitalists, or corporations, the big ones, are no longer American corporations, they're international. They're multinational, and that changes everything. There's no way to predict what's going to happen, because it's still at the beginning stage of evolution, and it's going to continue more and more. Now how that will affect culture is even harder to predict. We know that national culture does follow the lines of economic development, so that's wide open. That's an appalling prospect actually. It's so big and so complex it's overwhelming. It's a great threat to individuality . . . because it's so big. Even the national, as a concept, is a threat to individuality, but when you talk about the international, the whole world, I mean that's no concept that you can get hold of. There's too much there. You asked a question before, as to how I thought poetry affected language. It's T.V. that is affecting language. You talk about an influence, well: there.

EVANS: *To get to another subject . . . how do you view your work in regards to an Objectivist context?*

RAKOSI: Since the term itself was devised by Zukofsky, because he had to use something to describe the group of writers that he admired and had selected for that particular (1930) issue of *Poetry* magazine, one can't really take this too seriously, or take this seriously. A better way to talk about it would be simply to consider my work in relation to that of Reznikoff, and Oppen, and Zukofsky, and what it means that the four of us appeared at that time, and what things we might have in common, because all four of us were extreme individualists. Zukofsky taught briefly, I think at Brooklyn College, but by and large he was not connected with the academy, with the universities, and certainly Reznikoff, Oppen, and I have not been.

EVANS: *And Niedecker, if you'd put her in that group, certainly not.*

RAKOSKI: Yes, Niedecker, without us.

EVANS: *Which of the Objectivists do you feel most closely linked to in your world outlook, taken from the poetry?*

RAKOSI: I think . . . actually, if you talk about world outlook, all four of us had very similar world outlooks. Although Zukofsky went off in a different direction in his work, we had a great deal in common in the way in which we looked at the world. In some ways, I suppose in my Jewishness, I resemble Reznikoff most. In the existential sense I think I'm more like Oppen.

EVANS: *What do you make of Niedecker's work?*

RAKOSI: She's a true Objectivist. By that I mean that her self, her reflections, are less in the poem than in the rest of us. Although none of us wrote commentaries, still, the external reality is much more in the forefront in Niedecker. So, if anybody should be called an Objectivist it's she.

EVANS: *It's almost as if the observed reality, without paradox, just the reality which is immediately perceivable, is really there in her work, whereas you've complicated your work by being . . .*

RAKOSI: It's transformed. It's much more transformed in me.

EVANS: *Your interest in the lyrical mode certainly takes you completely away from that "direct" observation, that possibility. I see Oppen's existential drive within longer forms, and in Zukofsky an inwardly complicated lyrical mechanism functioning . . .*

RAKOSI: Yes, Zukofsky is much more literary than the three of us. You have a sense in Zukofsky that he's interested in literary forms, he's challenged by difficult literary forms, to write them himself. I never had that interest. Not that I don't enjoy poetry in specific literary forms, but I don't know why I should be doing it, why I should have to do it. (Laughter)

EVANS: *If you were to view life as a process possessing stages, what were your stages, and how would you describe your present stage?*

RAKOSI: I don't want to get into my present stage.

EVANS: *Why not?*

RAKOSI: Because it's terminal.

EVANS: *Life is terminal.*

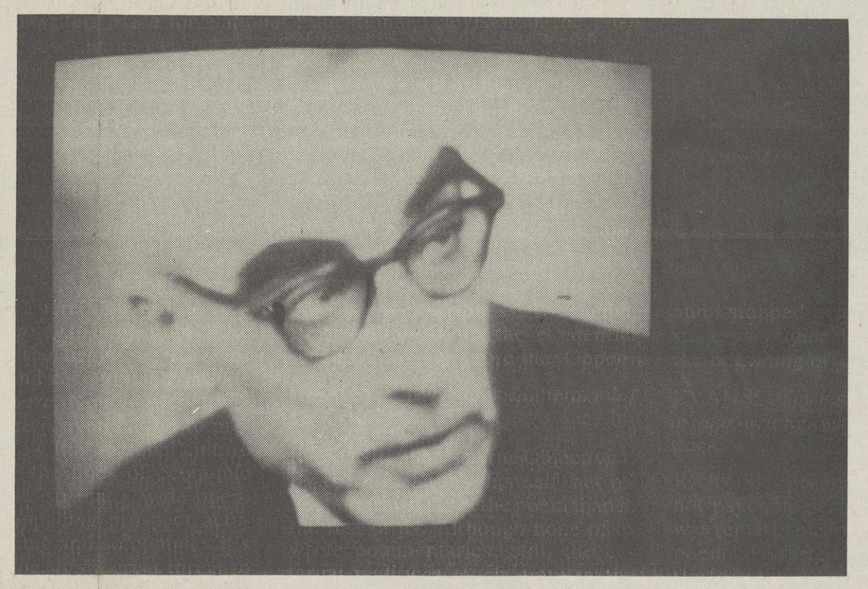
RAKOSI: That doesn't help me. (Laughter) Stages . . . let's see. In one sense my life broke up into three stages out of necessity. They're not three psychological stages, however. The first stage was when I began to write, and knew I was going to be a writer. The second stage was when I knew I couldn't continue to write and work at my profession, and I stopped writing. And the third stage was when I started again, at the beginning of 1966.

EVANS: *You had a thirty year hiatus in your writing, which was the second stage.*

RAKOSI: Right. But I say they're not psychological stages because it was remarkable to me to find that the poems I started to write when I started to write again had a remarkable similarity to what I had written all those years before. In other words, there is a basic consistency in my personality apparently, which I wasn't aware of. I feel good about that. I think a personality should be consistent, should have a certain basic, a single, character, otherwise it's too weak, it just floats around. But I didn't plan that, I mean that's just the way I was.

EVANS: *Apparently the period of your writing hiatus didn't really have any effect upon anything but your amount of output.*

RAKOSI: No, it didn't, and that was a great surprise to me. I would have thought that all those years, as a social worker, as a therapist, father, husband, and so on, all the many things I did, would have changed me. But it must mean that the poetic impulse, and what precedes the poetic impulse, is a poetic way of looking at the universe and one's own experience, and that doesn't change in a person.



Louis Zukofsky

OBJECTIVISTS IN THE ARCHIVE

In addition to two recordings of Carl Rakosi, the Archive holds several tapes of writers associated with "Objectivism."

MICHAEL HELLER delivers the Poetry Center's first annual George Oppen Memorial Lecture on November 17, 1985. His topic is "Knowledge is Loneliness Turning: George Oppen's Going Down Middle Voice," which focused on Oppen's late poems. Heller is the author of *Conviction's Net of Branches: Essays on the Objectivist Poets and Poetry*.

GEORGE OPPEN reads with Robert Duncan, February 22, 1973. From *Seascape: Needle's Eye* he reads "Song, the Winds of Downshill," parts of "Some San Francisco Poems," and the uncollected poem "The Lever The Die The Cam."

CARL RAKOSI reads on March 12, 1975, and is introduced by George Oppen. He reads "If one wrote like St. Augustine . . .," "Pursuant to the rocks, thorns . . .," "These lines written by Christopher Smart . . .," "What is the nature of quintessence?," "I had been reading a passage from Nietzsche . . .," and others.

CARL RAKOSI reads on November 14, 1985 with Michael Heller. He reads from the long poem, "The Poet."

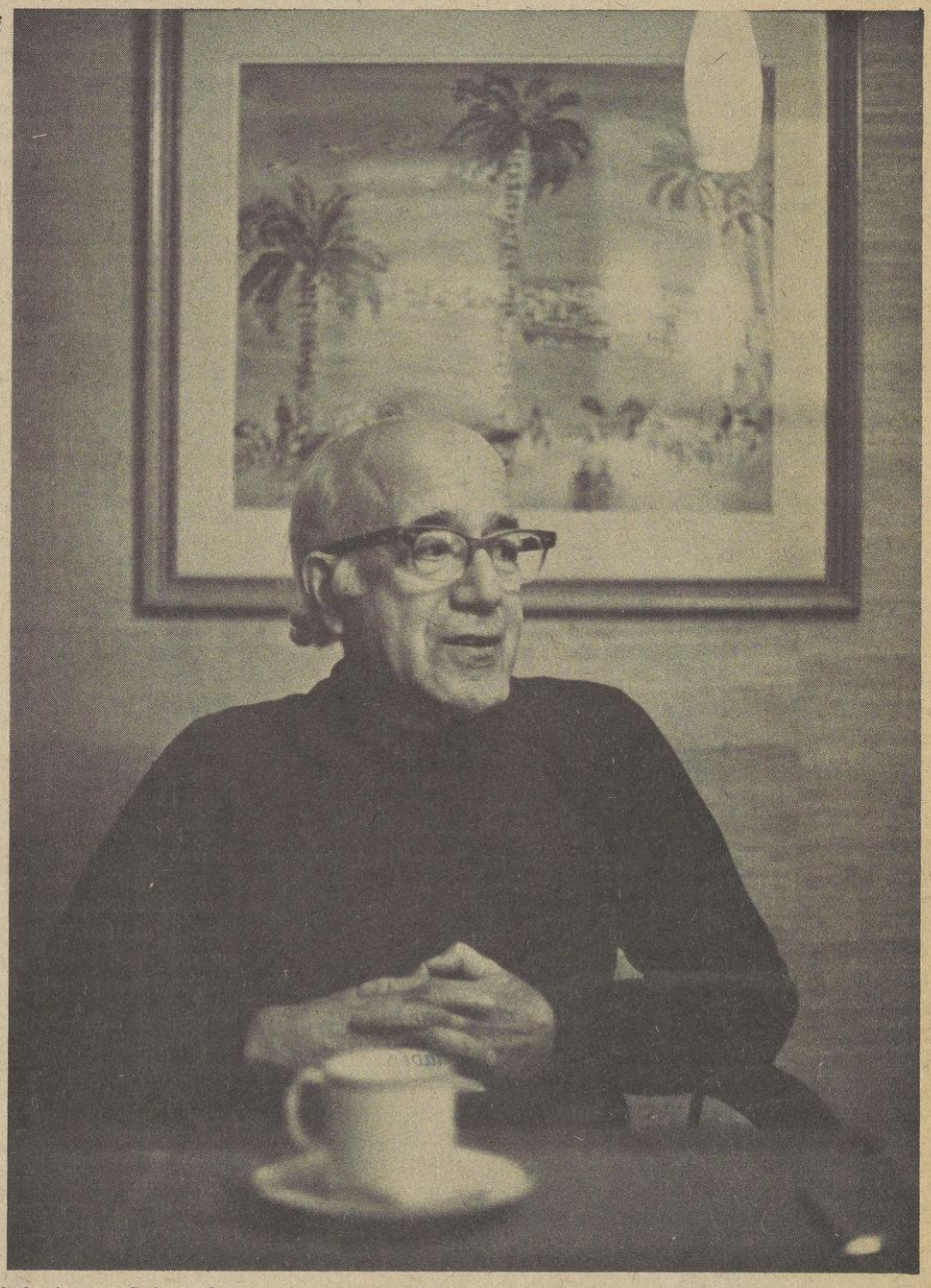
CHARLES REZNIKOFF reads his poetry on March 21, 1974, introduced by George Oppen. He reads more than fifty poems that are grouped into thematic sections: Nature, People, City, Ethnic, Personal, parts of *Testimony: The United States*, Love and Miscellaneous.

LOUIS ZUKOFSKY is interviewed by filmmaker Richard O. Moore on March 16, 1966 in his New York City apartment, where he reads part of *"A" 9* and discusses the uselessness of labels and the importance of going directly to the work, evaluating the achievements of James Joyce, Walt Whitman, Ezra Pound and Basil Bunting. He also discusses the particularity of British and American speech, and the problem of producing American sounds and words in other languages. He describes his efforts to translate not only the meaning but the sound of a poem into English, reading a long section from "Catullus," which he translated with his wife, Celia Zukofsky. This tape is a part of the Archive's NET Outtake series, which is based on the outtakes from a series of programs on American writers made for National Educational Television in the 1960s.

Margins / Feb. 1975 —

Carl Rakosi

Photo by Maureen Rosenblum



CARL RAKOSI:
An Interview

by Martin J. Rosenblum

Amulet, *the first book Carl Rakosi published since* **Selected Poems** *in 1941, came out in 1967; it was followed by* **Ere-Voice;** *Rakosi's next book of poems,* **Excranium, Night,** *will be out in May, 1975. The dedication in* **Amulet** *is:*

To Andrew Crozier, who wrote the letter
which started me writing again,
And to my family
L'hayim! Each of them came along just in time.

The text of the letter from Andrew Crozier is as follows:

English Department
Crosby Hall
SUNY at Buffalo, NY
12.iv.65

Dear Mr. Rawley,

Please excuse me if I make any intrusion upon your privacy, but I would like to write to you about the poems you published under the name Carl Rakosi. I have your address from the Hennepin County Welfare Department, to which I wrote at the suggestion of Charles Reznikoff in New York.

I have been interested in your poems since I saw your name mentioned by Kenneth Rexroth some years ago, but until I came here last autumn was only able to turn up "A Journey Away" printed in *Hound and Horn.* I have now been able to find about 80 poems of yours, published between 1924 and 1934, and what immediately strikes me is the discrepancy between that body of work and your 1941 *Selected Poems,* and the way, say, long poems like "The Beasts" and "A Journey Away" are chopped into smaller units in that volume.

I wonder too why you have stopped publishing since 1941, and whether you have been writing since then or not.

Again, please excuse me if this letter is an impertinence,

–8; Editors should refuse to publish each other–4; By staying independent and individual–3.

Did your magazine exhibit in this year's New York Book Fair? Yes–46; No–110. Did you exhibit in the San Francisco Book Fair last year? Yes–15; No–141. Will you exhibit in either or both the next time? Yes–84; ?–30; No–

General Outlook

Looking ahead, would you rate the following factors of major or minor concern?

	Major	Some	Minor
Increased postal costs	84	56	15
Increased printing costs	112	30	13
Increased paper costs	113	35	8
Paper shortages	48	62	31
Other costs	45	46	25

Do you expect to raise: Subscription rates in 1975? Yes–36; ?–9; No–102. Single copy price? Yes–31; ?–9; No–98. Advertising rates? Yes–9; ?–4; No–46; No advertising–82.

Do you expect revenues to keep up with costs? Yes–9; ?–20; No–110.

If you receive support from a college/university, which of the following most closely identifies its current attitude toward your magazine? Increased support–3; Continued support–10; Decreasing support–12; Support conditional on other funding from outside the college–16; Don't know–6.

* * *

COMMENT by Tom Montag

The results of Leonard Randolph's survey of little magazine editors raise two primary and some secondary questions. My first areas of concern are: 1) the attention to non-profit/tax exempt status for little magazines; and 2) the attention to college- or university-based littles. Further, I will discuss distribution, "regular" publication, and the lifespan of the little magazine.

Non-Profit/Tax Exempt Status

The questions about and the discussion of non-profit/tax exempt status are, of course, necessary because the National Endowment for the Arts' enabling legislation does not permit direct *funding of organizations without such status. To sidestep this problem, the Endowment has funded the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines and charged it with the responsibility of making sub-grants to the little magazines. Other programs of the National Endowment for the Arts, as the Literature Program does, fund "channeling" organizations which, in turn, fund individuals, organizations or projects. Information on the non-profit/tax exempt status of little magazines seems needed, for two reasons: first, to determine how many and what kind of magazines do not have or will not be applying for NP/TE status; and second, to use this information in determining what kind of programs for the indirect assistance of magazines seem necessary.*

If the Literature Program of the National Endowment is intent on uncovering ways to assist little magazines indirectly, and it would seem from the discussion of "bulk purchase of subscriptions or single copies for distribution" that this is the case, then the lack of non-profit/tax exempt status by 113 of the magazines responding to the survey is a significant and useful piece of information. I would not, however, want to see the questions about NP/TE status interpreted as indication of special concern on the part of the Literature Program for the magazines with such status. I would not want to see a trend toward NP/TE status for little magazines. Such a trend might do damage to the literature of our country. In this context, I think of Ezra Pound, who was associated with various little magazines in the early part of the century; I'd be interested in his reaction to the fact that 42 little mags have, and 12 more are seeking, NP/TE status. Pound knew what was involved in the process of making literature; I rather doubt that he would encourage magazine editors to seek such standing. Hopefully, what may appear to be emphasis on NP/TE status in the Literature Program will be seen only as attention for the sake of information, and will lead to the creation of mechanisms for indirect support to little magazines, whether NP/TE or not.

College- or University-Based Magazines

The attention given to college- or university-based little magazines might seem, on the surface at least, to be undue. We are already aware that many supposedly intelligent and well-educated readers in this country believe "little magazine" refers exclusively or primarily to college- or university-based quarterly journals. Nothing could be farther from the truth, of course. The survey itself shows that 41 of the responding magazines are so associated, while 128 are not. Three times as many "independent" little magazines as university-affiliated journals publish regularly; if this information can be disseminated widely, there may well be changes made in the thinking of many American readers, including the officials of private foundations and state arts councils. The survey reveals that 96 little magazines claim staff of one to three people; 64 claim four or more. I suspect that many of the magazines with staff of four or more are university-affiliated, and that many of the others with the larger staffs are cooperative ventures. Policies and programs which would serve the greater porition of the little magazine community would necessarily make substantial provisions for the journals with three or fewer people working on them: 96 to 64. The journals with staff of three or fewer are also, I suspect, largely without NP/TE status.

It would be a mistake, I repeat, to establish firm policy which ill-considers the smallest, most independent of the littles–those without NP/TE status, those with staff of three or fewer. It is these magazines, I think, which have been too long neglected already by those discussing "American literature".

Distribution

Another area of the survey-results which should have our attention is that dealing with the distribution of little magazines to book stores and newsstands. At present, 87 magazines sell no copies through a distributor, and 127 sell 100 or fewer copies that way. At the same time, only 21 show no interest in obtaining a distributor, and all but 24 are interested in selling 100 or more copies on newsstands or in book stores. I think such expectations are unrealistic in the face of lack of interest on the part of distributors, book stores, and book store customers. At least at present, most little magazine editors are misplacing their concerns when they emphasize the need for book store distribution. There is some value, certainly, in getting little magazines into book stores, but not at high cost, in terms of the time and energies of the editors, and not while little magazines continue to be shabbily displayed once in the bookstores. Literature Program funds would be better spent on bulk subscription orders to individual little magazines than on distribution schemes. A good deal of money could be invested in the at-

(Continued, page 66)

but I like and admire your poems very much and feel impelled to write to you, now that my interest is so engaged with them.

Yours sincerely,
Andrew Crozier

The nature of Carl Rakosi's "silence" is to a degree explored in the interview; however, the fact that should be stressed is the seriousness with which Rakosi approaches his poetry: his "silence" is a testimony to the depth of his concerns as a poet.

When Maureen and I visited Carl and Leah, his wife, at their home in Minneapolis this summer, it was immediately apparent that his openness would produce meaningful conversations; a good portion of these conversations, called an interview, portrays a generous, thoughtful man: Carl Rakosi approaches, I think, his poems in the same way that he approached my questions—with good-will and caution, as though every possible connection must be made and explored.

The "Objectivists"—Carl Rakosi, Louis Zukofsky, George Oppen, Charles Reznikoff—are often (mis)regarded as being obscure poets, elliptical and illusive. Their obscurity, which if at all present (and it is obvious that I do not consider them obscure), is not like that of T.S. Eliot, who drifts into philosophy and mythology like a gas-balloon released from moorings—it has no option but to soar out of sight until it collapses from pressure; rather, the difficulty as it were with the "Objectivists" is as a result of either an unfamiliarity with their poetic diction or a failure to realize the intentions of individual poems. In my correspondence with Oppen and Reznikoff (to be treated in a future issue of **Margins** *with Louis Zukofsky) I experienced humor and seriousness, but always the desire not to be misunderstood. Carl Rakosi, in this interview, could be characterized as a man who definitely wanted to be perfectly understood; he understands himself that well.*

New Directions has been primarily responsible for bringing out Rakosi's poetry, and James Laughlin, the motivating force behind New Directions, expressed in a letter to me his displeasure at not being financially able to continue as Carl Rakosi's publisher; **Excranium, Night** *will be available from Black Sparrow.* **Selected Poems, Amulet, Ere-Voice** *and the volumes of the* **New Directions Anthology** *that have contained Rakosi's poems have collected and presented Carl Rakosi's unique vision that has been identified and explained as being that of an "objectivist". The purpose of this interview was originally to study "Objectivist" poetry, and, certainly, it achieves this goal; but a study of Objectivism is not the only objective here, and I for one do not object: "objectivist" is only a word; Carl Rakosi is more than a process by which one can understand a dynamic poetic discipline—he is a creative individual. Ultimately, all generalizations break down when the original model is experienced; and then a practical use for the generalization can be put together. By this process the meanings of "Objectivism" can be assembled by virtue of listening to Carl Rakosi speak.*

Rosenblum: "The Existential World of George Oppen" by L.S. Dembo appeared in the *Iowa Review*, winter 1972. This quote is from that. Dembo says, "From the beginning, imagism was for Oppen a cognitive as well as a formal technique. Objects could only be known 'imagistically', by one's sensation of them and not discursively. Thus Oppen sought to construct a method of thought from the imagist's intensity of vision, a method that would represent a test of truth or at least a test of sincerity based on the idea that there is a moment, an actual time when you believe something to be true and you construct a meaning from moments of conviction." How does imagism, particularly that which is defined here, relate to your work. In other words, it seems to me Dembo is talking about something that tests sincerity or tests truth and I'm wondering how that relates to your work.

Rakosi: I'm not sure I get the point actually. I think probably Oppen is closer to a strict following of the original images of the eye but. . . actually imagism started—come on, you're not going to sit in on this, are you?

Mrs. Rakosi: Why, don't you want me to?

Rakosi: Do you really want to?

Mrs. Rakosi: I'll leave, I don't care.

Rakosi: Yeah, no, no. . . . No, it's ah, it distracts me. . . . [illegible], imagism did have an influence on me merely by virtue of the fact that it was being written at a time when I was just beginning to write myself.

Rosenblum: About what time was that?

Rakosi: Oh, about 1920, 1921, and it was the cleanest writing of the time and the clearest. I went my own way however. My first work was much more romantic than the imagists were writing at the time. But the imagism did have an impact on me through Pound, his strictures on what one should and should not write, which came out around 1913 I think, had a profound influence on me and [illegible] changed the direction of my writing. But imagism is actually a narrow, restricted medium.

Rosenblum: In what sense. . . to you as a poet?

Rakosi: In the sense that it left out too much of the subjective. And you can't get very far when you do that. The imagist poems, although some of them are quite lovely—some of Pound's imagist poetry is really beautiful, but it's superficial. Imagism was a necessary moment in the development of writing at the time but poetry had to go beyond that. There just wasn't enough depth to writing of that kind.

Rosenblum: How about your "Americana" poems? How does something like that relate to what you just said?

Rakosi: Oh, not at all. . . .

Rosenblum: Not at all?

Rakosi: Not at all. Those are not images. As a matter of fact, there are no, almost no, images in the "Americana" poems. They're not built around the image as a form of self-expression.

Rosenblum: Right, I didn't mean that they were imagist poems, I meant how developmentally. In other words, are they as far away from imagism as you've gone, do you think?

Rakosi: I think so, they're just another kind of writing altogether. It's not the image that's the central point there but the vernacular, and the folk ways. A way of looking at things, ah, which is very popular and very familiar.

Rosenblum: In classrooms when I've dealt with those poems I've often found the students saying "well, I get no sense of the author". Do you find that, first of all, to be justifiable criticism? Well, I suppose it naturally would be, but do you find it to be adverse criticism or would that be part of your method to limit yourself out of the poem?

Rakosi: Yeah, I'm not supposed to be in there, I'm not a part of the Americana. Of course you can't remain altogether outside but the "Americana" poems, the person who looks for the personal in that kind of poetry, of course is not going to be able to find it. It wouldn't be Americana if the personal were in it, that's too idiosyncratic and too special. No, the personal would only be in the selection of the material and the way it's put together, but even that, you wouldn't be able to recognize a literary or psychological person from that, you might be able to recognize a literary personality from that but not a

psychological one. No, I would say to that kind of reader that that is not to be expected. That's not the point of the poem, the point of the poem is to recognize a folkway, a way of looking at things.

Rosenblum: And in that sense it's quite removed from imagism.

Rakosi: Oh yes, oh yes. Imagism is a highly literary form and "Americana" are not particularly literary.

Rosenblum: How do you feel about that particular question? Do you feel that the majority of your recent poems are, do you feel that they're, as you put it, "literary", I mean, obviously we define imagism as some kind of super literary form. In other words, do you feel that some of your recent poems aren't super-literary, or literary in a bad sense?

Rakosi: Some are, some are, yes, but not in a bad sense though. (Laughter) Oh yes, but different people like different things. Now Tom McGrath, do you know his work?

Rosenblum: Slightly.

Rakosi: He's crazy about the "Americana" poems. He says "For God's sakes, never stop writing them." Others are not turned on by them at all. It's a matter of personal taste.

Rosenblum: You mentioned that you were influenced by Pound, would you consider him to be your first major influence, if there was an external influence, as a writer?

Rakosi: No, his influence on me was through his critical work, not through his poetry. No influence at all through his poetry. The only poetic-literary influences that I'm aware of, at the very beginning, were Yeats, and then Stevens, and Cummings a little.

Rosenblum: I would have guessed at Stevens, and quite possibly Yeats. How exactly Cummings? How exactly do you think he influenced you, in what way?

Rakosi: Well, his humor opened up my own sense of humor. I'm essentially an ironic poet. In that sense, the humor's one.

Rosenblum: You mentioned Pound, how about William Carlos Williams?

Rakosi: I don't know, he and I were writing free things at about the same time. I'm not aware that he really influenced me much, maybe he did. Maybe he did, in the sense that he was there first with free forms, but not in content, I don't really feel that I have much in common with Williams in content.

Rosenblum: How about in form?

Rakosi: In form, yes.

Rosenblum: Do you think that your sense of line length and word use. . . .

Rakosi: The line lengths, yes.

Rosenblum: I notice you have a poem, "A Reminder of William Carlos Williams"?

Rakosi: Yes.

Rosenblum: The lines, I think, are divided in such a way as to remind me of Williams.

Rakosi: Yeah, yeah. In the line division and I guess in the visual appearance of a poem, and this was true of Cummings too, Cummings was just as much of an innovator, maybe more so, than Williams in this respect. The appearance of the poem on the page is very important, it makes a design, and what the eye can comfortably and gracefully follow on a line is important, spaces are important, very important, and not sufficiently understood actually.

Rosenblum: In what sense do you feel that they're not sufficiently understood?

Rakosi: They're not used enough. Well, you probably know, some poems are ruined by being much too compactly together. Physically they're just a solid mass and they shouldn't be.

Rosenblum: In other words, you're calling for a greater use of what I'll call "negative space", more white space on a page; words and lines should be explored?

Rakosi: Yeah, there's, see, it's more relaxing, it flows better. The eyes pin down, uh, the compact form, there is a physiological difference, the eyes actually pin down and must follow closely, can't relax. I think that's important.

Rosenblum: And in that sense you differ greatly, of course, from Wallace Stevens or Yeats.

Rakosi: Oh yes.

Rosenblum: Sort of as a digression or a parenthetical question, how do you feel about concrete poetry, in this context, that makes use of visual techniques?

Rakosi: Well, it goes too far. A poem is not a design, that's the main thing. . . .

Rosenblum: In other words, it loses its vertical capacity.

Rakosi: Oh yeah, also it distracts you from content too much.

Rosenblum: In *Stonybrook,* 1969, you've got an essay you called "A Note on the Objectivists". And it closes with this sentence, "Of course, the game we play today is not with form but with intellect but the name of the game is still game."

Rakosi: Yes.

Rosenblum: Do you think that concrete poetry is playing a different kind of game?

Rakosi: Well, I wasn't thinking of concrete poetry when I wrote that.

Rosenblum: No, I know you weren't.

Rakosi: I really don't know much about concrete poetry. I've seen some of Finley's work, that's about it. What was your question?

Rosenblum: I don't remember. (Laughter) Perhaps "the name of the game is still game" relates back to your comment that you are an ironic poet. Not that everything's a game but that there are twists to everything, I'm wondering how much. . . .

Rakosi: No, I think what I'm referring to is someting different there. I, I say that these days a clear personal experience in a poem is so remarkable, and so on, well, instead of a personal experience, what we have in contemporary poetry, to some extent, is all kinds of intellectual excursions and expositions. *That* is a game, the game, in other words, is not with form but with intellect. I was posing that as the opposite of the poem which someone like Reznikoff writes. Reznikoff always expresses a personal experience. He's never playing a game. In other words, he's not simply trying to write well; he's intellectual only in the sense that he's doggedly determined to discover his truth, *his* truth, and to put it into a form that seems suitable and sincere but it's not intellectual in its purpose. His purpose is an experience.

Rosenblum: Could you also define a poet like Allen Ginsberg in that same way, or would you choose a different way to define what he's doing? To my mind, the two, Reznikoff and Ginsberg, write different kinds of poetry.

Rakosi: I suppose you could, but Ginsberg belongs directly to Whitman, so that the personal with him is very different from the personal of the Objectivists; Ginsberg's personal is always social. It's a different kettle of fish. I don't know if the term is really applicable to him.

Rosenblum: Okay, you say that the personal sense of the Objectivists is different, in what sense? Just expound on that a little bit if you could. What does that mean to you as an Objectivist? What does that mean to you to be called that and to

think of yourself as an Objectivist poet?

Rakosi: Give me something to answer that against, as against what?

Rosenblum: As against, let's say, the poems about which we were speaking, the poems that you say, in a sense, eliminate the author. Ginsberg's poems don't do that at all, Ginsberg's poems are Allen Ginsberg, every single one of them and yet they have a social or political impact. Now it seems to me that quite a number of your poems and poems done by the Objectivists in general sometimes can eliminate the person behind the poem and yet be more personal than Ginsberg's poems which do not eliminate the author. That seems to me to be a very interesting difference and I'm wondering if you have any reflections about that difference?

Rakosi: I think the difference is due to the fact that the characteristic Ginsberg poem is one in which he has made himself the observer and reporter of the times. The reports are in his voice and character but are not, obviously, reports of Allen Ginsberg. Allen's purpose in taking on society makes this unavoidable and desirable. This situation, therefore, sets limits on the personal. After all, acting as observer and reporter is not as deep as the self can go. Reznikoff's short, reflective poems are able to be more personal because the self in them is deeper and more intimate. He can be writing about a fly that lights on his little finger but his feelings and reflections about it are what every human being might feel. At this deep, intimate level the personal is universal.

Rosenblum: Do you think that is what Dembo was talking about when he speaks of the existential world of George Oppen?

Rakosi: Possibly.

Rosenblum: Do you see any other connections between the Objectivists and existential thought at all?

Rakosi: No, no, but, who was it, I think Roger Guedalla, [illegible], asked me whether I'd read any of the phenomenologists. There does seem to be some kind of connection. In other words, that school of philosophy from Vienna did seem to be moved by similar experiences and to be moving in a similar direction as we Objectivists. This French poet, what's his name? Ponge is a very good example. You could really call him a phenomenologist.

Rosenblum: Along the same lines, there's a little dust jacket blurb, here, on this New Directions book of your poems, *Amulet*. It says something to the effect that he, meaning you, had become disillusioned with the state of our society and felt there was no place in it for a poet, talking about the period of your life during which you didn't write. Two questions I guess I have here: one, does this blurb have anything to do with what really happened, and if it does, do you feel that that was existentialism pushed to its limits in your own personal life?

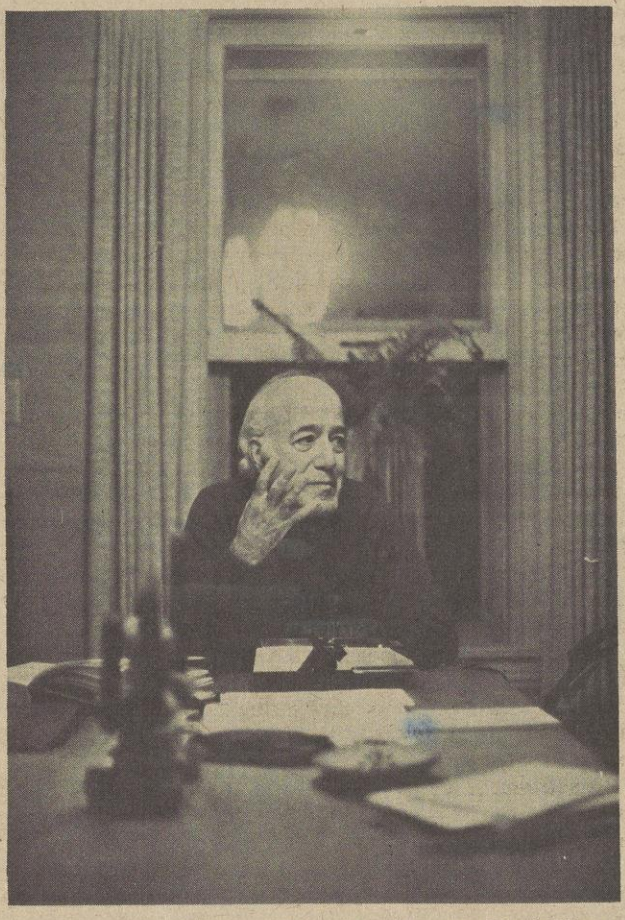
Rakosi: Oh no, not at all. It didn't happen because of existentialism but the disillusion was part of the reality, one of the reasons why I stopped writing. I had lost respect for writing as writing, for its potentialities.

Rosenblum: Could you elaborate a little on that? I think, generally, that period of your life is often dismissed with little sentences like this that don't really go into it.

Rakosi: Well, I just didn't think at that time that poetry could go anywhere.

Rosenblum: In a personal or in a socio-political sense?

Rakosi: No, it seemed too restrictive a medium, and in a way, too shallow. Also, I was a Marxian at the time and I thought that poetry had nothing to contribute to social reform or had any place in society [illegible], those two things were



Carl Rakosi / Photo by Maureen Rosenblum

true. But what I felt at the time, *that's* not particularly important, actually.

Rosenblum: You mean that it's not important to understanding your work?

Rakosi: No, it's not. It may explain partly why I stopped writing but it says nothing about my work. . . . I don't think.

Rosenblum: I wonder what it says about the poems that you wrote following your. . . I don't have a word for it, I don't want to call it a writer's block or a dry spell.

Rakosi: Silence.

Rosenblum: Silence? Okay. Maybe it talks about the poems that you wrote after your silence. I sense, it's trivial to say that some poems celebrate things because of course they do, but I sense in your poems, particularly those poems that are of an ironic mode, I can't think of the title of the poem, but it's about a dog that walks into the middle of the room and pees on the floor, I can't think of the title of it, your granddaughter. . .

Rakosi: [illegible] oh yes, that tiny. . . "Evening With My Granddaughters".

Rosenblum: Yes, right. I sense in that a microscopic vision, if you like, which is a celebration, but which is almost a relief to be celebrated. You find poems like that that Williams has done which are more literary if I can use that expression, more crafted, which isn't to say that yours aren't crafted, it's just a different kind of celebration, it's more a matter of factual celebration, almost a philosophical one, whereas yours seem to me

to be more than that; not a sigh of relief, but a sigh of recognition. I'm thinking in that sense maybe what you said about your silence maybe casts some interesting light on your later poems.

Rakosi: Well, I don't know, I can't do anything with that.

Rosenblum: I suppose it's not for you to decide either (laughter).

Rakosi: That's right, I really don't know that. You are pointing out something interesting when you compare this to Williams; are you suggesting that there is a stronger element of reality in this kind of poem?

Rosenblum: Yes.

Rakosi: That's true.

Rosenblum: And I'm merely saying that the fact that it's there is recognizable but the fact of the nature of it, that's ungrammatical but maybe that's clearer, the nature of that reality is what I think is different because of the way it's stated.

Rakosi: Let me think about that. Williams and I do have something in common, we do look at reality in similar ways but we don't write about it the same way. Reality is very important to both of us, it's very tangible to both of us.

Rosenblum: It's interesting that both of you had a profession which is not poetry.

Rakosi: Yes, that may be the reason.

Rosenblum: His profession with the physical reality, yours apparently with the psychological.

Rakosi: Well, he was a pediatrician, you see, and he had to deal with people all the time, so that in a way you can say he was in a similar profession. His interest in people was very similar to mine. I don't know why we came out so different .... (laughter) Darnit, now I got sidetracked, I thought I had a good idea but I lost it, maybe it'll come back to me later. It had to do with your question though. What was the question? Maybe it'll come back when we listen to this thing (tape).

Rosenblum: Yeah, I was going to say we'll play this back and point it out. Along the same lines, not to lose the subject, Williams was greatly influenced by Charles Olson, do you feel?

Rakosi: No, you mean the other way around. Williams was influenced by Olson?

Rosenblum: I'm speaking of the fact that he reproduced Olson's essay on projective verse in his Autobiography. Williams obviously influenced Olson but in turn, Williams, I think, was influenced by Olson's ideas.

Rakosi: I doubt it, oh, I doubt it.

Rosenblum: Why do you think he printed that?

Rakosi: Oh, I don't know, I wasn't reading at that time, so I don't know, I wasn't aware of it.

Rosenblum: In his Autobiography he devotes an entire chapter to the essay on Projective verse.

Rakosi: Yeah, yeah.

Rosenblum: In other words, you don't think Williams gained creative energy or ideas from Olson?

Rakosi: No, no.

Rosenblum: How about the idea of Projective verse? How do you feel about it? I mean, do you. . . let me put the question this way. How do you relate to Charles Olson's poetry? You said before that Pound's criticism influenced you more than his poetry. How do you feel about Charles Olson? Obviously Olson would be derivative of you and not the other way around, which is of course true of Williams also.

Rakosi: Well, I didn't become aware of Olson, you see, until I resumed writing myself which was quite late in the 1960s. I don't think I became aware of Olson's existence until about 1969, and then looking at, well, the essay on projective verse I would say he has an interesting idea, the idea that there is such a thing as energy in poetry and that it's important to keep that at top flight. That's an excellent idea, but, the theory of projective verse has led to the most preposterous kind of poetry. Those damned fools don't know when to stop! Energy's all right but you also have to have form, and not lose the beauties of condensation and so on, so although the projective idea is a worthwhile one it's led to the interminable poem (laughter) and to people writing interminably, absolutely interminably! There are young people who have already written 15 volumes of poetry! To what purpose? What do they think they are doing? You know, it's fantastic actually (laughter).

Rosenblum: That reminds me of Pound's statement that all publishing should cease for 10 years and then start up again (laughter).

Rakosi: I can't get excited about Olson (laughter), though some of his poems are lovely. But Olson has picked up Pound's worst traits, *absolutely* his worst traits, insufferable traits. I mean, if you have to endure them in Pound, that's one thing, but why should you have to endure them in a satellite? (laughter).

Rosenblum: To a large degree, I agree. You mentioned Projectivists as being important or, at least Olson's essay, as being important for defining the idea of a transfer of energy. How about the Objectivists? How would you talk about them in terms of a transfer of energy?

Rakosi: Well, you know that's interesting. In a sense we lack energy.

Rosenblum: In a sense you lack. . . ?

Rakosi: We lack energy in the sense that our power is in stasis, in the poem as a statue, a piece of sculpture. It's a different kind of poem.

Rosenblum: Is it a different kind of energy?

Rakosi: . . . though I love to read poems that move, have tempo.

Rosenblum: In other words, your poems freeze motion, whereas Olson. . .

Rakosi: I think they try, not so much motion, as they arrest the basics, and to hold it.

Rosenblum: How do you see that as different from Projective verse, obviously it does, you say they arrest the basics?

Rakosi: By basic I mean a basic emotion, or a basic thought, or a basic image. Now, you take someone like Reznikoff. He gets around this by having it very, very short. You can do that in short form, you can't do it in the long form because the long form then becomes too heavy. I think I derive energy, in my longer poems, from the vernacular, the language, not the literary language but the vernacular.

Rosenblum: In other words, less from ideas and more from the way they sound or the way they "mean" in the language.

Rakosi: Yeah.

Rosenblum: In that sense, I would imagine you feel affinities with George Oppen and naturally Reznikoff, and Zukofsky. Do you think that's a common bond with the Objectivists?

Rakosi: Yes, I think we all had that, right. Oppen, in reading one of my poems, I've forgotten which poem it was, wrote me that the poem was *absolutely* immovable. Nothing was wobbly in it. That was the highest compliment he could pay me. Like he's describing a piece of sculpture, I think it's a good way to look at it, because if a poem's to give any pleasure in its form it can only do it in the way a piece of sculpture does it. It can't do it through images, that's more like the medium of painting. A poem is actually like a piece of sculpture, you can go around it, look at it from different points of view: it's always the same.

Rosenblum: Then, in that sense, you're not an imagist.

Rakosi: No, no.

Rosenblum: Because even Pound's "In a Station of the Metro" is more impressionistic than an objectivist poem would want to be.

Rakosi: Yes, though that's a lovely poem, gosh, that's one of the loveliest. That may be the best imagist poem ever written.

Rosenblum: I think it's interesting to note that in *Poetry* magazine Ezra Pound defined the word objectivist; I think this goes along with what you've said about Pound's theories perhaps being more important to you and to the Objectivists than his poems.

Rakosi: Well, I don't know about the others. You can't say that of Zukofsky. Pound's poetry was very important to Zukofsky, not to me.

Rosenblum: I was just going to bring that up—How do you think, of course you can't speak for Zukofsky, but how would he feel about that statement, do you think? Naturally to Zukofsky Pound's poetry would be as important as his criticism, perhaps more so. I think that might point to some real differences between your writing style and Zukofsky's.

Rakosi: [illegible] there is. Zukofsky chops up the language and his line. It works to a large extent by elision, elipses. I don't like that actually.

Rosenblum: In other words. . .

Rakosi: It offends my ear.

Rosenblum: To have an absence of language, or therefore, an absence of connective meaning. . . .

Rakosi: [illegible], I can't stand language being chopped up for any purpose.

Rosenblum: And therefore I think your affinities, early affinities, with Yeats; he of course is the master of not chopping the language up.

Rakosi: Yeah, [illegible], and Stevens too.

Rosenblum: For Stevens however I see that, perhaps, the affinities are more in word use, getting all you can out of a word, so to speak, in a different sense than Pound speaks perhaps, for idiogrammic intensity, I mean; I think that Stevens is more intellectual; I think his words have more denotive meaning in them, perhaps.

Rakosi: [illegible], I don't know, I just know that I had to stop reading Stevens after a while because he was having too much [illegible] influence on me.

Rosenblum: In the way you used words?

Rakosi: Yeah, also in the way I used my imagination.

Rosenblum: I understand that as a publishing firm, The Objectivist Press, did, as one of their first publications, a book of William Carlos Williams. What was your relationship to that press at the time it was founded?

Rakosi: I had no relationship with them.

Rosenblum: It was just Reznikoff and Zukofsky?

Rakosi: No, [illegible], as I understand it, Oppen put up the money for it and Zukofsky did the editing and that was it. [illegible] I wasn't in New York then, so I didn't even know Oppen and Reznikoff then. I did know Zukofsky, [illegible].

Rosenblum: At what time did you become involved in The Objectivist Press as a publishing outfit?

Rakosi: I didn't.

Rosenblum: At what time did you become involved with Oppen and Reznikoff and Zukofsky, I mean how did they gradually enter into your life?

Rakosi: Well, you see, Ezra Pound had published some things of mine in *The Exile* and Zukofsky had seen them there and when he was invited by Harriet Monroe to edit this issue of *Poetry* he invited me to participate. That was my first contact with Zukofsky.

Rosenblum: I see. Did you spend much time with the early Objectivist poets? I mean, time sitting around discussing what you were doing, or did you just communicate through the mail, etc.?

Rakosi: With Zukofsky, yes. In the early years we corresponded a great deal and then when I was in New York, I worked there for a number of years, we used to see each other. Then when I stopped writing, everything stopped.

Rosenblum: Then you lost all contact with the literary world for those years?

Rakosi: Yes, yes. And those years I didn't know Oppen and Reznikoff at all personally.

Rosenblum: Did you know Pound at all? I mean did you ever meet him, meaning did you ever talk with him?

Rakosi: No.

Rosenblum: With Williams?

Rakosi: No. We had some correspondence but I didn't meet him. I was very shy and I couldn't have done what young people do nowadays with a great deal of ease, they call on well-known writers but I never could have, I was just too shy to do it. Zukofsky encouraged me to get in touch with Pound but I just didn't believe that he would be interested in meeting me.

Rosenblum: Apparently you think there's been a bit of a shift in values. What do you think of it? Do you think it's healthy or that it. . .

Rakosi: Oh, I think it's healthy, I was just timid, shy.

Rosenblum: In other words, you had a desire perhaps to contact these, meet these, poets?

Rakosi: Oh yeah, I would have loved to meet Pound.

Rosenblum: At what time in Williams' life were you corresponding with him?

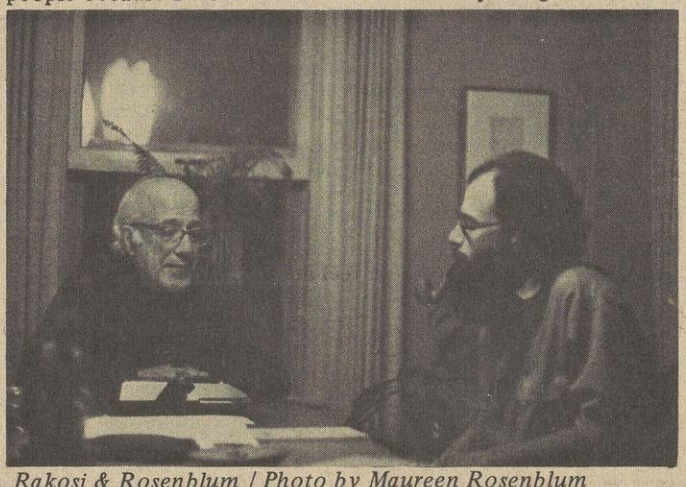
Rakosi: Oh, I wanted to get a Guggenheim, this was in the 1930's, late 1930's, [illegible], and I sent him my first book. Also Stevens and Marianne Moore, with the idea of getting recommendations from them.

Rosenblum: Was this the book called *Poems* that New Directions brought out or was there one before that?

Rakosi: No, it was called *Selected Poems.*

Rosenblum: *Selected Poems*?

Rakosi: Yeah, and Williams wrote back an ecstatic letter (laughter) . . . great book, exactly the kind of book that should be written and so on, but for God's sakes I must never give his name as a reference (laughter) to the Guggenheim people because I would never in a thousand years get the fel-



Rakosi & Rosenblum / Photo by Maureen Rosenblum

lowship.

Rosenblum: Was that because of his suspected communism or what?

Rakosi: No, no, no. Williams was just persona non grata in the literary world then, he had great trouble being accepted great trouble, nobody but the smallest magazines would publish him for years and years. He just never had any reputation (laughter). Now Stevens wrote back a very astute letter, very sharp in his critical appraisal of the book, and with regard to the Guggenheim said that after all the Guggenheim people were just as able as he was to read the book and evaluate it and he saw no reason why they would have to go to him for an evaluation. Which was very sensible. So I didn't get one from *him*! (laughter). My proposal for the fellowship was going to be a prose project—I don't remember now exactly what. This was on my mistaken understanding that every applicant, even poets, had to have a project, so I cooked one up, therefore, and Marianne Moore caught on to its falseness. So I didn't get one from her either and I never got a Guggenheim (laughter).

Rosenblum: You did get a National Endowment grant.

Rakosi: I got two of them actually.

Rosenblum: Was that to complete a book?

Rakosi: No. The first one was an award for a poem and the second was a fellowship.

Rosenblum: I see. In other words, when you were corresponding with Williams, this was about what time?

Rakosi: It was in 1939.

Rosenblum: Did you have any communication with him at all, say, in the late '50's?

Rakosi: No.

Rosenblum: That was the time that you weren't writing.

Rakosi: That's right.

Rosenblum: How about with Ezra Pound, what was the nature of your. . . ?

Rakosi: I never communicated with him.

Rosenblum: Never communicated with Ezra Pound?

Rakosi: No, as a matter of fact, I didn't even know that he had published my poems. I sent them to him, he never replied. It was Zukofsky who told me that they'd appeared.

Rosenblum: I see. How did you feel about that? Were you glad they'd appeared and unhappy Pound didn't reply or?

Rakosi: Oh, I didn't think anything of it [illegible], no. I mean, he was the great figure at the time, you didn't look at him critically.

Rosenblum: When, it was in 1931, that Zukofsky published his essay on objectivism, I believe that was in *Poetry* magazine, wasn't that one of the first, besides Pound's original statement, the first published, public statement on objectivism?

Rakosi: That piece in *Poetry* was the first, yeah.

Rosenblum: How did you respond to that? Did you feel that, did you feel, I'm sure this question's been asked of you many times as well as of all the Objectivists, did you feel that you were one of a kind and therefore supported by the possibility that you weren't just working alone?

Rakosi: Well no. It's pretty well known now because it's been published in a number of places that this was just a coincidence, this whole thing about Objectivism. Zukofsky himself never wanted to give a name to the writers that he selected for the magazine, he just admired their work, but Harriet Monroe insisted upon the name, so he pondered about it and pondered about it and finally fixed on Reznikoff as his model. Now, looking at Reznikoff, it seemed to him that his work was objectification and I suppose from those two things he derived the term "objectivism".

Rosenblum: Reznikoff in the article that I suppose is now famous in *Contemporary Literature,* the spring 1969 issue, in an interview he says that "I see something that moves me and I put it down as I see it and the treatment of it, I abstain from comment." You mention that it's fairly well known right now that all of the Objectivists didn't really consider themselves to be, at least overtly, part of a school, but wasn't there some, there must have been some feeling of comraderie, either that or some kind of justification, let's say, or philosophical justification or philosophical explanation for things, especially in that you were all writing a certain kind of poetry, well, let's face it, it wasn't exactly, not that poetry ever is, but it wasn't exactly a recognized form, or a recognized, that isn't the right word, recognized style. Did that sort of a public transaction affect you at all, affect your work?

Rakosi: What do you mean affected? In what way?

Rosenblum: As he says here, "In the treatment of it, I abstain from comment"—now that, traditionally speaking, wasn't really the mainstream of poetry; however, I think that Pound and Williams were breaking with the mainstream of poetry to create what we now know as a mainstream of poetry, and I think the Objectivists functioned in that same capacity and you get a sense between Pound and Williams, at least in their letters, that they were definitely working in opposite directions, but definitely took energy or, I don't want to use the word inspiration, but something like that from each other or from the mere fact of their directions. And I'm wondering if something like that didn't happen to you in your own work because of all of this; I'm not talking about anything resembling, as the politicians call it, a team spirit, that's nonsense, but I just mean some kind of external justification; you had said that you found poetry to be ineffectual when you mentioned that you were a Marxist. . .

Rakosi: Yeah.

Rosenblum: It seems to me that this whole thing, the principle, would be at war with that.

Rakosi: I don't know how to react to that because, [illegible], many things are just coincidences. Although, I liked Reznikoff's work when I saw it, he and I had no contact with each other. . . the fact that we had some things in common are, I think, coincidences, they're not of a philosophical nature and they're not things that were worked out through discussion or dialog.

Rosenblum: I think that that's been fairly well documented—that they were coincidences. But a second part, now that we've established that, a second part of my question is, and this is very speculative, do you think they were coincidences in a Jungian sense of the word? In other words, do you think they were a manifestation of the same type of creative energy at the same time with different people? Everyone discovered each other independently, you all were obviously working in the same direction without knowing it, to a degree, and I'm wondering if. . .

Rakosi: I don't know whether we're that much alike, whether you can even say that, whether we were working in the same direction. . .

Rosenblum: Do you think the "objectivists" is a relatively useless. . .

Rakosi: Our cases were somewhat similar, what seemed to us as good writing was somewhat similar, but I don't think that you can say more than that because George and I are just as different from each other as Zukofsky and I. Reznikoff and I have many things in common, maybe because I have a strong Jewish identity and so does Charles, that may have something

to do with it, I don't know.

Rosenblum: And Zukofsky doesn't really?

Rakosi: He does, in a different way, in a Talmudic way, which is a different Jewish tradition, which I find too crabbed.

Rosenblum: Do you think the term objectivist is more-or-less useless, or useful in an academic sense; I mean to group you as the objectivists, it obviously has meaning. . . when applied to the individual.

Rakosi: It's useful historically, grouping us in that way, identifying us, but it's not useful if you want to explore it as a system of thought, no, I would say not.

Rosenblum: In other words, nothing should be made of it as a system of poetry, a way of writing poetry.

Rakosi: I think not, no, but I am not altogether certain about this because it does have some meanings for me which are useful, that is, in terms of reality versus subjectivism, but you have to remember that the objectivists' anthology also included some early, long poems by Kenneth Rexroth which were as unobjectified as poetry could possibly be, so what does Objectivist mean then?

Rosenblum: I can see your point. A number of times you've referred to objectivism as being almost a crowbar into the understanding of reality. In other words, you seem to be able to use the term to pry into what reality means. I think with Reznikoff, who studied law, you can see how he looks at reality through that; how does your professional background fit into this? In terms of looking at reality, you talked about this a little bit earlier, in terms of Williams also—do you feel that you're better off as a writer not having been a writer professionally—obviously you couldn't have made money doing it, no one can—but, I mean, having a discipline other than writing, how does that work for you? It is an advantage?

Rakosi: I think it is a possible advantage. In content. In other words, there are some things in my life experience that writers who have always been teachers in the university will never have and never could have. Well, if that comes out in my poetry, it's a plus. But I don't know whether it has come out, or just how, I don't know.

Rosenblum: One thing that seems to me is evident is that your poems aren't self-conscious in a literary sense; they're not conscious of themselves as poems, which, to me, indicates that it's a damned good thing that you weren't a teacher, or involved in the academic world. The same thing with Williams, his poems aren't self-conscious literary machines; whereas I think Pound's can be or not, depending upon what you're looking at, but I think some of them are. Do you think it's reasonable to assume that this is due to the fact that you weren't involved in the academic community?

Rakosi: Oh, that was a blessing, that I know! I did teach for a year, though, at the University of Texas, I was an assistant in the English department, and a more miserable experience I have never had. Oh, God, it was sickening, absolutely sickening.

Rosenblum: In what ways?

Rakosi: Well, this was a long time ago, and people who teach now are somewhat different, but in those days there was such a sycophantic, sweet, polite, dishonest atmosphere, it was absolutely sickening. You felt in constant peril.

Rosenblum: Yeah, I think that's true, that's a good way of putting it, "peril". I think that if you had been in a constant state of academic peril your poems would be different (laughter). You have however served as a, I don't know what the official title would be, poet-in-residence or a workshop director or whatever, do you feel that's different from a real, live teacher?

Rakosi: Oh yes, sure. You're an outsider there. That experience was only for nine months, and as a matter of fact, nobody knew I was on campus even (laughter). There was a big fanfare about having me, and I felt good about it, but once I was there, I was just lost in the stream. . . .

Rosenblum: Do you think a lot of students didn't even know who they were taking a course from; is that possible?

Rakosi: Oh no, not that. They knew I was a poet, but that's all they knew about me. That didn't make any difference, though. They were much more impressed with the fact that I'd been a social worker and psychotherapist than by the fact that I was a successful poet.

Rosenblum: What were they doing in a writer's workshop?

Rakosi: If you think about it for a moment you'll see that's not too bad. They were rating the human element higher than the literary. They knew a social worker does good, and they were very much taken with that. . . no, I liked them for that quality, I didn't mind that.

Rosenblum: As long as we're on the subject, here's a general question: what is your background, generally, what biographical things about yourself interest you and relate to an understanding of you as a poet or as a human being or whatever course you want to take?

Rakosi: Oh gosh (laughter). I wasn't born in this country, I was born in Berlin. My family moved around. . . a lot.

Rosenblum: What did your father do?

Rakosi: At that time, the only time in his life, he was wealthy, he owned a factory in Berlin that manufactured canes, walking sticks, which was a big thing then. You know, every man carried a walking stick in those days. But that was the only time we were well off. Then he moved back to Hungary, and finally came to this country, before the rest of the family came. I came when I was six.

Rosenblum: Where did you go to?

Rakosi: We went to Chicago, were there a year, then moved to Gary, Indiana, for a year (chuckle) and then went to Kenosha, Wisconsin, where I spent my childhood.

Rosenblum: What was your father doing in Kenosha?

Rakosi: He had a jewelry store.

Rosenblum: A jewelry store. And you went to school, the public school system in Kenosha, and then, where did you go after that, you went on to school, where did you go?

Rakosi: The University of Wisconsin.

Rosenblum: In Madison?

Rakosi: Yeah.

Rosenblum: And there you took your degree in. . . ?

Rakosi: I got a BA in English and an MA in Psychology, then, in 1940 I got a M.S.W. from the University of Pennsylvania.

Rosenblum: And then went on into your profession?

Rakosi: Well, I actually did social work before I was trained for it professionally.

Rosenblum: When, in there, did you begin to feel yourself write, do some writing, and was it poetry?

Rakosi: Well, I began as a freshman at the University of Chicago, but I was very lonely in the city and changed in my sophomore year to Madison and in Madison I was in the writing class of William Ellery Leonard. Leonard isn't remembered anymore. . .

Rosenblum: I've heard the name but I don't know much about him.

Rakosi: He was very well known in his time. He was a contemporary of Sandburg's and had about the same kind of reputation although they were very different as people. It was

in Madison that I began to write.

Rosenblum: In school?

Rakosi: Yeah.

Rosenblum: In a creative writing class?

Rakosi: No, no, no. That damned class really discouraged me, if anything. That was no good at all.

Rosenblum: What kind of poems were you writing then?

Rakosi: Oh, rather romantic, florid. . . . but there were some interesting people in Madison at the time, Kenneth Fearing was my roommate. Do you know Fearing's work?

Rosenblum: Here again, I know the name, I've read some things but. . .

Rakosi: He's worth reading, he's good, very interesting fellow, and Horace Gregory was there. . .

Rosenblum: My next sentence was going to be did you know Horace Gregory?

Rakosi: Oh yeah. And Marcia Zatvrensky became his wife and Margery Lattimer was a very dear friend of mine. She was married to Jean Toomer who was the first really good American Negro writer. Toomer wrote a book called *Cane*, a book of short stories. Very poetic, really marvelous, but it was the only good thing he ever wrote, [illegible].

Rosenblum: Were you close to Horace Gregory during that time?

Rakosi: Not very. He was a year ahead of me.

Rosenblum: You kept in touch with him?

Rakosi: No, but with Fearing I did. We saw a good deal of each other. He went to Greenwich Village to live, spent his whole life there.

Rosenblum: You mentioned going to Mexico during the winters, do you do a lot of writing there?

Rakosi: Yes, Mexico's very good for me, [illegible]. No telephone there, no newspaper, nobody to bother me, and it's an advantage not to be able to understand most of the Spanish (laughter). No, I do very well in Mexico.

Rosenblum: In other words, your environment greatly influences the ways in which you write.

Rakosi: Oh yes.

Rosenblum: You mentioned earlier that you like to have absolute quiet. . .

Rakosi: I *have* to have absolute quiet. Anything will distract me.

Rosenblum: You mentioned, also earlier, that sometimes you go to the library or the synagogue to write, does this mean you don't compose on a typewriter; do you write things out longhand and then go to the typewriter?

Rakosi: Yes.

Rosenblum: Do you consider the poem finished before you type it?

Rakosi: Oh no.

Rosenblum: In other words, you. . .

Rakosi: The typewriter just enables me to get an idea of what it would look like in print. I do an awful lot of rewriting. Endlessly.

Rosenblum: When you compose poems, not using a typewriter, does your spacing resemble that which you ultimately end up with?

Rakosi: Yes.

Rosenblum: It does; in other words, you do have a concept of the. . .

Rakosi: Yes, I have it in my mind first. [illegible].

Rosenblum: The *New Directions Anthology*, I think this is the latest, number 28, how recent are the poems in here, the six poems?

Rakosi: Oh, I'd say 2 or 3 years.

Rosenblum: 2 or 3 years?

Rakosi: Yeah.

Rosenblum: The poems that you're working on now, in other words the poems that you're writing now, do you have any, are you, ah, are you comparing—what I'm trying to get at is do you write with an overall concept of a manuscript in mind or do you just write individual poems and they're later collected and put together; in other words, the six poems don't necessarily mean a group, they're just six poems?

Rakosi: No, no. I don't have ambitious schemes or plans.

Rosenblum: You mentioned earlier that by age 30 people sometimes have volumes of work. . .

Rakosi: 15 volumes! (laughter).

Rosenblum: 15, that was it. Your own work constitutes much less, what should I say, fewer volumes. Do you feel that you're more selective, consciously, I mean, do you eliminate a lot of words, lines, poems?

Rakosi: Oh yes. But about the other thing, I hope I'm not being unfair if I say that when I see a person publishing that much in a few years, I can't help suspecting it's for reasons other than poetry because in poetry quality is the only thing that matters. Also, some of this work sounds as if the person sat down, determined to write, and did. I can't write that way. I have to wait for it, for a strong impulse. I suppose I *could* write the other way too, but it would not seem to me to be sincere.

Rosenblum: I think that you could probably, in a very general way, call Ginsberg's poems unprofessional in a sense. What is your feeling about that kind of poetry? I mean, it's got a lot of qualities that projectivists don't cultivate—do you not feel these things, or do you willfully eliminate them, thinking that vast, long sentences perhaps have more sound value than communicative, verbal communicative value?

Rakosi: Well, I think that Allen has a view of himself, of his role as a poet that is different than mine. I've come to believe that he *really* thinks of himself as a kind of prophet, a social seer, someone other people should follow. I don't have this feeling about myself at all. So that the long line comes naturally to him. But I think the long line comes to him anyhow for other reasons: he's more talkative than I am, and he's a great admirer of Whitman. . . .

Rosenblum: Also of Williams.

Rakosi: Yes. But Williams' line is not long. . .

Rosenblum: Right.

Rakosi: It's very short. . .

Rosenblum: Right.

Rakosi: So. . .

Rosenblum: So therefore there's a definite conscious effort on his part to. . .

Rakosi: [illegible] I get my feeling about his seeing himself as a prophet partly because the Whitman line is suited for that. Whitman also saw himself as a prophet. Seeing how young people *do*, in fact, respond to Ginsberg, he's not delusionary in that respect. . .

Rosenblum: Yeah, that was what I was going to ask you; do you think he is, in a sense, a prophet?

Rakosi: Well, I wouldn't want to follow him, believe me (laughter) but he is in fact a prophet in the sense that young people do follow him and listen to every word he says.

Rosenblum: Before you likened your poetry to sculpture; I don't think it would be unreasonable to liken Ginsberg's poetry to music, metaphorically.

Rakosi: Yeah.

Rosenblum: Do you listen to the Beatles, do you listen to music?

Rakosi: Oh yes.

Rosenblum: What do you think of what the Beatles are doing with music?

Rakosi: I don't know what that is. I can't respond to that.

Rosenblum: Do you listen to Mozart or Beethoven or Schubert, Brahms? What do you feel, what do you derive, let's say, is there anything that you receive from that in terms of your poetry; for instance, Ginsberg talks at great length about Bob Dylan, about the Beatles, about the Rolling Stones and he's trying to capture some of this kind of energy—now, you've likened your poetry to sculpture so I'm not saying it's necessarily musical but is there anything you receive from it, I mean it's obviously very abstract.

Rakosi: Well, I listen to a lot of music. I have a very good phonograph set-up here and I have a tremendous record collection, it's in three categories actually, part of it's classical, part of it's contemporary, I have about the same amount of each, part of it's jazz, I love jazz. . . .

Rosenblum: Jazz?

Rakosi: Yeah. But I just haven't tuned in on rock music.

Rosenblum: Is there any relation that you can feel between, let's say, jazz and poetry at all. . . ?

Rakosi: No. No.

Rosenblum: There's no relation with music at all. . . ? I don't really know what I'm asking; it's just a very abstract, general thing. . . .

Rakosi: Well, this question comes up in lectures on poetry which I give each year at the University of Minnesota to school administrators as part of a seminar on humanism in the department of education. I try to explain, try to explain, what music is in poetry. It's not an easy thing to do because the natural thing is to think immediately that it's the same thing as rhythm in music. But that isn't really what it means. It has to do with something less physical. It has to do with the imagination too. This I hope will lead someway to your question about music.

Rosenblum: Sure it will (laughter).

Rakosi: Well, I don't know because I don't know what I'm going to say yet. (Laughter).

Rosenblum: Nor do I know what I've said, so you can't miss.

Rakosi: You begin to read a poem and you begin to fill it in with your own imagination. Now what you fill in, you've gotten the clue for from the poet, and what you begin to fill in has a cadence of some kind, but this is an inner kind of cadence, it has to do with language association, it has to do with the associations that the specific words of the poem invoke in you. It has to do with the way these words would be spoken naturally. It's an instantaneous synthesis of some kind—which is a cadence. Now you can't really compare this to music. And yet, I don't know, I'm really dependent on music a good deal. That is I get very nervous if I don't hear good music for about an hour a day, and now I don't. I've written a few poems on musical themes. Once I tried to reproduce what you might say is the psychology of an instrument, the clarinet; also an organ, and a recent poem, a cello. These are essentially responses to the input of music, so I don't know; maybe you can help me to make some connection here, I don't know what other connection I can make.

Rosenblum: What I sense you saying is that, in other words, your poems aren't, nothing that happens in them is a variation of or a taking upon of anything musical; it's more or less an internal response, it's not even that really, it's more or less, it's more concrete essentially.

Rakosi: Yeah. Now the music of line is important to me, tbe lyrical, which we don't get so very much of anymore. That to me is true poetry. I would never bother to write poetry if I weren't writing what was also lyrical, it just wouldn't be worthwhile, for me. My "Americana" are an exception. Now that's not an aspect of objectivism however. . . .

Rosenblum: I was just going to say, it isn't.

Rakosi: I don't think so, although Reznikoff has a fine ear, I think Zukofsky has a fine ear, and Oppen. . . .

Rosenblum: And especially in *The Materials*. . . .

Rakosi: Yeah, yeah, delicate ear. So I guess it's important to all of us but it's not part of a system. I don't know what's happened to the lyrical in contemporary poetry, I really don't. People write as if it were not a consideration anymore.

Rosenblum: I don't know if this is what you have in mind or not but I think that a lyrical sense in poetry is often thought of as being too traditional in favor of a very contemporary state of being, quality, in other words, the psychology of the poem outweighing the potential literary qualities of it.

Rakosi: Well, that's a good way to put it, yes.

Rosenblum: I think that, in many cases, that's a mistake. Recently you said that New Directions was no longer going to be your publisher because of what inflation essentially has done to publishing and Laughlin can no longer publish poetry that cannot keep New Directions' financial head above water. What are you going to do, first of all, what reflections do you have upon this and second of all what are you going to do now with, in terms of looking for a publisher, I know you've mentioned Black Sparrow as a potential publisher.

Rakosi: Yeah. Well, when Jim wrote me about the situation I felt terribly depressed, and I felt bad for him because he's been, really a very fine person to work with, a man of great integrity, and I know he didn't go into publishing to make money, and I suspect that he put his own money into and lost thousands of dollars in the early years, so I don't have any hard feelings toward Jim. In fact, I feel sorry that he's in this position because it's no fun to be publishing if you can only be publishing writers who sell a minimum of a thousand copies a year. It's a hard problem for poetry because most books of poetry do not sell that many copies. What's going to happen to the distribution of books of poetry I don't know, I think it's sad. My manuscript is with Black Sparrow, I hope they publish it.

Rosenblum: If they don't, will you send it out in search of another?

Rakosi: Well, I'd have to, sure.

Rosenblum: Do you send out poems to magazines that don't solicit your poems, I mean do you. . . ?

Rakosi: Some, some.

Rosenblum: What magazines do you particularly choose?

Rakosi: *Chelsea, Quarterly Review of Literature, Choice, Pembroke Magazine.*

Rosenblum: Norman Macleod. Do you know Norman?

Rakosi: He claims to know me, I don't remember him though (laughter). He claims he knows me from New York. I don't remember. A number of English magazines are interested in publishing me. As a matter of fact, I'm better known in England than here, believe it or not.

Rosenblum: That's what I've been reading. What are your feelings about that?

Rakosi: Great!

Rosenblum: Do you consider yourself to be an American poet who's known in England or a poet who's known in England; in other words, do you identify yourself as an American poet?

Rakosi: Oh sure. But the special feeling the young English

writers have for my work has moved me. I don't know why they particularly like me but they do, I know they do. Maybe some of my European background comes out in the poems and they respond to that. I don't know.

Rosenblum: How do you feel about the oral aspects of your poems. When you write them do you write them to be read aloud, to be read on a page, or a mixture of both, how do you approach it?

Rakosi: I don't write to be read aloud.

Rosenblum: How do you then feel about reading your own poems to an audience?

Rakosi: I write only for my eye and my ear. It has to satisfy my eye and my ear. You know I started out by disliking public reading very much, and I thought the whole thing was a big to-do about not much, but I learned to like it from an interesting person. I first began to like it when I saw that people were genuinely and deeply responding. Now I wouldn't have believed that was possible before I started to read, I just don't write to be read out loud, but as soon as I experienced this, I looked at reading in a different way. It began to be a fulfilling experience for me, something going on between me and the audience.

Rosenblum: You think that even with that development you still don't write. . .

Rakosi: Oh no, that would be a mistake for me. I think those people who write to be read out loud are forced into writing something which does not get to their depth, it necessarily limits them.

Rosenblum: Could you be more specific?

Rakosi: Well, there are all kinds of complexities in the human psyche and in the expression of them and in the use of language and so on, and in the making up of the form of a poem which has nothing to do with their being intelligible or followable by someone who's out there listening. This has nothing to do with clarity, though, because what you can follow when you're listening to a poem is much, much less than what you can follow when you are reading a poem on a page.

Rosenblum: In other words, someone who writes to be read aloud is simplifying?

Rakosi: Well, he has to write something that will be understandable right away because there's no time in a reading for a person to stop and think, now what does this mean? To bring in his own associations. You can't fill in a poem when a person's reading, and that's the essential nature of reading in my opinion, filling it in with the reader's imagination.

Rosenblum: I think, I think that that's an important aspect of poetry, I know it is to me, and I think that, in my own case, I think I've come full circle to agree with that. I think that for a long while I was writing for an oral reading and I found myself simplifying things out so I think that's definitely an important point. I think that a lot of poems, of the sort we were talking about before, confessional poems, long line, long winded poems are read, are written to be read to an audience. And I think that one special characteristic of objectivist poems is that, well, they're not puzzles by any means, but they're puzzling in a way that oral poetry, particularly oral poetry isn't; and I think that's mistaken by a lot of critics and a lot of students of poetry as identifying objectivist poems as being overly-intellectual or rather as mind-oriented as opposed to whatever else there is. I mean, they're saying the body's excluded, oral participation also, not in the sense of reading alone but in the sense of hearing it—and that's all. This is limiting. I think that may or may not be the case with objectivist poetry, but I don't think it's bad. I don't think a pejorative, or negative rather, I don't think negative criticism is justifiable. . .

Rakosi: Well, yeah, I think too it's something of a fad about oral poetry. Of course, there are a lot of readings. Some of it is bound to have some effect on the writing of poetry, I'm sure. But, in some deep way, I don't know, I'm suspicious of it. It's as if you were writing for an audience, which immediately puts your own personal integrity into question. Now, of course, if you are writing on a social theme, an audience is appropriate, but individual lyric poetry? I don't know. That doesn't mean that reading can't be pleasurable and rewarding, I think it can, I know that from personal experience, and I think that one good thing about it is that many young people who would not sit down and read a book of poems, they just wouldn't spend the time or give it what it requires in the way of personal concentration and effort, imagination, can get something out of a reading from what the poet puts into his voice and his cadence, his pauses. Pauses are very important in reading. . . .

Rosenblum: Especially in, if you're going to employ what you said before is an important technique, that is the line length—no matter what it is called, it's called the variable foot as Williams called it, or the breath segment as Olson called it, it's still the same thing, you're talking about line-length. I think something like that only comes across, well, not only comes across but should come across, I think it's exaggerated and you can see the way it works, if the poet who wrote the poem reads it. Would you consider making a recording of your poems, have you made a recording of your poems?

Rakosi: Yeah, I've been videotaped several times, twice in England, the University of Hull and the University of East Anglia. Cambridge University and the University of Essex taped me. And in Berkeley I was taped a few years ago, but there's no commercial disc of my work.

Rosenblum: How would you feel about doing something like that?

Rakosi: Fine, fine.

Rosenblum: Do you think that someone reading your poems, silently or aloud, reads them the way you read them? In other words, are you able, do you think, to write a poem such that the reading of it is going to be controlled?

Rakosi: Well, I think so, I think so. . . . Of course, the reading of a poem now takes you into another medium. One reason why some poets fall on their faces when they read is because they don't understand this. They read in a flat voice. they don't want to stress their poem in any way. They want it to come out as it is, this is the theory, but reading is a form of acting, it's a different medium. You have to enter that medium.

Rosenblum: What poets have you heard read in a very flat way, which you would say are not appropriate to the medium?

Rakosi: Oh, some of the women poets. Let's see. Well, William Carlos Williams was a terrible reader, Pound was an awful reader. Let's see, Elizabeth Bishop, I've forgotten the others. I was shocked at how unpleasant the voices were. Now I certainly don't have a pleasant voice but these were just flat, a monotone, so there's no person there. Obviously the poet is not putting himself into the medium of projecting, which is what acting is. It's a worthwhile medium too. Now there are some splendid poets reading, Cummings, I think, was a great reader, Stevens was a very fine reader. I was surprised. Have you heard him?

Rosenblum: I've never heard him.

Rakosi: Oh, *very* good. And Eliot was a good reader.

Rosenblum: I would consider Eliot to be rather monotone or flat.

Rakosi: Well, but it's dignified. It's very appropriate to his subject matter, it's very impressive. Kenneth Patchen was a good reader.

Rosenblum: Have you heard some of the readings done by Rexroth and Ferlinghetti to jazz with the cellar jazz quartet?

Rakosi: Yes. I didn't like that.

Rosenblum: You didn't?

Rakosi: No.

Duncan is a very good reader, a great reader.

Rosenblum: But basically you feel that your poems are page poems and if they're read aloud that's not inappropriate, but. . .

Rakosi: Well, I wouldn't say that, the question you asked was whether I wrote oral poetry and I said "No, that's not the way I write" but that doesn't mean that the kind of poetry I write can't be read well to the audience and be followed—I think it can. I wouldn't have thought so before I tried it, but it can be. They follow it.

Rosenblum: Do you find giving poetry readings an inspiring experience?

Rakosi: No, but enjoyable.

Rosenblum: Enjoyable?

Rakosi: Yeah, enjoyable. It's a great pleasure to move people. Now when I was at the University of Essex I read a poem there called "Services". It's a sad poem because it has to do with aging, and one of the young women in the audience who is herself a writer was crying, and it gave me tremendous satisfaction. That's a great experience to have that kind of union with another person through poetry.

Rosenblum: And of course this sort of thing is what you're looking for.

Rakosi: Yes, yes.

Rosenblum: You mentioned before about Judaism, some role in your sense, I don't remember the way you put it, in your sense of background or. . .

Rakosi: Well, I was trying to discover why Reznikoff and I had some things in common and I thought maybe it's because both of us have strong Jewish identifications. I don't know how. I haven't written many poems that have Jewish subject matter, so I don't know.

Rosenblum: In other words, this is just a feeling that you have and that you don't define your poetry, it's just something. . .

Rakosi: I'm just speculating that it might be an element. But I didn't always have it. As a matter of fact, as a young man I didn't have it at all. I was quite unsympathetic to it, in fact.

Rosenblum: To the tradition itself or to your own possible identity?

Rakosi: To both.

Rosenblum: To both?

Rakosi: Yeah.

Rosenblum: Does this mean that later on you felt differently about it?

Rakosi: Yes.

Rosenblum: Strong ties or simply the fact that possibly. . .

Rakosi: I think I began to develop them after I married and had children. So it's a question of personal identity in relation to a family.

Rosenblum: What feelings or thoughts do you have about small press? Do you think the small press is really doing what it's supposed to do—that it supports unknown but avant-garde writers? Small press is obviously very prolific and active in this country.

Rakosi: Yes, Oh I think they do, I think they do. There's a tremendous difference in quality among them though, of course. But I really don't know what would happen to poetry if there weren't small presses.

Rosenblum: In other words, you see them as essential then?

Rakosi: Oh, indispensable, indispensable. If the situation continues with the big publishers as they have been, I don't know what poetry will not be published by the small presses.

Rosenblum: What do you see as the direction or future of large publishing firms in regard to what we've been talking about.

Rakosi: Well, you know most of them have been taken over anyhow by other kinds of corporate entities. They're no longer what they were at first. They'll just be business enterprises, you know. We see what's happened to the bookstore in this country. It's beginning to happen in England too. The bookstore as we knew it has almost disappeared andwe're getting supermarkets. Only the books that move fast and in quantity are stocked. They're bought on consignment and if they're not sold in a short time, they're shipped right back, and that's what makes a supermarket.

Rosenblum: But obviously it's having its effect on quality literature.

Rakosi: Oh yeah.

Rosenblum: Do you think the small press can, if not remedy the situation, at least balance it? I think that's one of the roles small press has or should have.

Rakosi: Well, they really have to save poetry. And prose too of the kind that doesn't sell widely, although prose dosn't have the problems poetry does.

Rosenblum: A brief digression. Have you ever written any prose yourself, fiction?

Rakosi: Not fiction, but my new book is half prose.

Rosenblum: Of what sort, critical work?

Rakosi: It's aphoristic, sort of philosophical, speculative, meditative.

Rosenblum: I see. Do you approach something like that differently, I imagine you do, but is it a different kind of energy than you put into your poems? Is it as self-satisfying? In other words, does it feel good when you're done?

Rakosi: Ah. Yeah, I find it very difficult to write though. I find it more difficult to write than poetry. That is, I find it more difficult to satisfy myself about it than about poetry. I really sweat over the prose more. But maybe that's the nature of aphoristic prose, I don't know. Part of the reason for it may be that I intuitively look for form in prose. You know, you're not writing with that in mind in prose. You know, you're writing to make a point. So it's constantly frustrating and very hard.

Rosenblum: In other words, you're not propelled through the writing by the form. . .

Rakosi: No, it's your mind that moves you in prose.

Rosenblum: And therefore, I suppose, it's experimental. . . It's less like an experiment; prose is less like an experiment than poetry—the way you've described it, it's less of a surprise for you in that you're not discovering the form as you write it. It sounds like it's less surprising to you because you're not discovering the form while you're doing it.

Rakosi: Oh yeah, that's true. . . but I do discover new ideas in myself.

Rosenblum: You said that Rakosi is your family name but not your legal name—is it Rawley?

Rakosi: Rawley.

Rosenblum: Rawley is your legal name? Could you discuss why you went through that particular change?

Rakosi: Actually it was kind of a silly reason, but the name was constantly mispronounced and misspelled, [illegible] I just got sick and tired of it and changed it, it was being pronounced Rak-kawski, and nobody seemed to know how to spell it. It became a nuisance.

Rosenblum: But you retained Rakosi as your pen name?

Rakosi: Yes. Now my son is angry at me for having changed my name because he likes Rakosi much better (laughter).

Rosenblum: Do you think he'll change it back to Rakosi?

Rakosi: No, it'd be too complicated for him to change it, he's a doctor. He never could understand why the name was changed. In England I found nobody had trouble with Rakosi. I don't know why. The English, they might be more used to foreign names [illegible].

Rosenblum: But in America?

Rakosi: Especially in the middle west, terrible.

Rosenblum: How important are dreams to your writing? You mentioned before that you wait for the, I think the word you used was impulse, I might be mistaken.

Rakosi: Yes.

Rosenblum: Impulse. How important are dreams as they do or do not contribute to that impulse—or do you write about dreams, do some of your poems rise up out of dreams?

Rakosi: No. . . no, they have not. And I, myself, do not attach much significance to dreams. . . .

Rosenblum: As, ah, doing work?

Rakosi: Or anything actually.

Rosenblum: Anything? You mean even in social work, the psychological significance of dreams isn't stressed?

Rakosi: Yes. I think one of the most absurd things was the tremendous emphasis that the first surrealists placed on dreams. . . . It was preposterous. But in the last year or two I have written up some dreams because they seemed to have literary potentialities in themselves. In my new book I have one called "The Depression Dream" and it was so vivid and powerful that it did seem important to me, but not as a dream so much, but as re-evoking the climate of the Depression period. And a couple of dreams, which I have written about in the prose section of my new book, I thought were interesting as dreams to show about myself as a writer. But other than that, I do not use dreams. There may be some connection, some relationship between the frequency of dreaming and the activity of one's imagination, because I do have a lot of dreams and always have had them but other than that simply to report on a dream as though it were another kind of reality has no interest for me.

Rosenblum: I would assume then that your interest in, let's say the work of Carl Jung, would be limited in that sense; are you familiar at all with Jung?

Rakosi: Oh sure.

Rosenblum: What do you think of his. . .

Rakosi: You mean his theory of archetypes?

Rosenblum: Yes, for instance. Because he claims that they're manifested in many ways and one of the ways is of course dreams.

Rakosi: [illegible] that's I think [illegible] a lot of nothing, [illegible] entirely speculative, you know, [illegible]. They're interesting, but I have no confidence in them as being true.

Rosenblum: You mean you don't think they're psychologically valid?

Rakosi: [illegible], they have no clinical applicability. Jung to my knowledge doesn't use his theory of archetypes in his own professional practice. He uses it to try to explain myths and early literature. Freud like to do that too. He was constantly trying to interpret mythology, prehistory. Otto Rank, it was a favorite subject of his. This is a favorite practice of middle European intellectuals. It's in the German university tradition, this sort of thing, speculations on the grand scale.

Rosenblum: In other words, Jung's work's just speculative.

Rakosi: This part is.

Rosenblum: This part of it, yeah.

Rakosi: Now, some of Jung is very sound.

Rosenblum: Which part, for instance?

Rakosi: [illegible], his professional practice, but not when he begins to speculate about the meaning of history.

Rosenblum: You mean by his professional practice the actual patient-psychiatrist relationship?

Rakosi: Yeah, and what he has to say about the theory of therapy. And he has some very good insights into the psychology of the artist, as does Otto Rank too. Rank really is the greatest in that respect. You know, Freud himself was a very creative person. He was really almost as much of a writer as a scientist, but he has almost nothing to say of any significance on the creative process, on the nature of it. That was left, really, to Rank and Jung. As a matter of fact, if you follow simply Freud's written works, you find the most mechanistic view of the creative process.

Rosenblum: There seem to be a lot of Jungian interpretations of literature in the last five to ten years especially. Are you familiar with any study at all; do you think that the Jungian methods are inappropriate?

Rakosi: I really have not read them enough to say.

Rosenblum: In other words, the main emphasis you have regarding Jung is in the patient-psychiatrist relationship.

Rakosi: Yes, and some insights into the nature of the artist which are quite revealing. The nature of the creative process is something of great interest to me. It is elusive. One of the problems is that although the term *imagination* is used endlessly, we really don't know what imagination is. Nobody knows. We know how it works, in the same way that we know how electricity works—we see its effects—but we don't know what imagination *is*. We know it's part of the subconscious, that it's not in our control. So there's a great unknown there to be explored.

Rosenblum: When you mention electricity does that mean all our thinking about how physics is really in a sense speculative philosophy and in the same way that Jung is, in a sense, a speculative philosopher; in other words, both psychiatry and physics are describing something but don't really know how it works.

Rakosi: No, I wouldn't say that they're analogous, because Jung's is pure speculation, he has nothing to go on except his imagination. . . .

Rosenblum: And in physics, you have the physical effects to go on. . . .

Rakosi: In higher physics you build from one thing to another, you've got a structure there and you do start with some knowns and you deduce from those knowns and make some inferences from those, and then, although you can't prove them conclusively, you prove them in a sense by being able to predict that so and so will happen and it does happen. In other words, some of Einstein's speculations, for example, were proved because he was able to predict certain physical, observable facts from his speculations. Now you can't compare this to Jungian speculation. No.

Rosenblum: In other words, what you're saying is that even though Jung cites case histories to support some of his

writings on dreams and archetypes this to you is a different sort of footnoting than you have. . .

Rakosi: No, he's not able to bring in case material to prove any theory like archetypes.

Rosenblum: I'm thinking of, I don't remember the name, I think it's Miller, who has this series of fantasies and dreams, I'm speaking of a woman, I think her name is Miller, I don't know, I can easily look it up, it's in one of the volumes I have, he has I think, in that instance, theorized based on Miller. . .

Rakosi: Oh I see what you mean. Well, yeah, you can. . . Yes, it would be possible to take the dreams of a patient and, Rank did this too, show some analogy, some similarity between this and an archetypal conception which Jung had. That's possible, but that's not proof. That doesn't mean anything.

Rosenblum: And also the work he does by comparing myths from five or six different cultures which he also used to validate, in other words, you see this as being different entirely from seeing an apple fall out of a tree and deducing the law of gravity?

Rakosi: Yes. We don't know what [illegible] myths mean, to start with, in any sense. They're the most illusive and to us now, the most meaningless kind of thing. To use one myth to try and show something about another myth is to me groping around in the dark.

Rosenblum: It seems that your approach to Jung, and I'm thinking also, previously you mentioned surrealists, some of the first surrealists using dreams, it seems to me that your approach to this kind of speculation and experimentation is a very practical one and I'm wondering if this is a result of the work you did as a social worker. I can see it sort of spilling over into the poems you write—your choice of words. I think your poems go from one point to another in a very, and I use logical and imaginative as synonymous words, I think that your poems move logically/imaginatively; which is to say very clearly from one point to another, whereas some poems, I mentioned last night, some writers work by almost an elliptical method, I think you referred to Zukofsky in that sense, or was it Oppen, it was Zukofsky. . .

Rakosi: Zukofsky.

Rosenblum: Your poems don't do that, do they? I don't see anything being left out, or any speculation on the way.

Rakosi: No, no. Well, that's a temperamental matter. I don't myself like vagueness of any kind, but there's room for difference.

Rosenblum: Some of your earlier poems you have mentioned as being very romantic; now, were they different in that they were more speculative? Do you think they were just of a different sort altogether?

Rakosi: I haven't kept any of them, so I just don't remember what they were like, you know. They were romantic in the sense that they were very colorful and aspirational. Idealistic. The mystery in nature and man's relationship to nature. There are some legitimate mysteries in the world which are basically interesting and worth pursuing. The pursuit of myths is not one of them in my opinion. It's too remote, too insubstantial, so that I personally dislike it. . . but that's personal.

Rosenblum: You mentioned before that you played a lot of poker, I'm wondering. . . .

Rakosi: (laughter) I don't play a lot of it, but I love poker.

Rosenblum: You love poker. I'm wondering what kind of, in a sense, what kind of a game that you play, is it, do you follow the logical processes of the whole thing, or are you interested in the chance occurrences, or—you probably never thought about it (laughter).

Rakosi: Well, I play a hard game. I play to win. I like to play with tough players, I really don't like to play with players that are sloppy and easy to beat. Poker to me is irresistible. I have never been able to resist an invitation to a poker game. As a matter of fact, when I was in Texas, I played for two days and three nights once (laughter). There were eight of us. We rented this suite of rooms in a hotel. We were all nuts. We couldn't stop. We just went on and on and on.

Rosenblum: Without sleep, huh?

Rakosi: Well, there was a bed in the other room, so every six or seven hours, you could lie down for an hour or so, get up and play again.

Rosenblum: Were there really high stakes in that game, or. . .

Rakosi: Yeah, it was a tough game. This was before I was married. I haven't been able to afford that kind of game since. But I'm a sucker for poker.

Rosenblum: Did you win or lose a lot in that game?

Rakosi: In that particular game I lost a lot. The stakes actually were too high for me. That was why I lost. I couldn't play a normal game, I kept getting pushed out by very high bets.

Rosenblum: Are poems in any sense a gamble, do you think? To get through to win at the end; win at the end, whatever the stakes?

Rakosi: Well, they're not so much a gamble, except for some few brief poems. They're a great labor. But poker appeals to me I think because it brings out a part of my nature that usually isn't expressed.

Rosenblum: Do you play chess at all?

Rakosi: No.

Rosenblum: I know the last time we talked about listening to music, ah, what I'm sort of exploring I think is the machinery I mentioned before, the machinery of imagination or logic; in other words, going from one point to another; it seems to me that that kind of machinery can happen in poker games or while playing chess or listening to music, it's almost a mathematical awareness of reality, in a way—that's pushing things a bit, I probably should be more careful with my words here, but I sense, well, I know, sometimes I'll read one of your poems and I'll receive the same kind of energy or process that I receive sometimes from playing a game of chess or from listening to Schubert, Schubert more than Brahms, or listening to some Hungarian composers, some Kodaly, Bartok or Janacek or Khachaturian sometimes, there's a sense of order, I guess is what I'm saying, but an order that moves, you know, that moves from a point to another point not leaving anything out or if something's left out one comes back to retrieve it at the end.

Rakosi: Yes. Well, I think that leads me to say this. When the objectivists spoke about objectifying something, this is one of the things that I had in mind because although what comes to the poet's imagination is of course disorganized (it could be anything and has to be allowed out freely) what finally is left on the page does have to be an ordering of these things in some way after the inappropriate things have been selected out. You do have to discover what the order of these things to each other is and what it indicates. That's what we mean by clarity, actually, in any poem. That isn't so obvious that it isn't an issue. So, I like to hear you say that it does leave you with that. That's the thing that's so time-consuming, though, and so hard in the making of a poem, finding that order.

Rosenblum: Or not leaving any of the order out, I would imagine.

Rakosi: Yeah.

Rosenblum: I would imagine also that you'd see this order as grossly different from the order of dreams.

Rakosi: There is no order in dreams.

Rosenblum: There is no order in dreams?

Rakosi: No. None that we can detect. As a matter of fact, if we assume as true what Freud believed about them, that their purpose was to conceal, they would have to be without order in order to conceal.

Rosenblum: Do you, to a degree, go along with that, that they are out to conceal?

Rakosi: Yes, I believe that. I believe that because in my own professional practice occasionally I have tried to understand a person's dream, although I didn't used to go into it very much, and I was usually on the right track if I interpreted the dream as being the exact opposite of what the dream seemed to be.

Rosenblum: My experience with psychotherapy would partially substantiate what you just said in that I would often find the therapist suggesting things to me that the dream suggested to him; in other words, things that weren't apparent in the dream; but I don't know that the dream was out to conceal them, I don't know that at all really; on the other hand I don't know that the dream was out to do its best to make things clear to me either (laughter). By saying that I don't know that it was out to conceal things, I'm not assuming the opposite, that it was out to try and express, you know, something that's truly possible.

Rakosi: Well, what I meant by concealing was that the dream obviously was trying to make a point but a point which the individual in his conscious life did not want to know, wasn't ready to know, and so on, and that the dream protected him from knowing it by concealment. Nevertheless it was expressed. So it's expressed safely.

Rosenblum: In your work as a psychotherapist when you would become engaged in what's called dream therapy, you wouldn't first of all it sounds like you wouldn't go into that but if you did you'd look for what that would be concealing, or hiding from the patient and look at it in terms of what the patient did not want to know or couldn't admit to himself.

Rakosi: Yes. Yes.

Rosenblum: Which is, I think, a lot different from what Jung does with dreams, in a way; in a way it's not and in a way, of course, it is. And I think that that exploratory technique is something that can be seen in your poems, is that not correct? In other words, you, I think, look under things and you look around things, but you never look through things; you recognize an object for what it is and see what's under it, what's behind it, and you move it around and put it in a different context but you don't look through it. You don't imagine what's on the other side of it. You pick it up and look.

Rakosi: I guess that's true. . . . I don't know because once the subconscious material is out and I've begun to work on it, you arrive at some reality and some truth that wasn't in the subconscious at all. That is a subsequent discovery.

Rosenblum: You do obviously affirm very strongly the existence of a subconscious. How do you feel that it is manifested? How does it manifest itself? Or isn't that an appropriate question to ask of that sort of material, in other words, what evidence do you look for?

Rakosi: Well, the material is not spun simply out of the conscious mind. It comes from the subconscious. Everything that is intuitive comes from the subconscious. That's why you have to wait for an impulse. It may not be a helpful question therefore to ask, although it is a question how much of the subconscious is allowed to remain. Some poets, some regarded as academic, of course, allow very little of it to remain, very little.

Rosenblum: How do you feel about John Berryman in this light, or?

Rakosi: Oh, Berryman. Although Berryman was a teacher most of his life, I really don't see him as an academic poet. . . .

Rosenblum: You don't see Berryman as an academic poet?

Rakosi: No, I don't.

Rosenblum: The *Dream Songs* in particular you don't see as academic poetry?

Rakosi: No. He allowed an awful lot of his subconscious to stay in. He's not a predictable kind of writer at all.

Rosenblum: I agree, I think he's very misinterpreted actually.

Rakosi: Yeah. I respect Berryman, I think he's a far better poet than some of his friends. He was a very learned fellow actually, a tremendous reader, and remembered a lot, but that didn't make him academic because what he wrote was not at all predictable.

Rosenblum: In other words, one of the things that you see as a quality of academic poetry is that it is severely predictable. You know what's going to happen, so to speak.

Rakosi: Yes. Also that he allowed himself to his free associations.

Rosenblum: What do you think of Robert Bly's poems?

Rakosi: He's an interesting poet. I like him better as a poet than as a performer (laughter).

Rosenblum: Do you think that some of his political poems could be more Bly the performer than the poet? The difference in *The Light Around the Body* from *Silence in the Snowy Fields*?

Rakosi: What was the question?

Rosenblum: Do you think that Bly in his political poetry is perhaps acting instead of writing, perhaps. . . . In other words, do you find him less poetic than in his earlier poems?

Rakosi: Yes. The anti-war poems, he put tremendous passion into them and drama but I don't think they're the best Bly. I think the best Bly is the short poem in which he simply gets a certain look at nature which is interesting and original and has some of the mystery that good poetry needs.

Rosenblum: How about a very short poem like, I can't remember the title of it, "I have awakened in Missoula, Montana, utterly happy", I believe is the right quote. . . something like that I think combined a strong sense of mystery and a strong sense of physical reality.

Rakosi: Yes, of place. Yes, I like that line very much.

Rosenblum: I do too. I think that your comments about John Berryman are very interesting, have you written any literary criticism, so to speak?

Rakosi: No.

Rosenblum: Have you ever, do you want to, or do you have inspirations to do any?

Rakosi: None at all.

Rosenblum: Not at all, whatsoever?

Rakosi: No.

Rosenblum: Do you feel any strong reasons for that or is it something that you just damn well don't want to do?

Rakosi: There are plenty of people doing that. No, I have no interest in it.

Rosenblum: You mentioned that you met Toby Olson. Are you familiar with his work?

Rakosi: Slightly.

Rosenblum: Slightly. Yeah, you both appeared in *New Directions 25,* do you have any comments about his work that you'd like to make?

Rakosi: I don't think so.

Rosenblum: One of the reasons I asked is that I think that Olson, Toby Olson, brings together poetic elements that some people call projectivist and elements that are known as objectivist—sometimes brings them together, I don't know how many people feel that way, but I see him as a sort of a melting pot of these two schools of writing, and, I think actually, that he brings the best qualities of each to his poetry.

Rakosi: Could be, could be.

Rosenblum: You mentioned last night that your sense of Judaism, or yourself, being Jewish, didn't really surface until you'd gotten married. I notice a lot of poems that begin to deal with being married and children and grandchildren; it seems that going into a family situation, a family life greatly changed a lot of things for you; what are your reflections on that?

Rakosi: [redacted], you asked earlier what things in my life are important to me. My marriage has been very important. My wife has had great influence on me, a very great influence. Her personality is, in many ways, the exact opposite of mine, so that she complements me and influences me too. I would really be a very different person if I had not been married to her.

Rosenblum: Were you writing, I'm a little confused on the dates, were you writing when you were married or did you being to write after you got married?

Rakosi: No, no, I was writing before. . . .

Rosenblum: I know you were, but when did you start again? was what I meant to ask.

Rakosi: No, I wasn't writing then. . .

Rosenblum: When you got married you weren't writing?

Rakosi: No.

Rosenblum: That's what I wanted to clarify. Then it was after you had been married that you began to write again.

Rakosi: Yeah, many years after.

Rosenblum: When you were married did you have an orthodox ceremony or was it a civil ceremony?

Rakosi: It was civil.

Rosenblum: Civil ceremony?

Rakosi: Yeah.

Rosenblum: As civil as New York can make it (laughter).

Rakosi: It was in City Hall [redacted], it was awful. My God! (laughter) We were so poor then. This was part of it.

Rosenblum: How much time do you spend at Yaddo?

Rakosi: I go for three or four weeks. That's the best place for me, [redacted].

Rosenblum: It is.

Rakosi: Oh, Yaddo's great, for me.

Rosenblum: Could you describe your feelings about the place a little bit, how you came to go there, etc.

Rakosi: Yaddo's great because the whole place is organized around giving the person absolute privacy.

Rosenblum: And you've said before that this is something essential.

Rakosi: Oh, it's very important. Some can work with all kinds of distractions around, I can't. [redacted], almost anything will distract me.

Rosenblum: From your concentration?

Rakosi: Yes.

Rosenblum: When you're distracted do you then simply stop the piece that you're writing? Or do you then try to shut off the distraction; what I'm trying to get at is when you're distracted do you stop writing? You just leave your—

Rakosi: Sure, [redacted]. I may not get back to it after that. If it catches me at the point where things are coming up from my subconscious, I'm dead.

Rosenblum: In other words, if the structure of ordering is tampered with you find it hard to get back into the structure which will work with the materials you're getting.

Rakosi: Yes, now if it gets me after I've already jotted down things on paper, then I can get back to it. Then it might even be better sometimes to wait to get back to it. But in the initial stages it's deadly for me.

Rosenblum: Which of the poems that you've written have stayed with you the most. In other words, I guess what I'm asking for is do you have a poem of yours that you know really does the job well, is your favorite, expresses exactly what you wanted to express at the time?

Rakosi: You mean from these two [*Ere-Voice* and *Amulet*] books?

Rosenblum: Well, any, any, I was thinking from anything in particular, but from *Amulet* or *Ere-Voice.*

Rakosi: There's a recent poem of mine that I wrote in Mexico, this poem is "Services" that I mentioned before that made this young woman cry. I think it may be one of my very best.

Rosenblum: Did you feel that it was before you read it and before this?

Rakosi: Yes, I knew, [redacted].

Rosenblum: You did?

Rakosi: That's coming out in England, in their *Poetry Review.* But some poems, the poem called "The Code", I think is one of my best too. I think it's thoroughly realized. . . . That's the poem that won a National Endowment for the Arts Award.

Rosenblum: I'm thinking that, you know, it seems as though, if I can express this adequately, it seems as though the system itself fascinates you, and your poems express the system but they're not, as I mentioned last night, self-conscious literary artifacts; in other words, they're not overly literary about the fact that they are poems although you certainly, they certainly identify themselves as such, which I think is a unique phenomenon. I think that poems are either too literary or literary in a bad sense, no examples come to mind at the moment, or they're so, well in the sense that you express in your note on objectivism in *Stony Brook:* you speak of an almost diarrhea quality in expression; I think that most things go from one extreme to the other or combine the two in an awkward way. But I think that the poems that you have, I think they maintain their identity as poems which is something that I appreciate in the poems but, on the other hand, they're not literary to the point of boredom which most poems become as they say they're poems themselves; but I find that a student's reaction to that is mixed because they're —for one thing—relieved to find a poem that isn't, that doesn't depend on a knowledge of a great deal of poetry or literature that has preceded it—of course one has to be aware of the tradition, naturally, but on the other hand, they get the feeling that, well, I can remember one student saying "well, if it's like this how come it's still so dense or intellectual" or, you know, whatever; now this is just an example of a mixed reaction that occurs and I think that depending upon the awareness of the student, I think that can easily be dealt with in the classroom situation. I find actually that your poems work well in the classroom situation; they're not impossible to deal with because there isn't really anything specific to say about them as you can find with a lot of poems that aren't too self-con-

scious, but yet they're, they inspire a lot of discussion which seems to revolve around them almost in concentric circles—like a gyroscope effect, the class revolving around your poem.

Rakosi: Oh, that's interesting.

Rosenblum: I'm wondering, all of which is to say, I'm wondering if you've had any other people who've used your poems in classes or in academic situations, if they've ever expressed anything to you that may resemble what I've said or differed greatly from it.

Rakosi: No, I'm kind of isolated here, I don't really get reports on what use is being made of my poetry in the classroom. I have no awareness of that at all. As a matter of fact, it's amazing how little awareness a writer has of who's reading his poems or what influence they're having. I got the biggest surprise a few years ago when Allen Ginsberg visited me and. . .

Rosenblum: Here in Minneapolis?

Rakosi: Yeah. He came with his tape machine. Every word that was uttered [illegible] was recorded by him (laughter).

Rosenblum: He just left the tape recorder on all the time?

Rakosi: Oh yeah. I got my first awareness of the effect of my poetry from a comment he made, "You know, we all knew your work when we were starting to write." I didn't know, I didn't know Allen Ginsberg ever existed during my silence because I wasn't reading anything. Afterwards, I had no awareness that anybody knew I was alive. There are occasional surprises, however. Not long ago my publisher sent me a copy of Louis Simpson's *An Introduction to Poetry*. It's a full anthology from Chaucer on, obviously intended to be used as a classroom text. In the Introduction he quotes several of my poems as examples of a different kind of poetry, peculiarly American poetry without metaphor. He gives me credit for introducing it.

Rosenblum: I would agree with him.

Rakosi: Naturally that gave me quite a lift. Needless to say however I wrote those poems without intending to innovate and certainly without anticipating what effect they were going to have.

Rosenblum: I know, well, Allen Ginsberg saying that he grew up wth your poems, in a sense, I could say the same thing; I came upon your work after I had been writing for a while and I too had been taken by the fact that you didn't use metaphor and therefore, although I had experienced the absence of metaphor in poets previously to coming upon your work I still, your work had a certain, well I mentioned before, a game of chess has a certain type of energy, well, I picked up that type of energy also from your poems and I think about that time saw that I could get rid of a lot of metaphorical statements that I still had in my own poems. I think that's I think that's the beauty and importance of your work. There is no push toward symbolic or metaphorical statement; I'm sure that's been said a million times in a million different ways but each writer I think who discovers it for himself says it differently, with a different sort of inflection, so to speak, and I think that's, well, I know often with your books I will read them but I will sometimes simply have them near me, like within four or five feet when I'm writing (laughter), almost like a talisman in a way, but not quite, but it's something like that actually but not quite—what I mean to say by that is the talisman doesn't quite equal the touchstone that your poems provide for me and I'm sure that's the case with a lot of writers that I know of.

Rakosi: Well, that's very pleasant to be told, that's great.

Rosenblum: I think that I mentioned to you *The Werewolf Sequence*, the poem I had just finished. I think there's a lot in there, there is no metaphor in there and what would appear to be symbolic isn't—and I don't want to go into that, but that's largely as a result of the Objectivists and I think mostly that's a result of your work; particularly the work that I have found in these two ND anthologies and in these two ND books of yours that I do have; is this, the first book, *Selected Poems*, is that still available?

Rakosi: Sure.

Rosenblum: Is that still in print?

Rakosi: No, not *Selected Poems*. But you can still pick up an occasional copy.

Rosenblum: Every once in a while there's a used book store I'll run across. . .

Rakosi: It gives me encouragement to hear this from you because I don't really write for an audience, as I said, so if there's an audience there, that's great.

Rosenblum: Well, I'm thoroughly confident there is. And that the audience is the type of audience that is dedicated in that there is a continual reference to your work or a continual coming back, which to me is the way I define which poets are important. I could rip off a list of poets that I'll never read again or, if I do, I'll just do it in a magazine, just for the hell of it.

Rakosi: Yes, right. Right. Well, that's the test I apply to myself too. I'm not satisfied with anything unless I can go back to it also and find it interesting over and over.

Rosenblum: Do you find yourself reading poems that you've written that are published?

Rakosi: Yes, and changing them.

Rosenblum: You do change them after they've been in print?

Rakosi: Yes.

Rosenblum: Do you publish their, what's the word I'm looking for, the different editions of their forms?

Rakosi: If I can, yes.

Rosenblum: That's interesting, I think, because I think poets generally can be divided into those who once a poem is published, forget it, and will not revise it and those who once something's published they read it, they find something wrong with it or something they want to add or amend, and will do it and then publish another version of the same poem.

Rakosi: Well sometimes it's a mistake to keep revising. I probably go too far. All of a sudden something will not seem right to me and I'll think, oh God, how could I have written this? It's wrong, and I'll slash it up, but when I go back to the revision later I'll find that it's not really an improvement. Zukofsky, by the way, thought I'd made a big mistake in the changes I'd made for the *Selected Poems* book.

Rosenblum: Oh really.

Rakosi: Yeah. And I think he was right. I'd reduced them too much.

Rosenblum: I see.

Rakosi: So you can do that too, you can go too far.

Rosenblum: I think maybe I go too far in the other direction. On two occasions I think I've rewritten a poem that's in print. I won't. I absolutely won't. You know, if I see it and if I don't like it, I'll just not read it (laughter). Or I'll read it and try to find the good points and ignore the bad. I figure once it's published I don't have anything to do with it and I put my energy into another poem so I'll use the energy in a new form.

Rakosi: Well, that's probably more sensible, I don't know.

Rosenblum: I myself haven't written very much, there are

(Continued, page 59)

not a great many volumes to my name. One of the things I'd like to follow up on a little bit here as the tape comes to an end is the fact that you weren't aware, and it seems that maybe you still aren't, in a certain way of the audience that you have. In a way, I see that as a good thing for you as a writer, I think it fits with your need for silence and not to be disturbed when you're working.

Rakosi: Well, that's my sense. †††

CLING CLANG CLING/ the bells the wrestlers were done for the nite/ the mulatto, raul, waz supposed to hold the boomin half-cast, searin' eagle in a bear hug for 8 counts/ get thrown unawares/ fall out the ring & do then do searin' eagle in for good/ sechita/ cd hear reneck whoops n slappin on the back/ she gathered her sparsely sequined skirts/ tugged at the waist-sincher from under her greyin slips/ n made her face immobile/ she made her face like nephritite/ approachin her own tomb/ she suddenly threw her leg/ full-force thru the canvas curtain/ a deceptive glass stone sparkled malignantly

For Marty

Another Reference to me, The New Am. Poetry, ed. Donald M. Allen
Grove, p. 410 (in Creeley's statement on poetics called
"Olson & others: Some Odes for the Sports"
Also, Journal of the Otto Rank Ass., June 1970, p. 68-78 /
Int The Poetic Process, Comment on an Int. with CR by V. Robinson

In the News, Mexico City

Jan. 29, 1976

Death of Reynolds

Reznikoff Succumbs

NEW YORK (AP)—Charles Reznikoff, founding member of the Objectivist school of poetry, died Jan. 22. He was 81 years old.

Objectivism meant stripping the verse of all those elements that do not contribute to the objective image or idea. Taking his cue from Ezra Pound and the Imagists, along with such poets as George Oppen, Carl Rakosi and Lous Zukovsky, Reznikoff preached a poetry that was anchored in the concrete detail, the solid fact, rather than in the poet's feeling or emotion.

Two of his long poems, "Testimony" and "Holocaust," were verse paraphrases and quotations from verbatim accounts of the trial records in the United States and from the Nazi confessions at the Nuremberg trials.

from Albright-Knox Art Gallery Calendar, September 1982 Buffalo, N.Y.

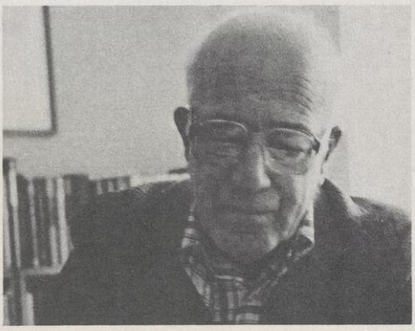
7

POETRY READING BY CARL RAKOSI

Born in 1903 in Berlin, Germany, Carl Rakosi moved to the United States in 1910 and grew up in the Midwest. He trained as a social worker/psychotherapist and worked in the profession until his retirement in 1968.

Rakosi's poems first appeared in THE LITTLE REVIEW, where Joyce, Eliot, Pound and Hemingway were first published, and in Ezra Pound's THE EXILE in the 1920s. In the early 1930s he was associated briefly with the Objectivists. His first book, TWO POEMS, appeared in 1933 (The Modern Editions Press). Then came SELECTED POEMS (New Directions, 1941). However, by 1940 he had stopped writing entirely and did not resume until 1966. Both early and new work are in his volume, AMULET (New Directions, 1967). This was followed by EREVOICE (New Directions, 1971), EX CRANIUM, NIGHT (Black Sparrow Press, 1975), MY EXPERIENCES IN PARNASSUS (Black Sparrow Press, 1977), HISTORY (Oasis Books, London, 1981), DROLES DE JOURNAL (Toothpaste Press, 1981).

Carl Rakosi won awards three times from the National Endowment for the Arts, and he has served as writer-in-residence on several university campuses. His poems have appeared in French translation and he has lectured extensively in Great Britain and also in Europe.



Carl Rakosi, who will read his works in the Auditorium on Sunday, September 19, at the first Gray Chair Poetry Reading.

The appearance of Carl Rakosi marks a new beginning for *Walking the Dog*, a poetry series once familiar to many in Buffalo. Sponsored exclusively by the Gray Chair of Poetry and Letters (UB English Department) and under the guidance of Robert Creeley, Gray Chair Professor, the new series will maintain the distinctive quality established in previous years showcasing writers of exceptional ability and importance. As in the past, the Gray Chair of Poetry and Letters sponsors literary events in and for the Buffalo community. *Walking the Dog* revives only a series title. The Gray Chair and its constituents remain, as always, active and vital.

St. Mark's Poetry Project Newsletter
Feb. 1984

BOOKS RECEIVED

From Crossing Press (Trumansburg, NY 14886): **Movement in Black,** Pat Parker, $5.95; **Natural Birth,** Toi Dericotte, $4.95
Somebody Talks Alot, Paul Hoover, The Yellow Press, 1446 W. Jarvis, Chicago, IL 60626, $3.50
She Wears Him Fancy in Her Night Braid, Faye Kicknosway, Toothpaste Press, (order from Bookslinger, 213 E. 4th St., St. Paul, MN 55101), $8.50
The Chest, Mohammed Mrabet, Tombouctou Books, Box 265, Bolinas, CA 94924, $7
From Durham, (7 Cross View Terrace, Melville's Cross, Durham DH1 4JY): **Spiritus, I,** Carl Rakosi, $6.50; **Nightvision,** George Evans, $6.50
Agnes and Sally, Lewis Warsh, Fiction Collective, Flatiron Book Distributors, Inc., 175 5th Ave., Suite 814, NYC, NY 10010, $5.95
From City Lights Books, (261 Columbus Ave, S.F.,CA 94113): **Notes on Thought and Vision,** H.D., $4; **In America's Shoes,** Andrei Codrescu; **Intimate Journals,** Charles Baudelaire
Green Rose, Tadeusz Rozewicz, translated by Geoffrey Thurley, John Michael Group Of Publishers, No. 16 John St., Darlington, West Australia 6070

St. Mark's Poetry Project Newsletter
April 1984

BOOKS RECEIVED

From Merging Media Press (59 Sandra Cir. A3, Westfield, NJ 07090): **Dialogue of Days,** Rochelle Dubois & Adele Kenny, $3; **Refusing the Frog,** Adele Kenny, $2.25

From Garland Publishers, Inc. (136 Madison Ave., NYC, NY 10016): **Derek Walcott, Annoted Bibliography,** Irma Goldstraw, $39; **Medieval Latin Poems of Male Love and Friendship,** selected and translated by Thomas Stehling, $31

The Torture Poems, Daniel Wolff, The Sons of Leisure & the Daughters of Commerce and Industry

Modern Heaven, John Kruth, Jackalope Press, 211 Highview St., Mamaroneck, NY 10543

Finding the Name - anthology of women poets, edited by Elisa Vietta Ritchie, Wineberry Press, c/o The Writers Center, PO Box 606, Glen Echo, MD 20812, $15.95

Raking the Snow, Elisa Vietta Ritchie, Washington Writers Publishing House, PO Box 50068, Wash., DC 20004, $4

Volcan: Poems from Central America, edited by Alejandro Murguia & Barbara Paschke, City Lights Books, 261 Columbus Ave., S.F., CA 94133, $5.95

The New Surrealists, edited by Rose Sayre, Pig Iron Press, PO Box 237, Youngstown, Ohio 44501, $5.95

From the Inside, Barbara Adams, 57 Coach Lane, Newburgh, NY 12550, $4

Anticipation, Frederick Ted Castle, McPherson & Co., PO Box 638, New Paltz, NY 12561, $12.50

Madame Realism, Lynne Tillman, with drawings by Kiki Smith, PO Box 360, NY, NY 10009

Sweat & Sex & Politics, Bob Holman, PeKa Boo Press, 868 Teaticket Highway, E. Falmouth, Mass. 02536

Traffic, Tom Smith, The Smith Publishers, 5 Beekman St, NYC, NY 10038, $4

Collected Prose, Carl Rakosi, National Poetry Foundation, 305 EM Building, Univ. of Maine, Orono, Maine 04469, $12.95

Asking Myself/Answering Myself, Shimpei Kusano, translated by Cid Corman with Susumu Kamaike, New Directions, 80 8th Ave., NY, NY 10011, $5.95

Makeup On Empty Space, Anne Waldman, The Toothpaste Press, order from: Bookslinger, 213 E 4th St., St. Paul, Minnesota 55101, $8.50

Dangers of Reading, Lorna Smedman, Prospect Books, 500 E. 11 St., NYC, NY 10009, $3

wednesday 14

7:00
KPFA NEWS
Rebroadcast of last night's news program.

7:45
METAPHYSICAL IN THE MORNING MIX
Jim Emdy

8:30
COMMENTARY
Rebroadcast of last night's commentary by David Bortin.

8:45
MORNING CONCERT
Pacifica Chamber Players
Antheil: *Sonatina for Violin and Cello* (1932)
Antheil: *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano* (1923) 1st and 4th Movements only
Antheil: *Quartet No. 1 for Strings* (1924)
Cowell: *Hymn and Fuguing Tune No. 16 for Violin and Piano*
Cowell: *Seven Paragraphs for String Trio* (1925)
Pre-empted in May due to illness, we present Ann Kish, violin; Mimi Dye, viola; Jeanne Stark, piano; and others in this special concert. Commentary by Charles Amirkhanian and William Sharpe.

10:45
MORNING READING
Ishi, Last Of His Tribe by Theodora Kroeber. This is a true story of the last survivor of the Yahis, a California Indian tribe wiped out in the latter part of the 19th Century. The reader is Virginia Maynard.

11:15
AN ARGUEMENT FOR THE NEW MODEL CONSTITUTION
One in a series of discussions that followed publication by the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions of a New Model Constitution for the United States. Robert M. Hutchins, Chairman of the Center, discusses the New Model with students at U.C., Santa Barbara. (CSDI)

11:45
BENNETT TARSHISH PRESENTS
Sir Arnold Bax – V
Viola Sonata, William Primrose, viola; Harriet Cohen, piano
Mater Ora Filium, for unaccompanied choir
Nonet, Griller quartet plus
(all from 78 rpm records)

1:15
WORLD MYTHOLOGY AND THE INDIVIDUAL ADVENTURE: Dr. Joseph Campbell
Buddhism in China is the subject of today's discussion by Dr. Campbell. This is part four in a series of twelve discussions by Dr. Campbell, the author of *The Hero of a Thousand Faces.*

1:45
NEWS HEADLINES
OPEN HOUR
Rebroadcast of last night's program.

3:00
AFTERNOON CONCERT
with George Cleve.

5:00 TO BE ANNOUNCED
5:15 CALENDAR OF EVENTS
5:30 BAY AREA INSTITUTE
6:00 COMMENTARY
Cy Schoenfield
6:15 KPFA NEWS

7:00
ODE TO GRAVITY with Charles Amirkhanian
Poet Carl Rakosi (born November 6, 1903) was a prominent member of the Objectivist Group of the 30's (which included Louis Zukofsky and George Oppen) but became disillusioned with society and poets, giving up his art altogether around 1941. Almost 25 years later, he returned to writing and published *Amulet* (New Directions, 1967). Rakosi talks with Amirkhanian and reads from his new book *Ere-Voice* which will appear in late 1971.

8:00
OPEN HOUR
Timely public affairs coverage.

9:00
A GAMELAN CONCERT
The Wesleyan Gamelan Chamber Ensemble in its first New York performance. Recorded at the Asia House in New York City, January 17, 1971.

10:15
REPRESSION IN BRAZIL
A discussion of conditions in Brazil today in regards to the current repressive military government. Panelists are Brady Tyson, professor in the School of International Service, American University; Al Stephan, professor of political science, Yale; Ralph de la Cava, professor of history, Queens College; and Warren Dean, professor of history, NYU. The program was recorded at the Richard Schechner Theater, March 26, 1971. (WBAI).

11:00
THE JURA-PARIS ROAD with Charles Shere
Tory Document for Quartorze Juillet. (Stereo)

12:00
LIVE, ALIVE ALL
With Paul Rude.
Live bluegrass, traditional folk and contemporary non-electric musics.

Pacifica Educational ~~Radio~~ Radio
My broadcasts

7:00
KPFA NEWS
Rebroadcast of last night's news program.

7:45
OPENING UP
With Alan Farley.

8:30
COMMENTARY
Rebroadcast of last night's commentary by Henry Ramsey.

8:45
MORNING CONCERT
Berlioz: *Symphonie Fantastique*
Mitropoulos, New York Philharmonic
*Odyssey 32 160204 (50)
Berlioz: *"Lelio" (The Return to Life)*
Barrault, narrator; Mitchinson, tenor; Shirley-Quirk, baritone; Boulez, London Symphony Chorus and Orchestra
*Columbia M30588 (54)

10:45
MORNING READING
Ishi, Last Of His Tribe by Theodora Kroeber. This is the true story of the last survivor of the Yahis, a California Indian tribe wiped out in the latter part of the 19th Century. The reader is Virginia Maynard.

11:15
SOVIET PRESS & PERIODICALS
With William Mandel. Rebroadcast of last night's program.

11:30
SONGS OF LOVE AND REVOLUTION
Elena Paz presents the sixth program featuring music from Mexico.

12:15
THE SAN FRANCISCO ECOLOGY CENTER WATER PLAN SERIES: RAYMOND WALSH, Fresh Water from the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers — The Answer to Water Quality Problems in San Francisco Bay
Mr. Walsh concerns himself principally with municipal and industrial waste discharges into San Francisco Bay, but during the question and answer session he addresses himself to questions about the Delta and the Peripheral Canal. He is the director of the Bay-Delta Program of the State Water Resources Control Board. This is the sixth and final program in the series recorded at the San Francisco Ecology Center.

1:30
KPFA MISCELLANY

1:45
NEWS HEADLINES
OPEN HOUR
Rebroadcast of last night's program.

3:00
CONCERT OF NEW RELEASES
With George Cleve.

5:00 DRAMA & LITERATURE REVIEW
5:15 CALENDAR OF EVENTS
5:30 JUDICIAL REVIEW
6:00 COMMENTARY
David Bortin
6:15 KPFA NEWS

7:00
ELWOOD'S ARCHIVES
Phil Elwood.

7:30
THE MOVIES
Bob Sitton talks with people who make them about them.

8:00
OPEN HOUR
Documentaries, discussions and special reports.

9:00
PACIFICA CHAMBER PLAYERS CONCERT
"Music of the Mannheim School"
Music for solo violin by Johann Stamitz, clarinet quartets of Carl Stamitz, Hoffmeister, and Peter Winter, as well as selected duos and trios. Tonight's performers are Ronald Erickson, violin; Nancy Ellis, viola; Teressa Adams, cello; Tom Rose, clarinet. Recorded especially for KPFA.

10:30
POLITICAL PRISONERS SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE RALLY: MAYDAY IN DOLORES PARK
Excerpts from the rally, including talks by Mark Allen and by Mrs. Georgia Jackson, the mother of Soledad Brother George Jackson. This program was produced by Hal Levin and Denny Smithson for KPFA's Public Affairs Department.

11:00
MICHAEL McCLURE: MAD SONNETS AND BEAST SOUNDS
A reading of poems by the San Francisco author and playwright. Recorded in July, 1963.

12:00
SANDY SILVER / COMMUNICATIONS

saturday 10

8:00
KPFA NEWS
Rebroadcast of last night's news program.

8:45
COMMENTARY
Rebroadcast of last night's commentary by Robert Tideman.

9:00
LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC CONCERT XVI
Britten: *Sinfonia Da Requiem,* Op. 20
Mozart: *Concerto No. 9 in E flat for Piano and Orchestra,* Misha Dichter, piano
Tchaikovsky: *Suite No. 3 in G, Op. 55*
Intermission interviews with Lawrence Foster and a quotation from Britten. STEREO

11:30
FOR CHILDREN

12:00
THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION AND OUR ENVIRONMENTAL CRISES, I
The President of the Security National Bank, Fortney Stark, gives a businessman's evaluation of these crises and the response of health professionals to them. Recorded at a meeting of the California Environmental Health Association on April 16, 1971 in Oakland.

12:30
BOOKS
Kenneth Rexroth.

1:00
MUSIC OF THE WORLD'S PEOPLE
English and Pygmy music.

1:30
EYE VIEW

2:00
A VOICE FOR THE AMERICAN INDIAN
A series of programs on Indian culture and history and the current struggle for political rights and power. Produced by Cal Turlock of the Bear Tribe in Sacramento.

3:00
LIVE ANIMAL ROOM
A visit to the Josephine D. Randall Junior Museum in San Francisco. The children play tree to a boa constrictor and are led on a sawdust safari by Assistant Life-Science Curator Juanita Richardson. Director A. Kirk discusses some of the other activities at this busy institution on top of Corona Heights. Produced by Erik Bauersfeld and Clay Grillo.

3:30
THIN AIR
A program highlighting cultural events in the Bay Area and presenting a variety of artists who visit the KPFA Studios.

4:30
GOLDEN VOICES with Anthony Boucher
"Claudia Muzio – III"

5:00
MUSIC OF THE ITALIAN MASTERS
G. Gabrieli: *Canzona in the twelfth tone, for gambas, cornett and trombones*
Benedetto Marcello: *Psalm Ten, "Mentr'io tutta ripongo,"* Ugo Trama, bass; Lucienne Devallier, alto; Coro Polifonico di Milano/Bertola
Aldrovandini: *Sonata for two trumpets,* Helmut Wobisch, Adolf Holler, trumpets; I Solisti di Zagreb/Janigro
Zipoli: *Elevazione; Offertorio*
Luigi Ferdinando Tagiavini, organ
Castelnuovo-Tedesco: *Overture to Twelfth Night,* RAI Symphony Orchestra of Turin/La Rosa Parodi
Berio: *Serenata No. 1 for flute and 14 instruments,* Orchestra "A. Scarlatti" of RAI of Naples; Gazzelloni, flute

6:00 COMMENTARY
Henry Anderson

6:15 S.F. WOMEN'S MEDIA WORKSHOP

6:30 KPFA NEWS

7:00
ANDREAS PAPANDREOU SPEAKS
The Greek political leader-in-exile and former chairman of U.C. Economics Department, details how the military junta took power, how it is kept in power by U.S. political and economic aid, and the status of the Greek Resistance. Moderated by Frenk Newman, Professor of Law at U.C. Law School.

8:30
CARL RAKOSI READS HIS AMERICANA POEMS
The American poet (born 1903) is introduced by Charles Amirkhanian and reads selected poems from his Americana series appearing in his books *Amulet* (1967) and *Ere-Voice* (1971) published by New Directions.

9:00
"CONCEPTS OF EQUALITY IN AMERICAN HISTORY" (Part II)
Second in a series of four Jefferson Memorial Lectures. The speaker throughout the series is J.R. Pole, of Churchill College, Cambridge. This program is entitled "Community and the Individual."

10:00
BENNETT TARSHISH PRESENTS
Eugen Jochum's first recording of Beethoven's *9th Symphony.* Hamburg Philharmonic from 78 rpm recordings.

11:30
MADHOUSE CELLS
A selection of poems written by or about madmen, concerning the special vision of madness. Included are selections from Plato's *Ion*, four poems by Yeats, two Hopkins sonnets, Emily Dickinson, Rilke, Browning, Kafka, Verlaine, and Archibald MacLeish. Dramatized by Ed and Deborah Schell and Al Jacobs.

12:00
THE HERCULES GRYTPYPE-THYNNE SHOW

7:00
KPFA NEWS
Rebroadcast of last night's news program.

7:45
FRIDAY MORNING 94.1
With Denny Smithson.

8:30
COMMENTARY
Rebroadcast of last night's commentary by Robert Pickus.

8:45
MORNING CONCERT
A Recital by John Williams, guitar, and Wilfred Brown, tenor, featuring : Britten: *Songs from the Chinese;* Dodgson: *Four Poems of John Clare;* also Elizabethan Songs and Dowland guitar solos
*Columbia 32 16 0398 (44)
Respighi: *Sonata in B minor*
Heifetz, violin; Bay, piano
RCA LVT-1034 (24)
Rodrigo: *Fantasia Para Un Gentilhombre*
Williams, guitar; Groves, English Chamber Orchestra
*Columbia MS 7063 (22)
Respighi: *Brazilian Impressions*
Dorati, London Symphony Orchestra
*Mercury SR 90153 (19)

10:45
MORNING READING
Ishi, Last Of His Tribe by Theodora Kroeber. This is the true story of the last survivor of the Yahis, a California Indian tribe wiped out in the latter part of the 19th Century. The reader is Virginia Maynard.

11:15
MARTIN LUTHER KING SPEAKS: ADDICTING A WHOLE GENERATION — Part III
The conclusion of the discussion between Mr. Cain and Mr. Ginsberg.

11:45
DUTCH COMPOSERS OF THE 20TH CENTURY
Ton de Kruyf: *5 Impromptus for Chamber Orchestra,* Hupperts, Hilversum Radio Chamber Orchestra
Lex van Delden: *Symphony Nr. 8*
Hupperts, Utrecht Symphony Orchestra
(Radio Nederland STEREO)

12:15
THE SAN FRANCISCO ECOLOGY CENTER WATER PLAN SERIES: JAMES L. WELSH,
Evaluation of the Plan from the State's Viewpoint
Mr. Welsh, Chief of the Environmental Quality Branch of the State Department of Water Resources, discusses the Water Plan in general, and the Peripheral Canal in particular. The fourth in a series of six programs recorded at the Ecology Center in San Francisco.

1:00
THE BALLAD OF A FREE PEOPLE
Greek songs of freedom and death. Music by Mikis Theodorakis, lyrics by Yannis Ritsos. Translated and narrated by Thanassis Maskaleris. (Broadside Records - BR 307)

1:45
NEWS HEADLINES
OPEN HOUR
Rebroadcast of last night's program.

3:00
INSIDE ON THE OUTSIDE
With DeLeon Harrison.

5:00 ON FILM
Bob Sitton
5:15 CALENDAR OF EVENTS
5:30 ECOLOGY & POLITICS
Keith Murray
5:45 TO BE ANNOUNCED
6:00 COMMENTARY
Robert Tideman
6:15 KPFA NEWS

7:00
SOUNDS OF AFRICA
With Sam Oni

8:00
OPEN HOUR
Timely public affairs coverage.

9:00
ON STAGE: "THE QUARE FELLOW"
By Brendan Behan
With Arthur O'Sullivan, Frank O'Dwyer, Brendan Caldwell and Eamonn Kelly.

11:00
THE FOLK MUSIC OF MOLDAVIA
Selections from a concert given at the Hall of Columns at the Trade Union House in Moscow of the Moldavian Folk Ensemble, "Fluerash."

11:30
CANDLELIGHT AND BRINE
Susan Levine and Jerry Friedman in a program of improvisations on sacred and secular themes. The voice of their reader is David Foote. Final technical production is by Bob Bergstresser.

12:00
PITCH PERCEPTION
Complex formant cycle upper limit change reset register; with Richard Friedman.

"Morning Concert" host George Cleve conducting a concert featuring John Williams. Williams will be heard today on the "Morning Concert."

11/23/75
Sunday

The New York Times Book Review

Editors' Choice

General

BEING WITH CHILDREN, by Phillip Lopate. (Doubleday, $7.95.) The author's experiences teaching imaginative writing to children; alternatively touching and funny, always alive.

THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO: Volume II, by Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn. (Harper & Row, cloth, $15; paper, $2.50.) Continuing Solzhenitsyn's "experiment in literary investigation" into the secret world of the Soviet prison camps.

STEINBECK, edited by Elaine Steinbeck and Robert Wallsten. (Viking Press, $15.) A collection of revealing letters winnowed from the voluminous correspondence of a lifetime and functioning as an autobiography.

Fiction and Poetry

THE DEAD FATHER, by Donald Barthelme. (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $7.95.) Concerning the traverse of a giant father-dictator to his grave; a cryptic, witty allegory eschewing plot and prosody, in which things are never what they seem.

EX CRANIUM, NIGHT, by Carl Rakosi. (Black Sparrow Press, cloth, $15; paper, $4.) Prose reflections, aphorisms, sketches and anecdotes intermingled with 93 pages of new verse by a poet of the personal who offers communion colored with the pleasures of art.

GUERRILLAS, by V. S. Naipaul. (Knopf, $7.95.) Against the brooding legacy of slavery, a modern episode of Third World guerrilla theater is played out; a violent, complex, suspenseful novel without a villain.

PASSIONS, by Isaac Bashevis Singer. (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $8.95.) Twenty stories celebrating Singer's preoccupation with the wondrously diverse lives of East European Jews.

THE REALMS OF GOLD, by Margaret Drabble. (Knopf, $8.95.) As omniscient narrator Drabble manipulates her characters to a somewhat arbitrary ending; but otherwise the novel works as an intelligent satire of English class and family mores.

Best Seller List

Fiction

This Week		Last Week	Weeks On List
1	**LOOKING FOR MR. GOODBAR,** by Judith Rossner. (Simon & Schuster, $7.95.) Woman finds death at end of singles-bar trail.	3	23
2	**HUMBOLDT'S GIFT,** by Saul Bellow. (Viking, $10.) Bellow on art, fame, money, power and death in America.	5	12
3	**THE GREEK TREASURE,** by Irving Stone. (Doubleday, $10.95.) Faithful, if weighty, novelization of life of Heinrich Schliemann.	4	5
4	**CURTAIN,** by Agatha Christie. (Dodd, Mead, $7.95.) *Hercule meurt, hélas.*	2	8
5	**RAGTIME,** by E. L. Doctorow. (Random House, $8.95.) Fact and fiction satirically blend, with darker undertones.	1	17
6	**THE EAGLE HAS LANDED,** by Jack Higgins. (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, $8.95.) Nazis attempt to kidnap Churchill.	10	16
7	**SHOGUN,** by James Clavell. (Atheneum, $12.50.) Blood and intrigue in 17th-century Japan.	6	19
8	**THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY,** by Michael Crichton. (Knopf, $8.95.) Caper novel steeped in underworld Victoriana.	9	22
9	**THE MONEYCHANGERS,** by Arthur Hailey. (Doubleday, $10.) Power struggle in a big bank; the usual Hailey treatment.	8	35
10	**IN THE BEGINNING,** by Chaim Potok. (Knopf, $8.95.) Familiar Potok theme—orthodoxy vs. modernity—probed in greater depth.		1

General

This Week		Last Week	Weeks On List
1	**POWER!** by Michael Korda. (Random House, $8.95.) Manipulating the corporate system.	4	6
2	**SYLVIA PORTER'S MONEY BOOK,** by Sylvia Porter. (Doubleday, $14.95.) Family financial advisor.	1	20
3	**WINNING THROUGH INTIMIDATION,** by Robert J. Ringer. (Funk & Wagnalls, $9.95.) Psychological tricks for closing the deal in your favor.	2	12
4	**BRING ON THE EMPTY HORSES,** by David Niven. (Putnam's, $9.95.) Vintage Hollywoodiana; vintage champagne.	3	5
5	**TOTAL FITNESS,** by Laurence E. Morehouse and Leonard Gross. (Simon & Schuster, $6.95.) Low-key exercise course.	7	21
6	**THE RELAXATION RESPONSE,** by Herbert Benson, M.D. (William Morrow, $5.95.) The benefits of meditation and a simple technique for doing it.	9	3
7	**MONEY,** by John Kenneth Galbraith. (Houghton Mifflin, $10.) A history of the stuff coupled with policy advocacy.	5	8
8	**TM,** by Harold H. Bloomfield, M.D. and Michael Peter Cain and Dennis T. Jaffe. (Delacorte, $8.95.) An official, approved TM book.	6	25
9	**THE SAVE YOUR LIFE DIET,** by David Reuben, M.D. (Random House, $7.95.) High-fiber diet plans.	8	16
10	**THE GREAT RAILWAY BAZAAR,** by Paul Theroux. (Houghton Mifflin, $10.) By train through Asian geographical and cultural fastnesses.		7

Based on reports from more than 250 bookstores in 110 communities throughout the United States. Weeks are not necessarily consecutive.

The New York Review – Nov. 4, 1971

NEW DIRECTIONS

JOHN HAWKES

The Blood Oranges. Novel. "Rich, evocative, highly original piece of fiction...."—Anthony Burgess "The sixth and most accessible novel by, feasibly, our best writer." —*The New York Times Book Review.* Book-of-the-Month Club alternate selection. Cloth, $6.95

DENISE LEVERTOV

To Stay Alive. "Intelligently political, . . . she writes poems that are a personal testimony to those of conscience, . . . achieves a moving and spiritual document not easily paralleled in America in the 1970's." —*Library Journal.* Cloth, $6.50; Paper, $1.95

CARL RAKOSI

Ere-Voice. "Poems on Vietnam and dying, images that hit with a delayed shock wave for being right and not ostentatious . . . full of humor about even the writing of poetry."—*Kirkus Reviews.* $6.50; $2.45

DYLAN THOMAS

The Poems of Dylan Thomas. Adds 102 poems to the original 90 in *Collected Poems.* Edited, with introduction and notes, by Daniel Jones. $6.00

YVOR WINTERS

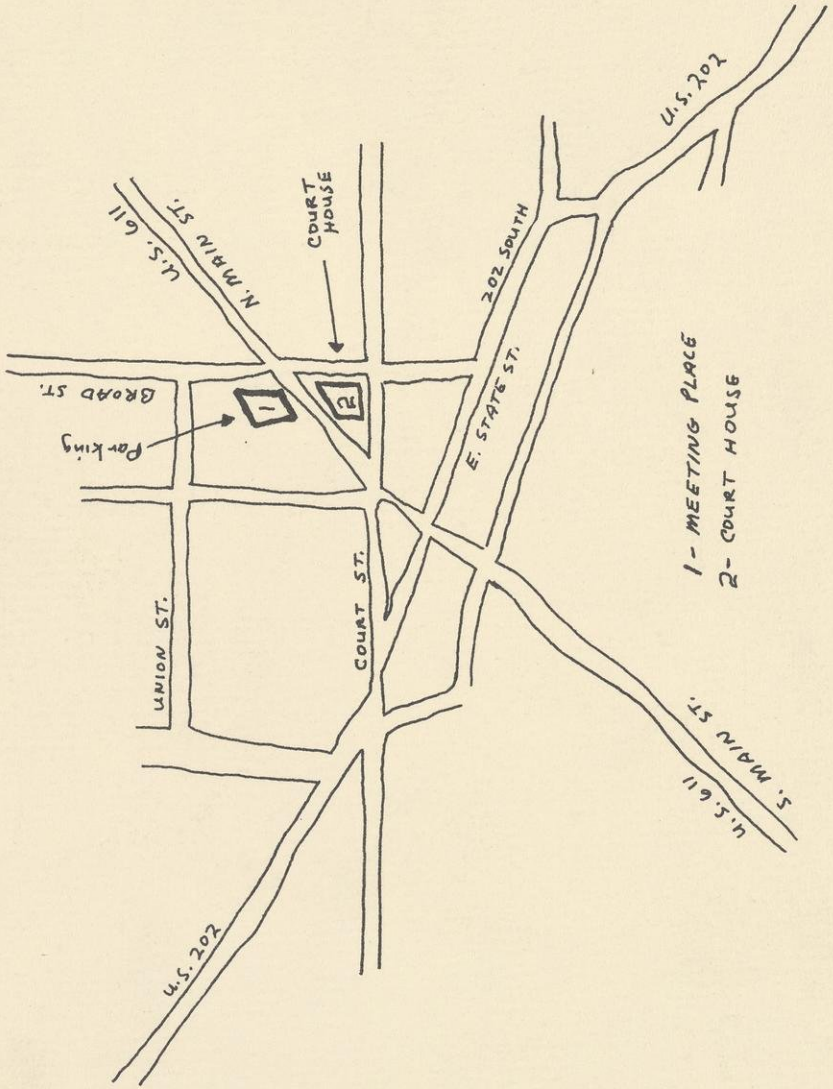
Edwin Arlington Robinson. Criticism. Rev. and expanded ed. Includes poems analyzed. $7.95; $3.45

OTHER PAPERBOOKS

Louis-Ferdinand Céline: *Death on the Installment Plan,* $3.95; Gustave Flaubert: *Bouvard and Pecuchet,* $2.95; James Purdy: *Children Is All,* $2.25; William Carlos Williams: *Imaginations (Spring & All, Kora in Hell, Descent of Winter, Great American Novel, A Novelette & Other Prose),* $2.75.

Please request complete catalog

NEW DIRECTIONS 333 SIXTH AVE. N.Y. N.Y. 10014



Fall Membership Meeting

THE OTTO RANK ASSOCIATION

Saturday, October 17-18, 1970

James-Lorah Memorial House
132 N. Main Street
(Entrance on Broad St.)
Doylestown, Bucks County, Pa.

MARTIN GROTJAHN, M.D., comes from a family of physicians in Berlin. He received his M.D. degree in 1929 and became a physician at the University Clinic of Berlin and a member of the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute.

He came to America in 1936, first to the Menninger Clinic, then to Chicago where he joined Franz Alexander on the staff of the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis. In 1946 he became clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of Southern California Psychoanalytic Institute. He is the author of several much used books, Beyond Laughter (1957), Psychoanalysis and the Family Romance (1960). As editor with Franz Alexander and Samuel Eisenstein of the book, Psychoanalytic Pioneers (1966) he is responsible for this valuable history of the psychoanalytic movement. His own writing for this volume on Karl Abraham and Franz Alexander are superb biographies of these great men.

Dr. Grotjahn is known far and wide for his interest in the history of the psychoanalytic movement and his skill in reading Freud's difficult script. He has contributed introductions, reviews and articles on the many volumes of correspondence with Freud as they appear. One of the most recent, a delightful volume of letters between Freud and Arnold Zweig (author of The Case of Sergeant Grisha and other anti-war novels) will be reviewed by Dr. Grotjahn in the journal of this association.

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CARL RAKOSI, with the publication of Amulet by New Directions in 1967, was welcomed back to the world of poetry writers from which he seemed to have disappeared by his silence since 1941. In those years he pursued other concerns all enriching the background out of which his poetry developed.

Born in Berlin of Hungarian Jewish Parentage, he spent his early childhood in a small town in Hungary. He came to this country in 1910 finally settling in Kenosha, Wisconsin. He went on to the University of Wisconsin where he majored in English literature and received a master's degree in educational psychology. One could guess that he wrote poetry in his college days and became acquainted then with Rank's psychology that he found congenial in the development of his own point of view.

Graduating from the University in the depression years he found work in social agencies. His social work experience brought him to the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work for courses in the advanced curriculum and eventually let him to a position as director of the Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis until his retirement in 1967. Social workers know him as Callman Rawley.

He is known to this audience for an article entitled "Rank and Taft" published in the Journal of Jewish Communal Service in 1959. In the past year he has been poet-in-residence at Wisconsin University and this summer has been in residence at Yaddo, happily engaged writing poetry.

THE OTTO RANK ASSOCIATION
Fall Membership Meeting, October 17-18, 1970
Auditorium, James-Lorah Memorial House
Corner of Broad and Main Sts. Doylestown, Pa.

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P R O G R A M

Sat. 10:30 A.M.
Virginia P. Robinson
Presiding and Introducing the Speaker

Martin Grotjahn, M. D.
COLLECTOR'S ITEMS FROM THE FREUD-RANK CORRESPONDENCE, 1909-1924

Discussion

12:30 P.M.
Lunch -- Warrington Country Club
C. Rollin Zane, Vice-President and Chairman, Finance Committee
REPORT TO THE MEMBERSHIP

3:00 P.M.
Virginia P. Robinson
Presiding and Introducing the Speaker

Carl Rakosi
REFLECTIONS ON FORM AND CHANGE

Discussion

5:00 P.M.
Reception

Sunday morning, October 18, 10 A.M. -- James Lorah House

Dr. Grotjahn will conduct a seminar on GROUP THERAPY

Advance Registration, limited to 60 Participants

Mayor Lindsay on Lenox Avenue, June, 1967.

Fun City Mayor

(*Continued from Page* 18)

posed to save the biggest city when cities are dying. If he fails, the tired men will quit. Let the cities become our ghettos, our concentration camps. Let them die out of our sight.

All of this avoids talking about Lindsay's first book, but then his book avoids talking about all of this. The first 131 pages cover Lindsay's lonely years in Congress, years of which he once said: "I am sufficiently independent to have come close to the edge of being ineffective." The final chapter entitled "Commitment to the City" reads like one of his early campaign speeches. He gave those speeches in 1965, when he thought the problems of the city could be described in the knowing generalities that fill the Congressional Record.

The author candidly reviews his own book in the foreword:

"The hours I devoted to the manuscript gave me a great deal of personal satisfaction, although so much has taken place since the original draft was written that the book now seems strangely quiet. Perhaps the strangeness is natural; compared with a single year's tenure as Mayor of New York, my seven years in Congress — with which this book primarily deals — seem peaceful, indeed."

Lindsay the writer, then, has not done what Lindsay the Mayor does — walk into the big trouble, like Harlem, and get other men interested in following him.

A book, of course, has become as essential to a potential President as a handsome wife. But it would be astonishing if this book — even though it is essentially concerned with national issues — were quoted when Lindsay begins to figure in the speculation on the 1968 Republican ticket. He devotes a chapter to the dead issue of immigration — "the system was substantially corrected" by the Immigration Act of 1965, he concludes — but doesn't say a word about *the* live issue, Vietnam. That's hard to understand because Lindsay has been relatively consistent and courageous on the war. When asked about Vietnam, he still hands the questioner a printed copy of a speech he gave on April 24, 1965. (How many other politicians can do that?) "I suggest that the reunification of Vietnam . . . may be the key to a peaceful settlement," he said on that day two-and-a-half years ago. "I think we should seek the creation of an international commission to sponsor negotiations on Vietnam and to supervise a truce."

Other chapters do little more than restate the obvious: John Lindsay is a liberal Republican. He is for civil rights, civil liberties, foreign aid, the Supreme Court and Abraham Lincoln. He is against Barry Goldwater.

The title "Journey Into Politics" gives a false impression that the book is autobiographical. In fact, only one of the half-dozen anecdotes he tells give any insight into Lindsay the man. While writing about the new electronic threats to individual freedom, Lindsay tells about the time a department store wanted him and his wife to be photographed before accepting their check as payment for a Christmas bicycle. "We were then led away to be photographed, presumably with the check across the chest in place of a number," he recalls. "We tore up the payment and walked out."

Now that's the John Lindsay who runs New York.

Walker Art Center
Vineland Place
Minneapolis, Mn. 55403

Telephone 377-7500

MARCH 1972

WALKER ART CENTER

NOTICES

Winter Hours
Tuesday, 10 am—9 pm; Wednesday—Saturday, 10 am—5 pm; Sunday, noon—6 pm. The museum is closed on Mondays. Admission free.

Design Quarterly 84
Finnish Architecture Now, to be published in March, concerns an emerging philosophy among young Finnish architects that reflects a global rejection of architecture for art's sake and concentrates on responding to urban problems. In this issue, four Finnish architects discuss the roots of such problems as inadequate housing and automobile congestion, and propose solutions. Four new town centers are looked at in terms of their ability to accommodate social activities, and church architecture is reexamined in terms of the '70s.

Charter Flight
The 1972 charter flight to Europe departs 31 August for London and Paris, and returns from Paris on 23 September. There will be a general flight meeting in the Art Center Restaurant on 7 March, Tuesday, at 8 pm. For information call: Mr. and Mrs. Archie Givens, Jr., 377-4647; or Mr. and Mrs. Robert Sicora, 537-4065.

Walker Film on TV
A documentary film about Walker Art Center produced by KTCA-TV will be shown on Channel 2 on 7 March at 6:30 pm.

Gallery Tours
Tours of the Walker Art Center galleries start at 2:30 pm on Sundays. Groups who wish guided tours during the week may call the Education Department (377-7500) to make arrangements. Please schedule tours at least two weeks in advance.

NOTICES

Access to the Art Center by Bus
Buses Nos. 1, 4, and 6 from Downtown stop at Vineland Place; buses Nos. 1, 4 and 6 to Downtown stop at Groveland, across Lyndale Avenue from the Art Center.

Restaurant
The Art Center's Restaurant, overlooking Terrace III, is open each day except Monday. Lunch is served from 11:30 am to 2 pm and light refreshments from 2 pm to 4 pm, Tuesday through Saturday. Sundays, lunch is served from noon until 2 pm, and light refreshments from 2 pm to 5 pm. Children's plates are available on request.

During March, groups of fewer than 50 persons may reserve tables in the Restaurant for lunch. Arrangements must be made at least a week in advance.

Evening rental of the Restaurant is available to non-profit organizations for events related to the Art Center's programs or to Guthrie Theater activities. For evening and luncheon reservations, call Margaret Otis (377-7500).

Wheelchair Facilities
A ramp adjacent to the steps of the main entrance on Vineland Place gives access to the museum by wheelchair. All galleries can be reached by elevator or ramp, and both the Auditorium and Lecture/Information Room have space for a number of wheelchairs.

Mailings
If you are receiving duplicate Art Center mailings, please notify us. Also to ensure prompt delivery of museum publications, please advise us of address changes at least three weeks in advance.

EXHIBITIONS

Prints by Zigmunds Priede 1 March—13 April

Zigmunds Priede teaches at the University of Minnesota and is a master printer for Universal Limited Editions, Long Island, New York. Shown are 20 lithographs from his 50-piece work **From Stone,** unique impressions pulled from the same stone displayed in the sequence in which they were printed.
Lobby

Mario Merz through 19 March

Nine works designed for spaces in the museum by Italian artist Mario Merz, who uses materials such as neon tubing, glass, newspaper and fabric in compositions based on mathematical series.
Gallery 1

Introduction: 7 Young Artists through 2 April

Painting and sculpture, most produced especially for this exhibition, by young Minnesota and Wisconsin artists Joseph Aiken, Leland Bjorklund, Dustin Davis, Michael DeVoni, Robert Kerns, Philip Ogle and Elaine Pelosini.
Gallery 2

Bill Brandt: Photographs through 2 April

125 photographs made since the 1930s by British photographer Bill Brandt. Organized by the Museum of Modern Art, the exhibition includes portraits of well-known artists and literary figures, views of British life, and a series of fragmentary views of the human body.
Gallery 3

Bill Brandt: Young Housewife in Bethnal Green 1937
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Lecture: Bill Brandt and 20th Century Photography

24 Friday John Szarkowski, Director of the Department of Photography at the Museum of Modern Art and organizer of the exhibition, will discuss Brandt's art.

8 pm Auditorium
Admission: free. Call 377-7500 for reservations.

26 Sunday Gallery Tour
A tour of the Bill Brandt exhibition conducted by John Szarkowski.

2:30 pm Gallery 3

MUSIC

First Minnesota Moving and Storage Warehouse Band

2 Thursday An evening of contemporary music, directed by Eric Stokes, featuring works by Hindemith, Ives, Lutoslawski and Petrassi, plus such classics as **Pitch City** by William Duckworth and **A Night Upon The Waves** by Raymond Weisling. The concert also includes choral works conducted by Thomas Lancaster.

8:30 pm Auditorium
Tickets: $1 on sale at the door. Call 377-7500 for reservations.

The Music of Benjamin Britten

10 Friday Philip Brunelle is Music Director of an ensemble that will present an evening of Britten's music, including the American premiere of the **Fourth Canticle.** Cosponsored with the Schubert Club.

8 pm St. Paul Arts and Science Center
Tickets: $2 at the door. Call 377-7500 for reservations.

The Leventritt Series: Alberto Reyes

19 Sunday Fourth in the series of six afternoon piano recitals featuring finalists from the Leventritt Foundation's International Competition. Alberto Reyes, born in Montevideo, Uruguay, has successfully competed in many competitions including the Emma Feldman Competition in Philadelphia. As a finalist in the Fourth International Tschaikowsky Competition in Moscow last year, Mr. Reyes received the coveted diploma and an invitation to tour the Soviet Union.

4 pm Auditorium
Tickets: $2 at the door. Call 377-7500 for reservations.

Morton Subotnick Residency 21—23 March

Now on the faculty of the California School of the Arts, Mr. Subotnick co-founded the Mills College Performing Group and the San Francisco Tape Music Center. He was also Director of Electronic Music at the Electric Circus in New York. Cosponsored with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and the Schubert Club.

21—23 A Ritual Game Room
A work for two participants and no audience. The participants (museum visitors) perform and experience this environmental light-sound composition using electronic music devices, laser patterns, colored strobes and films of video synthesis. In the galleries during museum hours.

22 Wednesday Concert
Electronic compositions by Mr. Subotnick including **Sidewinder** and **Face/Circles/Window/Shadows,** which incorporate six film loops on a video synthesizer.

8 pm Auditorium
Tickets: $3; students and Members $2 on sale at the door. Call 377-7500 for reservations.

Explorations '72: The St. Paul Chamber Orchestra

25 Saturday First in a series of three contemporary music concerts featuring Sydney Hodkinson, composer in residence, as guest conductor. The series will include three world premieres of commissioned works; the first is a piece by William Bolcom. Other composers featured are Webern, Ives, Castiglioni, Stockhausen and Ligeti.

Cosponsored with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and the Schubert Club.

8 pm Auditorium
Tickets: $3; students $2 on sale at Dayton's, Walker Art Center, and the Schubert Club.

21 Tuesday Open Rehearsal
The public is invited to an open rehearsal of the **Explorations '72** concert.

2:30—4:30 pm Auditorium
Admission free

EDUCATION

Studio Happenings

Open to children and adults

5 Sunday Color Rally
Group and individual explorations of mixed media, including giant colored paper and yarn collages, fabric dyeing, and projections with colored acetate transparencies. Informal clothing suggested.

12 Sunday The Last of the Grade A's (Gray Days)
A surprise Happening, with live animals and plants, in anticipation of Spring. Poetry, drawing, painting and dance.

Happenings start at 2 pm in the Studio
Fee per session: Children under 16 and Members $1; adult non-members $1.50.

Workshops

19 Sunday Hands Only (ages 4—6)
Mixed media workshop: finger-painting, collage-making and building with clay. Children should bring smocks.

2 pm Studio
Fee: $2.50; Members $1.50

26 Sunday Photogram Workshop (ages 9—14)
In the darkened Studio students will make photograms by placing objects on light-sensitive paper, exposing the paper to light, and developing the resulting images.

2 pm Studio
Fee: $3; Members $2

EDUCATION

Symposium: Focus on Photography 18, 24—26 March
An informal symposium related to the **Bill Brandt: Photographs** exhibition, and exploring photography as an art form. The symposium, open to students junior-high through college age and teachers, includes group discussions led by local professional photographers and evaluations of participants' work.

Special guest: John Szarkowski, Director, Department of Photography, The Museum of Modern Art.

Cosponsored with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.
Fee: $10. For complete details and application forms, call the Education Department (377-7500).

Registration Procedures
To register for Education Department activities and for further details, call Mrs. Thorp (377-7500). Early registration is advised.

POETRY

26 Sunday Readings by Alvin Greenberg and Carl Rakosi

4 pm Lecture/Information Room
Admission: $1.50; students $1
Call 377-7500 for reservations.

WALKER ART CENTER

MARCH 1972

Walker Art Center
Vineland Place
Minneapolis, Mn. 55403

Telephone 377-7500

FILM

Andy Warhol Film Retrospective 7–30 March

The film career of one of the most important American artists and film-makers to emerge during the 1960s outlined in films and lectures.

Viva in Andy Warhol's
Lonesome Cowboys (1968).

7 Tuesday **Introductory lecture: The Primitive of a New Art** by art critic Barbara Rose, followed by **Haircut** (1963)

9 Thursday **Eat** (1963), 39 min., and one reel of **Sleep** (1963), 33 min.

14 Tuesday **Lecture: Andy Warhol: I Want to be a Machine** by Stephen Koch, author of a forthcoming book on Warhol's films, followed by **Vinyl** (1965), 64 min.

16 Thursday **Beauty No. 2** (1965), 70 min.

21 Tuesday **My Hustler** (1965), 70 min.

23 Thursday **Chelsea Girls** (1966), 205 min.

28 Tuesday **Lonesome Cowboys** (1968), 116 min.

30 Thursday **Women in Revolt** (1971), 85 min. Twin Cities premiere.

All programs at 8 pm in the Auditorium
Admission: $2; Members $1.50 Adults only.

DANCE

Merce Cunningham and Company Residency 6–12 March

6 Monday **Dialogue: Merce Cunningham and John Cage**

8 pm Auditorium
Admission: $2; students and Members $1.50

7 Tuesday **Seminar: Musicians from the Cunningham Company**

2 pm Auditorium
Admission: $1

8 Wednesday **Lecture/Demonstration: Company and Musicians**

8 pm Auditorium
Admission: $2; students and Members $1.50

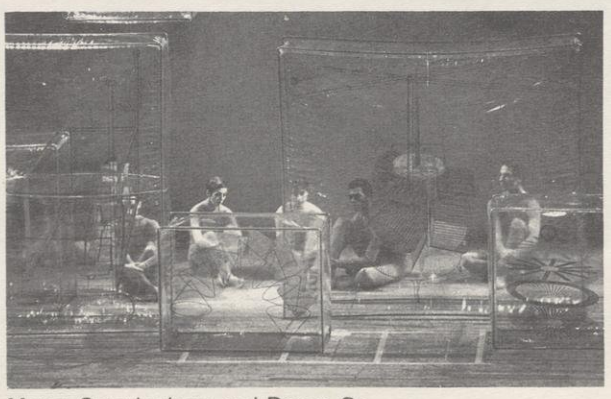
9 Thursday **Performance**

8 pm O'Shaughnessy Auditorium
Tickets: $6, $5, $4 and $3 on sale at Dayton's and O'Shaughnessy Auditorium

12 Sunday **Gallery Performance: Event No. 32**

8 pm Galleries 1, 2 and 3 and Lobby
Admission: $3; students and Members $2

Call 377-7500 for reservations and information about master classes and group rates.



Merce Cunningham and Dance Co.

FILM

The Swashbuckler Series: Saturday Matinees 14 March–29 April

A well-known adventure film, plus chapters of the serial **The Phantom Creeps,** with Bela Lugosi.

4 Saturday **Beau Geste** (1939) with Gary Cooper; and Chapter 1, **The Phantom Creeps.**

11 Saturday **The Thief of Baghdad** (1940) directed by Zoltan Korda, with Sabu; and Chapters 2 and 3 of **Phantom.**

18 Saturday **Ivanhoe** (1952) with Elizabeth Taylor and Robert Taylor; and Chapters 4 and 5 of **Phantom.**

25 Saturday **The Corsican Brothers** (1941) with Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.; and Chapter 6 of **Phantom.**

All programs at 1:30 pm in the Auditorium.
Admission to each program: $1; Members and those under 13 free.

Open Screenings: Session VI

11 Saturday College-age and older filmmakers are invited to show their films informally on the second Saturday of each month. The 11 March program includes Jordan Belson's new film **Meditation.**

8 pm Auditorium
Admission: free. For reservations to show a film, call the Education Department (377-7500).

Films for Children and Parents

12 Sunday **The Kind-Hearted Ant, Moonbird,** and **Naica and the Squirrels.** A one-hour program.

2:30 pm Auditorium
Admission: $1; Members and those under 15 free.

MEMBERSHIP

Members' Benefits Include:
● Invitations to exhibition previews ● Exhibition catalogues and a subscription to DESIGN QUARTERLY ● Discount coupons for concerts at The Guthrie Theater ● Free or reduced admission to most film programs ● Monthly calendars of events including advance notice of programs ● Reduced fees for art classes and workshops ● Eligibility for charter flights abroad ● Reduced subscription rates to leading art, film, photography and graphics magazines ● Discounts on purchases at Center Book Shop
For information call the Membership Office (377-7500).

I would like to be a Member of Walker Art Center
Indicate membership category:
____Regular Member $20
____Education Member (full-time teachers and students) $12.50
School _____
____Contributor $50
____Sponsor $100
____Senior Member (Age 62+) $12.50

Name _____

Street _____ Telephone _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Payment enclosed _____ Bill me _____

I would like to give a membership as a gift to:
(Fill in your name and address as donor above)

Name _____

Street _____ Telephone _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Send gift card signed "From _____"

Return to:
Membership Office, Walker Art Center
Vineland Place
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55403

VICTOR HERNANDEZ CRUZ · ROCHELLE OWENS · ROBERT DUNCAN

GEORGE ECONOMOU · ALLEN GINSBERG

MICHAEL MCCLURE · CHARLES REZNIKOFF

CARL RAKOSI · DAVID MELTZER · GEORGE OPPEN

EDWARD DORN · KENNETH REXROTH · THEODORE ENSLIN

Thomas Jefferson College

NATIONAL POETRY FESTIVAL

JUNE 14-24, 1973

A ten-day festival of poetry, poets and students of poetry meeting at Thomas Jefferson College, the experimental unit of the Grand Valley State Colleges near Grand Rapids, Michigan. Readings, workshops, poetry events and theater, seminars, discussions, etc. The Festival is seen as a place and circumstance in which, for ten days, the human, esthetic and practical resources are available for a sustained experience of the art of poetry and engagement with the artistic personality; it is not planned as a spectator-oriented, performance situation, at which an "audience" sits passively at lectures. Over a dozen poets of national and international reputation will attend as resource guests, together with over 100 other poets, students, teachers, editors and other participants from all parts of the country. Fee: $110 for the complete period; housing $40, meals available on campus.

FOR INFORMATION WRITE:
NATIONAL POETRY FESTIVAL
THOMAS JEFFERSON COLLEGE
ALLENDALE, MICHIGAN 49401

Walker Art Center and
St. Paul Council of Arts and Sciences
Poetry in the Schools Project present

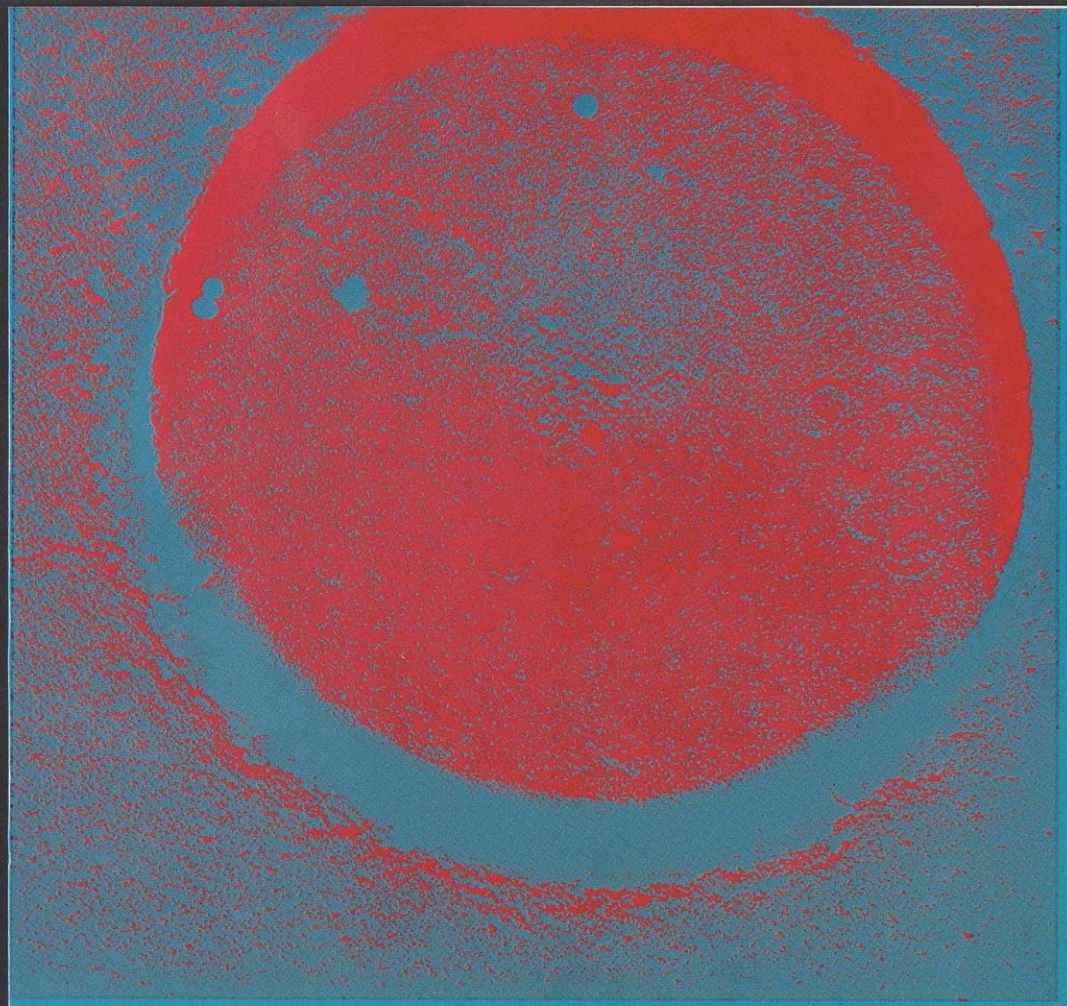
POETRY READING

Alvin Greenberg
Carl Rakosi

Sunday, 26 March 4 pm

Walker Art Center Lecture/Information Room

Tickets: $1.50, students $1. at the door



Carl Rakosi

AMULET

AMULET
Poems by Carl Rakosi

For the new generation of poetry readers the work of Carl Rakosi will be an exciting discovery. Rakosi was well known in the Thirties, a leading member of the Objectivist Group, which also included William Carlos Williams, Louis Zukofsky, Charles Reznikoff, and George Oppen. New Directions published his *Poems* in 1941. Then, to the great disappointment of his admirers, Rakosi stopped writing; he had become disillusioned with the state of our society and felt there was no place in it for a poet. The world seems little better off today, but at least we can be grateful that Rakosi began to write poetry again three years ago and has now given us this selection from his poems, old and new.

Rakosi's poetry has affinities with that of the other Objectivists, but his voice is very much his own. His lines have distinctive tone and finish, deriving in part from a buoyant and ironic wit, in part from a rather unexpected vocabulary. Born in Berlin, educated in Hungary and the American Middle West, Rakosi studied both law and medicine, and brought to his work a unique, fresh, almost gnomic perception.

"Good news—Carl Rakosi is writing again! A great ear. What's more, a great, brave, bright heart. We can use him!"

—*Hayden Carruth*

Jacket photograph courtesy of Union Carbide Corporation. Design by David Ford

A NEW DIRECTIONS BOOK

$4.50

Some Other Books of the Objectivist Poets

GEORGE OPPEN
The Materials. (ND) NDP122, $1.25
This in Which. (ND) $3.50 & NDP201, $1.75

CHARLES REZNIKOFF
By the Waters of Manhattan. (ND) NDP121, $1.50
Testimony: The United States 1885-1890. (ND) $3.75 & NDP200, $1.95

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS
Collected Earlier Poems. (ND) $5.00
Collected Later Poems. (ND) $4.50
Paterson. (ND) NDP152, $1.95
Pictures from Brueghel. (ND) $5.00 & NDP118, $2.25

New Directions Bilingual French Books

GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE
Selected Writings (translated by Roger Shattuck). $3.50

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE
Flowers of Evil (various translators; edited by Jackson and Marthiel Mathews). $6.50
Selected Flowers of Evil. ND Paperbook 71, $1.35

ALAIN BOSQUET
Selected Poems (various translators). $1.00

BLAISE CENDRARS
Selected Writings (various translators). $5.95
ND Paperbook 203, $2.45

PAUL ÉLUARD
Selected Writings (translated by Lloyd Alexander; prefaces by Aragon, Claude Roy, and Louis Parrot). $3.50

STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ
Poems (translated by Roger Fry; introduction by Charles Mauron). $3.00

HENRI MICHAUX
Selected Writings (Introduction and translation by Richard Ellmann). (paperback ready 1968)

ARTHUR RIMBAUD
Illuminations (translated by Louise Varèse). ND Paperbook 56, $1.35
A Season in Hell & The Drunken Boat (translated by Louise Varèse). ND Paperbook 97, $1.45

JULES SUPERVIELLE
Selected Writings (various translators). $6.75
ND Paperbook 209, $2.75

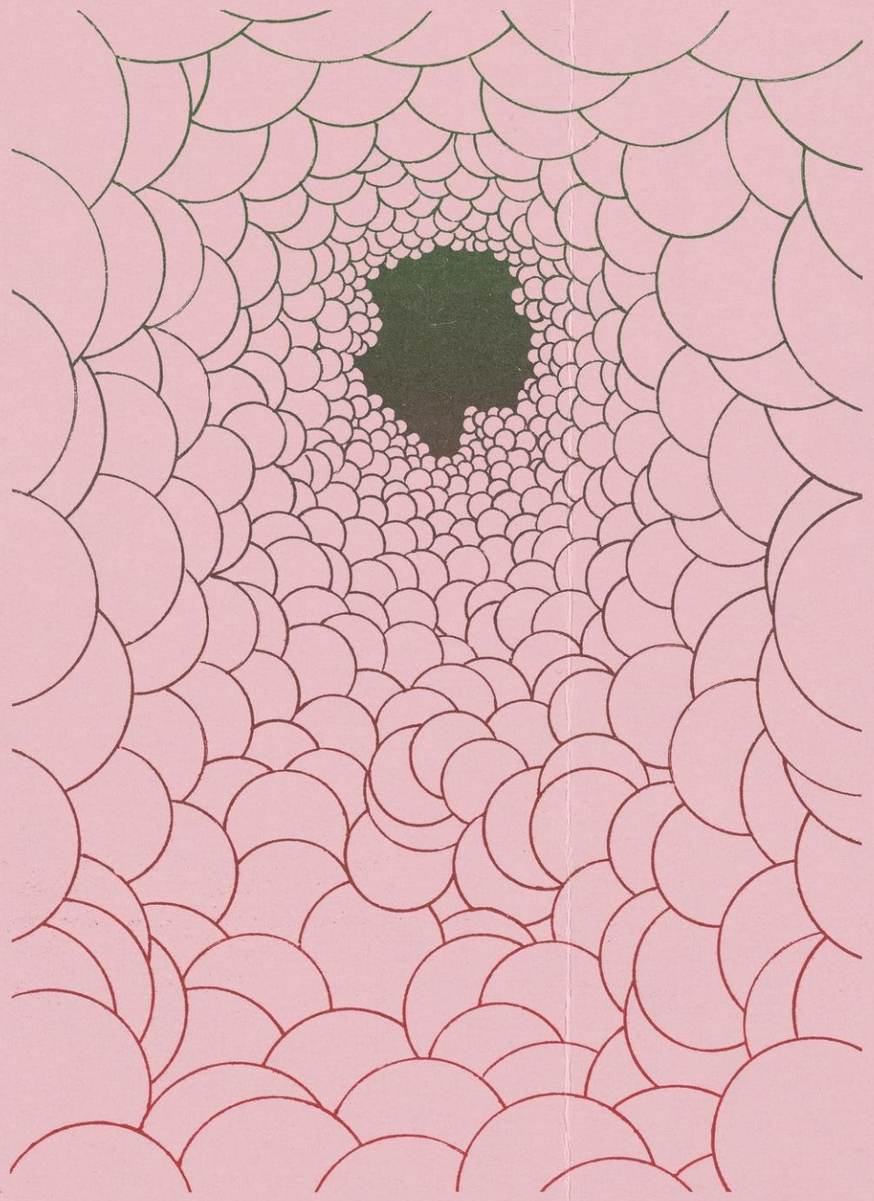
PAUL VALÉRY
Selected Writings (various translators). ND Paperbook 184, $1.65

New Directions 333 Sixth Avenue New York 10014

Carl Rakosi AMULET

New Directions

MARCH POETRY CENTER READINGS



thursday 6 march 12:30pm

h.l.l. 135 on s.f. state campus 19th & holloway

KENWARD ELMSLIE
KEITH ABBOTT

wednesday 12 march 8pm

s.f. museum of art : van ness & mcallister : $2 donation

CARL RAKOSI
ARMAND SCHWERNER

introduced by george oppen

thursday 20 march 12:30pm

h.l.l. 135 on s.f. state campus 19th & holloway

JANE COOPER
LAURA CHESTER

readings sponsored by Associated Students of S.F.S.U.

POETRY CENTER NEWSLETTER

MARCH, 1975

Visitors from the East distinguish the month of March at the Poetry Center with two programs on campus and one evening event at the S.F. Museum of Art . . . don't forget that the last week will be unscheduled due to the Spring break at S.F.S.U. from March 23-30.

KENWARD ELMSLIE, TED BERRIGAN AND KEITH ABBOTT, Thursday, March 6, 12:30, HLL 135

KENWARD ELMSLIE spends his time between New York City and Calais, Vermont, and has a constant stream of poems, theatre works and opera librettos issuing from his imagination . . . among his books of poems, *Motor Disturbance* (Columbia Univ. Press) won the 1971 Frank O'Hara Award; his only novel, *The Orchid Stories,* was published in 1973, and his opera libretto for *Lizzie Borden* was produced by the New York City Opera, followed by librettos for *Miss Julie, The Seagull* and *Washington Square.* TED BERRIGAN, whom we hope will be here (pending solutions as yet unforthcoming at the time this letter goes to press), is now teaching in Chicago after a year in England. His "C" Press was famous in New York City in the '60s for publishing the works of many young, funny and serious poets who were beginning to emerge from the influences of O'Hara, Ashberry and Koch. Ted's *The Sonnets* (Grove) and *Bean Spasms* (collaborations with Ron Padgett and Joe Brainard from Kulchur Press) were followed by many poem-works, comic books, etc. from little presses and a book, *In the Early Morning Rain* (Golliard-Grossman). KEITH ABBOTT lives in the East Bay where he trims trees, professionally not metaphorically. His book of poems *Putty,* was recently issued in a beautiful small-press edition from Cranium Press. Forthcoming works include a novel, *Gush,* from Blue Wind Press and another book of poems, *Erase Words,* from Cranium. He was winner of a Poet's Foundation grant in 1973.

CARL RAKOSI AND ARMAND SCHWERNER, Wednesday night, March 13, 8 p.m., S.F. Museum of Art, Van Ness at McAllister

CARL RAKOSI, after years of being read and appreciated as a leading member of the Objectivist Group in the '30s, a group including Zukofsky, Reznikoff, Oppen and W.C. Williams, is finally beginning to be read by a new generation of poets who feel the necessity for exactness and clear seeing that he brings to his work. *Ere-Voice,* published in 1971, and *Armulet,* 1967, are both issued by New Directions. ARMAND SCHWERNER lives on Staten Island, N.Y., and is best known for a long experimental work-in-progress called *The Tablets,* parts I-XV published by Grossman in 1971. Schwerner's very droll and energetic wit make his performance of this work a unique event. He published the *Bacchae Sonnets* in 1974; *Redspell Poems of the No. American Indian,* Mt. Hored, Wisc. was just published this month by Perishable Press. Coming in the fall will be his new translation of *Sophocles' Philoctetes.* George Oppen will introduce.

JANE COOPER AND LAURA CHESTER, Thursday, March 20, 12:30, HLL 135

JANE COOPER lives in NYC and teaches at Sarah Lawrence College. Her first book, *The Weather of Six Mornings* won the 1968 Lamont Award of the Academy of American Poets. Her new book, *Maps & Windows* is an unusual collection of new poems plus an unpublished group of poems written from 1947-51, sandwiched with a fascinating autobiographical essay questioning the effects of war, romantic love, academic life, etc. on her own work, or her censoring of it. Both books are from Macmillan. LAURA CHESTER is a poet and prose-writer, co-editor of *Stooge* magazine (with her husband, Geoff Young) and co-editor of the women's poetry anthology *Rising Tides* (with Sharon Barba). *Nightlatch,* a collection of short experimental prose pieces, was just published by Tribal Press.

Don't forget the Frank O'Hara films at the S.F. Museum, Wednesday night, March 19, $1.50. These will include the half hour film made for N.E.T. and seen nationwide over the last decade, plus the unique outtake footage, bequeathed to the Poetry Center by KQED, via Richard Moore (the film's producer/director), and edited by Gordon Craig and Peter Kunz, with the assistance of an N.E.A. grant . . . the footage includes lots of fascinating material not considered appropriate or important enough for TV viewing.

Poetry

THE POETRY CENTER, 92 ST. Y M-YWHA

$30 Membership
The Poetry Center's 78-79 Season will include evenings with:

Yehuda Amichai	**Toni Morrison**
Donald Barthelme	**Scott Momaday**
Joseph Brodsky	**Howard Nemerov**
Robert Duncan	**Stanley Plumly**
Carlos Fuentes	**Carl Rakosi**
Günter Grass	**Susan Sontag**
Seamus Heaney	**Gerald Stern**
Barbara Howes	**Mark Strand**
John Irving	**May Swenson**
Stanley Kunitz	**David Wagoner**

Anthony Burgess and The Laurentians
An Evening of Poetry and Music

Harold Clurman: Morning Lectures on Theatre

In addition poetry writing workshops will be taught by Judith Hemschemeyer, David Ignatow, Naomi Lazard. Daniel Stern will hold a fiction workshop and Richard Howard will teach a translation workshop. Emile Capouya will lecture on the art of understanding poetry.

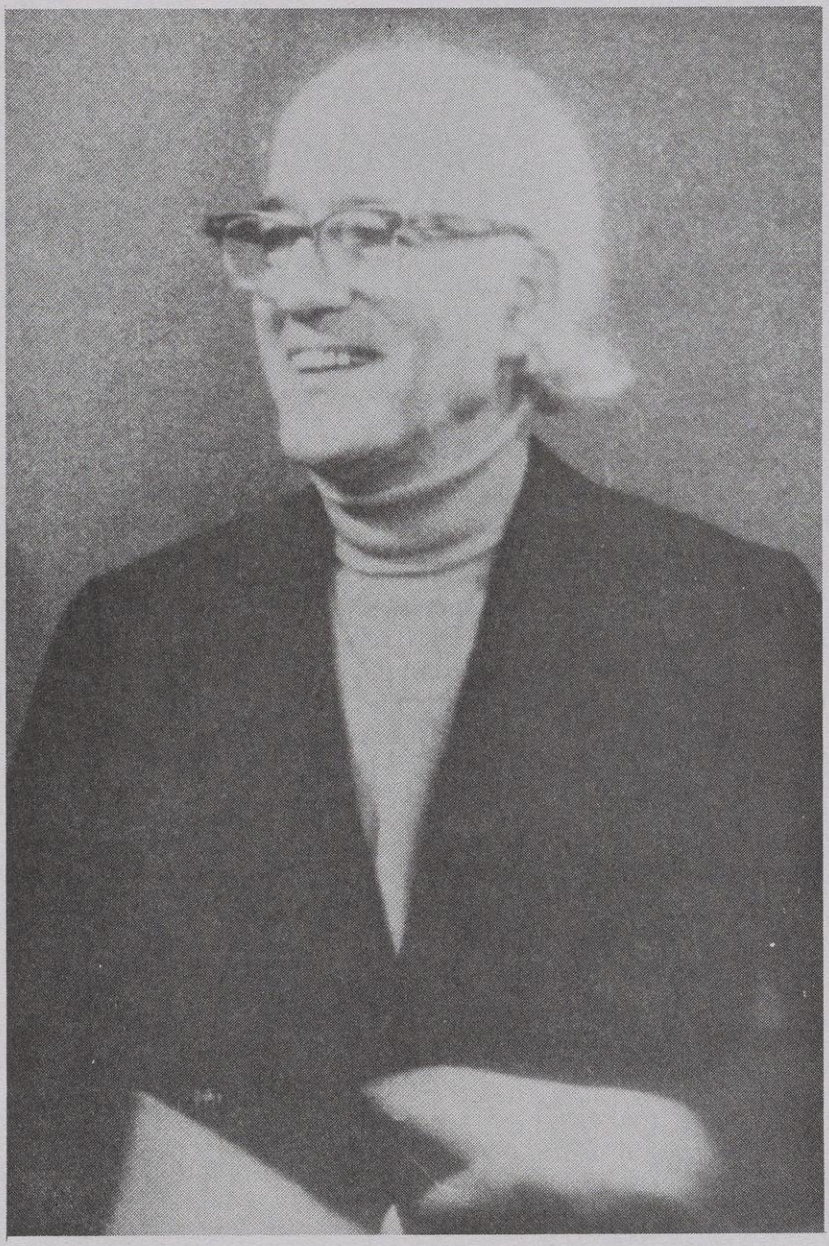
at the Y

1395 LEXINGTON AVENUE, NYC, 10028

Write or phone (212 427-6000, ext. 711) for information.

Beneficiary, UJA/Federation Joint Campaign

 American Poetry Review 1978



CARL RAKOSI

About Carl Rakosi:

Carl Rakosi has juggled several careers throughout his life, and even his work as a poet divides itself into two parts. His poems first appeared in *The Little Review* and in Ezra Pound's *The Exile* in the '20s. In the early '30s he was associated with the Objectivist poets, a group that didn't make a very big splash at the time, but has had a profound, long-term effect on contemporary British and American poetry. His first book was published in 1933. By the time of the publication of his next book, *Selected Poems* (New Directions, 1941), he had stopped writing poetry. He did not resume composition until 1966. Whatever the reasons for his decision to stop writing, the period of literary silence didn't diminish his abilities – he was able to pick up where he left off without having to go through a second apprenticeship. Perhaps we can see some of Rakosi's honesty in his silence: if you don't have anything to say, or if no one will listen, you should not talk. George Oppen, a poet closely associated with Rakosi, went through a period of silence at about the same time, perhaps for similar reasons. During the period between 1940 and 1966, interest in Rakosi's early work and that of the other Objectivists had been growing: when he reemerged as a poet, he had a small but committed audience waiting for him. Since 1966, Rakosi's work has gained in depth and breadth, and he is now accepted as a major American poet.

Rakosi studied psychology at the University of Wisconsin and at the University of Pennsylvania, followed by training in psychotherapy. Until his retirement in 1968, he worked as a psychotherapist and social worker. Perhaps his work in these areas gave him something he needed to resume his literary career. As a poet, Rakosi has a unique ability to combine sympathy and detachment, qualities apparent in his early work, and central to his post - 1966 writing.

Rakosi was born in Berlin in 1903. He lived in Hungary from 1904 to 1910, when he came to the United States. His father was a watchmaker and had a jewelry store, first in Gary, Indiana and then, until his death, in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Carl Rakosi was writer-in-residence at U.W.–Madison, 1969-1970. He has given many readings and conducted his share of workshops since that time.

For literary historians and critics, Carl Rakosi is firmly placed as a leading member of the Objectivist movement, a group that has Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams as its patron saints, and includes Louis Zukofsky, George Oppen, Charles Reznikoff, and Basil Bunting as its nucleus. Lorine Niedecker, Theodore Enslin, and Cid Corman form a sort of second generation Objectivist group. The legacy of Objectivism can be seen in the work of many younger writers, including John Taggart, Barbara Einzig, and Thomas A. Clark; it has also left its mark on concrete poetry and the poets of the language centered school.

The Objectivist label is useful in a milieu like ours: it helps you find your bearings in a large galaxy of poets and schools going in more directions than most readers can keep track of. But it can also set up a barrier between contemporary audiences and the uniqueness of Rakosi's work. Rakosi achieves profound psychological depth through careful observation of everyday life, including the flat, stubborn surfaces of American speech. Rakosi's unadorned verses radiate open good humor, playful irony, untroubled powers of precise observation, sly exuberance, unresentful disregard for authority and trendiness, judicious respect for proportion and scale in human activities, a direct jocularity rare in contemporary poetry, and, rarer still, unalloyed horse-sense. His wit is wry and wise. He maintains the classical satirist's focus and restraint. His sense of timing and disjunction have grown throughout his career. Listen for the surprising but graceful progression of ideas in his poems, and the lucid idiosyncrasies of his vocabulary. He never hides behind a mystique of craft – he is too competent a craftsman for that. His earthy humor can attract devoted aficionados and people who usually find poetry uninteresting. His thin and controlled voice can suddenly open surprisingly unnoticed areas of contemporary American life.

–Karl Young

Books by Carl Rakosi Available at Woodland Pattern:

Amulet, New Directions, 1967.
The Collected Prose of Carl Rakosi, National Poetry Foundation, University of Maine, 1983.
Droles De Journal, Toothpaste Press, 1981.
Ere-Voice, New Directions, 1971.
Ex Cranium, Night, Black Sparrow Press, 1985.

A major critical biography, **Carl Rakosi**, by Milwaukee poet Martin J. Rosenblum, is scheduled for publication in 1986 by the University of Maine Press.

Woodland Pattern Book Center carries one of the largest selections of contemporary poetry in the United States. Hours are: Tuesday through Friday, noon to 8:00 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, noon to 5:00 p.m.. Woodland Pattern is located at 720 East Locust Street. Come in and browse!

Carl Rakosi's reading is the fourth, and final, event in the Spring 1985 New Arts Sampler Series.

This reading is made possible by private donations and the Wisconsin Arts Board, with funds from the State of Wisconsin and the National Endowment for the Arts.

CARL RAKOSI
READING

MEDITATION

What's this world's ache
for which
the ego falls
to its knees, crying
and claims to speak,
bound by a sigh
as in song
where one can sit
within the nature
of a voice?
Prospero himself
in these boundaries
could not do more.
O cantus firmus!

–Carl Rakosi

Woodland Pattern
720 East Locust
May 11, 8 p.m.
$4 Donation

For more information, and for reservations, call 263 - 5001.
This reading is made possible by private donations and the Wisconsin Arts Board, with funds from the State of Wisconsin and the National Endowment for the Arts.

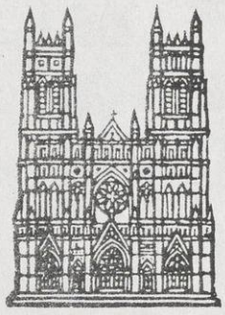
Mr. Carl Rakosi
128 Irving Street
San Francisco, California 94122
U.S.A.

עיריית ירושלים
بلدية اورشليم - القدس
Municipalty of Jerusalem

The Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine

Cathedral Heights
1047 Amsterdam Avenue
at 112th Street
New York, New York 10025
(212) 753-5966

We have to be there at 6:30 p.m.
Ask for Daniel or Canon Ed West
Walk on Amsterdam Ave at 112 St.



The Poets' Corner

THE NINE LESSONS — VESPERS — 7 PM, MAY 12, 1985

1) DANIEL HOFFMAN READING FROM POE:

"Alone"
"Romance"
"To One in Paradise"

2) DANIEL HOFFMAN READING FROM POE:

"Israfel"

3) CARL RAKOSI READING FROM POE:

"To Helen"
"To —" ["I heed not that my earthly lot"]
"To Science"

4) CARL RAKOSI READING FROM POE:

"Silence"
The Cask of Amontillado [the first two paragraphs]

5) STANLEY KUNITZ READING FROM MELVILLE:

"Letters to Hawthorne" [Selections from two letters dated June & November, 1851; written while writing Moby Dick.]
"The Portent"

6) STANLEY KUNITZ READING FROM MELVILLE:

Moby Dick [Chapter 81, "The Pequod meets the Virgin"; from the paragraph beginning, "His motions plainly denoted his extreme exhaustion"...to the paragraph ending... "—so the last long dying spout of the whale."]

The Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine

Cathedral Heights
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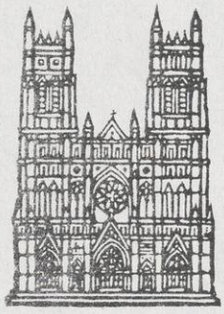
at 112th Street
New York, New York 10025
(212) 753-5966



The Poets' Corner

THE NINE LESSONS — VESPERS — 7 PM, MAY 12, 1985 (continued)

7) JOSEPHINE JACOBSEN READING FROM MELVILLE:

Moby Dick [Chapter 9, "The Sermon"; at the end, from "... —But oh! shipmates! on the starboard hand of every woe," ...to..."the boisterous mob can never shake from this sure Keel of the ages..."]

8) JOSEPHINE JACOBSEN READING FROM MELVILLE:

Moby Dick [Chapter 26, "Knights and Squires"; at the end, from "...but this august dignity I treat of"...to... "Bear me out in it, thou great democratic God!"]
"Lone Founts"

9) DANIEL HOFFMAN READING ON POE:
DANIEL HABERMAN READING ON AND FROM MELVILLE:

"At the Tomb of Poe"; by Stephane Mallarme (translated by Daniel Hoffman) Read by Daniel Hoffman
"At Melville's Tomb"; by Hart Crane
Read by Daniel Haberman
Clarel ["Epilogue"]
Read by Daniel Haberman

Carl

the JARGON SOCIETY *inc.*

April 18, 1985
Birthdays: Franz Von Suppè, Leopold Stokowski, Wahoo Sam Crawford, Wynn Bullock...
Highlands

BASIL BUNTING (March 1, 1900... April 17, 1985)

And so, suddenly, the seemingly indestructible Baz is gone into then... He had outlived his great contemporaries and his time. I am sure that he is pleased that it all happened very quickly. A few days before the end he was thinking about television appearances. As Tom Picard says, Mr. Bunting died like a Roman, with curry in his stomach and Glenfiddich in his veins, entertaining his daughter, Roudaba, and his young protege, Tanya, in his Hexhamshire cottage.

On charitable days (which were many), BB would allow that a few of his younger friends could write a good line or two, just now and then. Now comes an opportunity for us to prove it. Bradford Morrow, editor of CONJUNCTIONS, has offered the opening hundred pages of his 8th issue (September 1985) for me to edit a tribute to Bunting. I hope there will be a number of epitaphs. The mock one he wrote for himself runs:

MINOR POET, NOT CONSPICUOUSLY DISHONEST

Therefore, I ask poets, writers, and friends of BB to rise to the sad occasion and celebrate the man and the work. Criticism is not wanted: joy and sorrow and "a respect for the music" are wanted. Contributions should be sent to me at the Corn Close address (checked below) by June 15th, at the very latest. Please arrange that contributions arrive at Corn Close no sooner than May 15th, date of arrival of JW and Tom Meyer.

Basil Bunting always said that he wrote for "unabashed boys & girls." Assuming that we are all in that cherished category, let's do this job right and get it straight:

"If you keep straight you will have no friends
but catgut and blossom in season."

(from 'Chomei at Toyama')

Jonathan Williams

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The Poetry Center

at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago
Columbus Drive and Jackson Boulevard

11th Season
1984-85

Friday, October 12, 8:00pm

Gerald Stern

A celebrant of Jewish mysticism and nature, Gerald Stern is a Lamont Poetry Selection winner and author of several volumes including *Lucky Life, The Red Coal,* and *Paradise Poems.*

Friday, November 30, 8:00pm

Paul Carroll/Alice Notley

Chicago poet and former editor of *Big Table,* Paul Carroll is the author of *Odes, The Luke Poems,* and *New and Selected* Poems. Alice Notley, author of *How Spring Comes* and *Phoebe Light,* among others, was a 1983 winner of the prestigious G.E. Award for Younger Writers.

Tuesday, December 4, 8:00pm

Elizabeth Hardwick

Distinguished critic, novelist, and lecturer, Elizabeth Hardwick is a founder and advisory editor of *The New York Review of Books.* Her most recent book is *Bartleby in Manhattan and Other Essays.*

Friday, February 8, 8:00pm

Ted Kooser/A.K. Ramanujan

Ted Kooser's *Sure Signs: New and Selected Poems* was praised by Karl Shapiro as "a lasting work, comparable to Frost in his richest vein." A MacArthur Prize Fellowship recipient in 1983, A.K. Ramanujan is author of four books of poems in English, and several volumes in translation from two Indian languages.

Friday, March 15, 8:00pm

Joe Brainard/Paul Violi

Joe Brainard, the noted artist, will read from his poetry and prose, including the legendary *I Remember.* Paul Violi, a 1980 NEA Fellow, is author of the well-received book of poems, *Splurge,* as well as *Harmatan* and *Baltic Circles.*

Wednesday, April 17, 8:00pm

Annual Benefit for the Poetry Center
James Merrill

Winner of the National Book Award, Pulitzer Prize and the Bollingen Prize, James Merrill is author of many books of poetry, two novels and several plays. His most recent book, *The Changing Light at Sandover,* was published in 1982.

Friday, May 10, 8:00 pm

Carl Rakosi

First published in the 1920's by Ezra Pound in *The Exile,* Rakosi's poetry also appears in the famous 1931 "Objectivist" issue of *Poetry* magazine. He reads from his many books in this rare Chicago appearance.

The above events are supported in part by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.

Dear Carl—
in case you haven't seen this . . . and before I misplace it.
welcome back—
George

Lee Remick in "The Europeans."

movie slots on its schedule to accommodate a production such as "The Europeans." "American Playhouse" should be focusing its energies on more original television projects.

Melville And Poe Join Poets' Corner

By HERBERT MITGANG

Two giants of 19th-century American literature, Herman Melville and Edgar Allan Poe, had their names inscribed in stone last evening at a dedication service held in the Poets' Corner of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

The one-year-old Poets' Corner, in the arts bay on the north side of the nave in the cathedral, on Amsterdam Avenue at 112th Street, is the American version of the centuries-old Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey in London where Chaucer, among others, is memorialized. Poe and Melville join the first three writers — Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson and Washington Irving — who were elevated last year into this symbolic pantheon of American letters.

Three Ballots for Poe

But in poetry as in politics, controversy abounds. Melville emerged as the choice on the first ballot, getting 8 votes, but it took 3 ballots by a group of 13 electors — all distinguished authors themselves — before Poe made it to the Poets' Corner. Among the electors are Daniel Aaron, Joseph Brodsky, Ann Stanford, Robert Penn Warren, Eudora Welty and Richard Wilbur.

Poe's stiff competition included a celebration of poets and prose writers: Emerson, Hawthorne, Poe, Stephen Crane, Robert Frost, Henry James, T. S. Eliot, Marianne Moore, Willa Cather, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Robert Lowell and Anne Bradstreet.

At the conclusion of the vespers service, memorial stones were unveiled with inscriptions from the writings of the new members. For Melville: "The running battle of the star and clod," derived from "Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land." For Poe, "Out of Space — Out of Time," from his poem "Dreamland."

The program, arranged by Daniel Haberman, poet-in-residence at the cathedral, included recitations from the works of Melville and Poe by the poets Stanley Kunitz, Josephine Jacobsen, Daniel Hoffman, Carl Rakosi and Mr. Haberman.

The Poets' Corner and poet-in-residence post came about by coincidence. Two years ago, the novelist Howard Fast introduced Mr. Haberman to the Very Rev. James Parks Morton, the cathedral's Dean, at a recital. The Dean later went to a poetry reading by Mr. Haberman at the Guggenheim Museum. The Dean then invited the poet to establish a Poets' Corner at the cathedral. Two poets are added every year with only two conditions: they must be American and they must be dead.

APRIL

MONDAY NIGHT POETRY/PERFORMANCE

ALL EVENTS 8 PM THE PARISH HALL $3
HOSTS CHRIS KRAUS & MARC NASDOR

1 OPEN READING FREE
8 SUSAN COOPER & ELLEN ZWEIG
15 STEVEN LA VOIE & THE TINKLERS
22 "A.A. (ANTONIN ARTAUD)" w/ CHRIS KRAUS, SYLVERE LOTRINGER & DAVID RATTRAY
29 MATILDE DAVIU & MOLLY PEACOCK

WEDNESDAY NIGHT READINGS

ALL EVENTS 8 PM THE PARISH HALL $3
HOSTS EILEEN MYLES & PATRICIA JONES

1 REED BYE & HELENA HUGHES
8 BERNADETTE MAYER & CARL RAKOSI
15 STEVE LEVINE & PATRICIA JONES
22 AKUA LEZLI HOPE & JEFF WRIGHT
29 MARIE PONSOT & MAGGIE DUBRIS

ST MARK'S TALKS

8PM THE PARISH HALL $3
HOST CHARLES BERNSTEIN

2 ANNE WALDMAN "WHAT TAKES"

SPECIAL EVENTS

19 CELEBRATION & READING IN HONOR OF CHILDREN'S VERSE IN AMERICA OF OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS WITH JOHN CIARDI, DONALD HALL, MARY ANN HOBERMAN & SPECIAL SURPRISE GUESTS
3PM THE PARISH HALL DONATION $3
CHILDREN FREE

26 AN EVENING OF VIDEO POETRY
8PM THE PARISH HALL $3

THE POETRY PROJECT AT ST MARK'S CHURCH

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NEW YORK CITY 10003
212.674.0910

MAY

MONDAY NIGHT POETRY/PERFORMANCE

ALL EVENTS 8 PM THE PARISH HALL $3
HOSTS CHRIS KRAUS & MARC NASDOR

6 OPEN READING FREE
13 TINA DARRAGH & MURAT NEMET-NEJAT
20 LEE BREUER & CAROLEE SCHNEEMANN
27 "TENTATIVELY, A CONVENIENCE" & LYNN SWANSON

WEDNESDAY NIGHT READINGS

ALL EVENTS 8 PM THE PARISH HALL $3
HOSTS EILEEN MYLES & PATRICIA JONES

3 LYN HEJINIAN & DAVID TRINIDAD
10 MICHAEL LALLY & DAVID WOJNAROWICZ
17 BARBARA GUEST & VICKI HUDSPITH
24 THULANI DAVIS & LYNNE TILLMAN

ST MARK'S TALKS

8:30 PM THE PARISH HALL $3
HOST CHARLES BERNSTEIN

26 NATHANIEL MACKEY "SOUND AND SENTIMENT, SOUND AND SYMBOL"

The Poetry Project receives funding for its programs from the New York State Council on the Arts; The National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency; The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and its Arts Apprenticeship Program; the New Young Filmmakers Video Arts for film screenings, Inc.; the York Council for the Humanities; the Mobil Foundation; the Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts; the Kulchur Foundation; The East New York Savings Bank; the members of the Poetry Project and individual contributors.

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MINNESOTA WRITERS' FESTIVAL

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Meridel Lesueur

Thomas McGrath

Frederick Manfred

Carl Rakosi

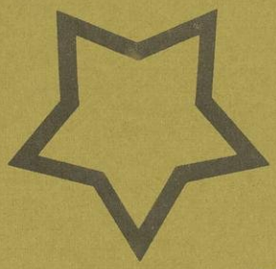
Kate Basham
Carol Bly
Michael Dennis Browne
Emilio DeGrazia
William Elliot
John Engman
Kate Green
Keith Gunderson
Pat Hampl
Phebe Hanson
Margaret Hasse
Susan Hauser
Bill Holm
Lou Jenkins
Mary Karr
Michael Kincaid
Wendy Knox
Sr Galen Martini
John Minceski
Jim Moore
Joe Paddock
Nancy Paddock
John Rezmerski
Barton Sutter
Cary Waterman
Charles Waterman
plus many others

FOR INFORMATION PLEASE WRITE

Philip Dacey
Literature, Language & Philosophy Dept
Southwest State University
Marshall, Minnesota 56258

April 24–28

Southwest State University



Monterey Peninsula College
English Department presents:

SPRING POETRY SERIES

CARL RAKOSI

Wednesday, March 28 8:00 PM in Room H-203 Free Admission !!!

DISTINGUISHED POET CARL RAKOSI WAS ONE OF THE "OBJECTIVIST" POETS OF THE 1930S WHO STOPPED WRITING FOR TWO DECADES TO BECOME A PSYCHIATRIC SOCIAL WORKER. SINCE RESUMING WRITING IN THE MID-1960S, HE HAS COMPLETED THREE BOOKS AND WILL SOON EMBARK ON A LECTURE TOUR. THE PROGRAM WILL BEGIN AT 8 P.M. IN HUMANITIES ROOM 203. ADMISSION IS FREE AND THE PUBLIC IS INVITED.

CARL RAKOSI

"There are little poems about ordinary things which are as strong as an epic without raising their voice... because a discriminating mind, the kind that is adept at metaphysical first causes, has sifted out the essence of a thing, and that is epic."

Changing Scene Theater
Wednesday, March 31, 1976
8 pm

1527 and one half Champa

Reservations: 893-5775

Presented by Lodestar Press and D R R Productions

1985

CATHEDRAL HONORS MELVILLE, POE

Herman Melville and Edgar Allan Poe will be inducted into the American Poets' Corner in The Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine on Sunday, May 12, at the 7 p.m. Vesper Service.

Joseph Brodsky, Josephine Jacobsen, Stanley Kunitz and Carl Rakosi will read from the works of Melville and Poe. At the conclusion of Vespers, memorial stones will be unveiled with the inscriptions "The running battle of the star and clod ("Clarel") and "Our of Space—out of Time ("Dreamland")."

The following day at 8 p.m. in the Cathedral's Synod House, John Hollander will introduce J. V. Cunningham, who will give the first annual "Poet's Corner Cathedral Lecture." Mr. Cunningham's lecture is entitled "If Fame Belonged to Me: Dickinson."

A reception will follow both events.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, MONDAY, MAY 13, 1985

Poe and Melville Join Poets' Corner

By HERBERT MITGANG

Two giants of 19th-century American literature, Herman Melville and Edgar Allan Poe, had their names inscribed in stone last evening at a dedication service held in the Poets' Corner of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

The one-year-old Poets' Corner, in the arts bay on the north side of the nave in the cathedral, on Amsterdam Avenue at 112th Street, is the American version of the centuries-old Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey in London where Chaucer, among others, is memorialized. Poe and Melville join the first three writers — Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson and Washington Irving — who were elevated last year into this symbolic pantheon of American letters.

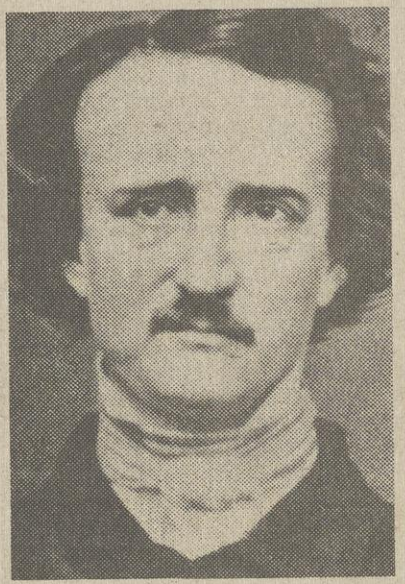
But in poetry as in politics, controversy abounds. Melville emerged as the choice on the first ballot, getting 8 votes, but it took 3 ballots by a group of 13 electors — all distinguished authors themselves — before Poe made it to the Poets' Corner. Among the electors are Daniel Aaron, Joseph Brodsky, Ann Stanford, Robert Penn Warren, Eudora Welty and Richard Wilbur.

Poe's stiff competition included a celebration of poets and prose writers: Emerson, Hawthorne, Poe, Stephen Crane, Robert Frost, Henry James, T. S. Eliot, Marianne Moore, Willa Cather, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Robert Lowell and Anne Bradstreet.

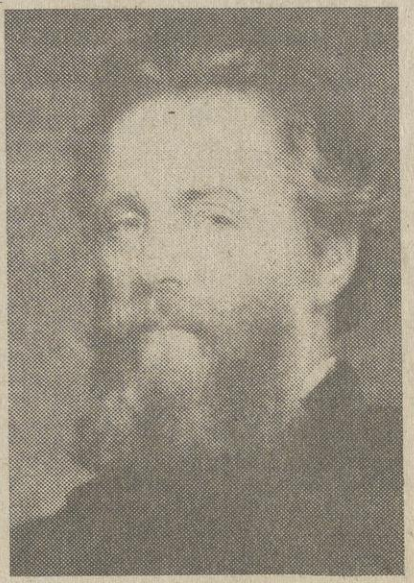
At the conclusion of the vespers service, memorial stones were unveiled with inscriptions from the writings of the new members. For Melville: "The running battle of the star and clod," derived from "Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land." For Poe, "Out of Space — Out of Time," from his poem "Dreamland."

The program, arranged by Daniel Haberman, poet-in-residence at the cathedral, included recitations from the works of Melville and Poe by the poets Stanley Kunitz, Josephine Jacobsen, Daniel Hoffman, Carl Rakosi and Mr. Haberman.

The Poets' Corner and poet-in-residence post came about by coincidence. Two years ago, the novelist Howard Fast introduced Mr. Haberman to the Very Rev. James Parks Morton, the cathedral's Dean, at a recital. The Dean later went to a poetry reading by Mr. Haberman at the Guggenheim Museum. The Dean then invited the poet to establish a Poets' Corner at the cathedral. Two poets are added every year with only two conditions: they must be American and they must be dead.



Edgar Allan Poe

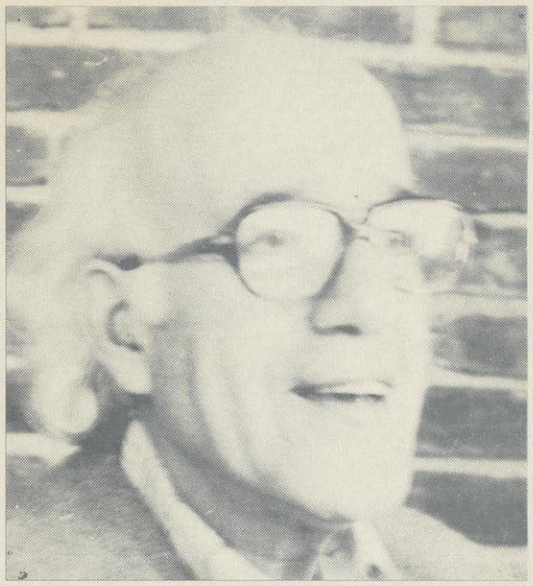


Herman Melville

The Poetry Center at
The School of
the Art Institute
of Chicago
Presents a Special
Appearance by

Carl Rakosi

Friday, May 10th, 8 pm
At The School of the
Art Institute of Chicago
Columbus Drive and
Jackson Boulevard
Admission $4.00 general,
$3.00 students and
senior citizens
Free admission to
School of the
Art Institute students



POETRY READING by CARL RAKOSI

Carl Rakosi's early work appeared in the 1930's — in the famous Objectivist issue of *Poetry,* in Ezra Pound's magazine *The Exile,* and in *The Little Review,* along with contributions from James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, Wyndham Lewis, William Carlos Williams and Hemingway. After a long silence, during which he devoted himself to a career in social work and psychotherapy, he resumed writing in the 1960's. Since then he has received three National Endowment for the Arts Awards and published seven collections of verse and prose.

Last year Rakosi was invited to read his poetry in Budapest, Jerusalem and Oxford. This is his first reading in Toronto.

HART HOUSE LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

FRIDAY, MAY 22 at 8:30 P.M.

26 March 1984

Schulman

Dear Grace:

The National Poetry Foundation at the University of Maine has just brought out my COLLECTED PROSE (some autobiography but mostly aphorisms and pensees). If you think The Nation might be interested in reviewing it, I'll ask my publisher to hurry a copy along to you.

Do you have that outsize Yaddo group photograph with you and me sitting on the floor, looking into each other's eyes and laughing? I love that picture.

Hugs,

Carl

Book Review
Editor
Minneapolis Star & Tribune

24 March 1984

Dear Bob Sorenson:

Greetings from a former, and slightly aging, very slightly, book-reviewer.

The National Poetry Foundation at The University of Maine has just brought out my COLLECTED PROSE. The book is, in part, autobiography but mostly aphorisms and pensees. If you think you'd be interested in having it reviewed in the Star and Tribune, I'll have my publisher send you a copy. In that case, anyone you assign it to would be all right with me, but if you'd like suggestions, here are two: "Chet" Anderson in the English Department at the University (there are two Andersons in the department and by chance they have the same first initials, so if you're interested, you'd have to inquire for the Joyce scholar; that's the one) and Al Greenberg, a professor of English at Macalester.

Leah and I have lived here for five years now and although it has been stimulating, never, I'm afraid, am I going to feel like a San Franciscan.

Best,