

Essays on the Making of Modern Poetry


# FROM POETRY TO VERSE <br> Essays on the Making of Modern Poetry 

Edited by SRikanth Reddy


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## PREFACE

Curators and poetry journal editors perform strikingly similar roles. Both identify new and emerging talent worthy of "collecting"-for curators, within an institutional setting, for editors, in a publication. Curators develop collections that preserve a significant documentary record and make it accessible; editors produce journals to disseminate works they believe to be of value and interest. Both must decide what is appropriate for their collection or publication, make selections according to the program they have established, and promote the results. The work of curators and editors participates in the creation of culture and history by determining what will be available to current and future audiences.

These activities come together in the archives of poetry journals. Collecting the papers of contemporary writers is a phenomenon of the second half of the twentieth century. But decades earlier, the University of Chicago recognized the importance of preserving such materials. In 1936 the university received the archive of Poetry: A Magazine of Verse as a bequest from Harriet Monroe, the journal's founding editor. The collection includes correspondence, manuscripts, and editorial files that document the role of the journal in the development of modern poetry and in the careers of many poets who first appeared in its pages. Over the years, the archive has supported the work of countless biographers, editors, literary critics, and historians. It has also encouraged and inspired generations of students who
learned to appreciate the process of creating and producing literary works and who came to love poetry through their encounters in the library's vast modern poetry collection.

Chicago has continued to be a vital center of poetry and poetry journals, with strong ties to the University of Chicago, where the study and writing of poetry has always had an important place. In recent years, a new level of energy fuels these activities. Under the leadership of Professors Robert von Hallberg, Department of English, and Danielle Allen, Dean of the Humanities Division, new programs and reading series are flourishing. And, as part of this resurgence, Professors von Hallberg and Allen have stimulated a renewed era of collecting poetry archives by the University of Chicago Library. We are delighted to have this opportunity to thank them for their contributions and to showcase the early results of our efforts. We also thank the University of Chicago Library Society for their support of several recent acquisitions.

This book and the exhibition it accompanies serve a common purpose: to highlight the archives of poetry journals in the University of Chicago Library and to illustrate their enormous potential for research. The exhibition surveys themes-discovering new talent, poetry in the academy, and creating an audience for poetry-that also shape the essays collected in this volume. Together they illustrate the extent to which writers, editors, curators, and scholars depend upon each other and the importance of poetry journal archives to help us understand these relationships.

A number of University of Chicago faculty members and graduate students guided this project from its inception. In addition to Professors von Hallberg and Allen, we are particularly indebted to Srikanth Reddy, who helped define the nature of the publication and, through his editorial efforts, bring it into being. We are profoundly grateful to the authors who have dedicated their time and effort to highlight specific items in the collection or to provide introductions to the poetry journal archives: Kenneth Clarke, Joel Felix, Jenny Ludwig, Michael and Peter O'Leary, Matthias Regan, Eirik Steinhoff, David Wray, and Andrew Zawacki. Concurrent work on the exhibition enhanced our
understanding of the research potential of the poetry journal archives featured in this publication. We thank David Pavelich, Reference and Instruction Librarian; Sandy Roscoe, Reference Librarian; Kerri Sancomb, Exhibitions Specialist; and Catherine Uecker, Rare Books Manager, for their contributions to the exhibition.

Sebastian Hierl
Bibliographer for English and Romance Literatures

## Alice Schreyer

Director, Special Collections Research Center

## INTRODUCTION

15 April I862
Mr. Higginson,
Are you too deeply occupied to say if my Verse is alive?
The Mind is so near itself - it cannot see, distinctly - and I have none to ask -

Should you think it breathed - and had you the leisure to tell me, I should feel quick gratitude -

If I make the mistake - that you dared to tell me - would give me sincerer honor - toward you -

I enclose my name - asking you, if you please - Sir - to tell me what is true? ${ }^{1}$

Sooner or later, for better or for worse, the making of poetry-modern or otherwise-involves the necessary ordeal of introductions. While Emily Dickinson's correspondence with the soldier, critic, and preacher Thomas Wentworth Higginson may have ultimately led her to conclude that "Publication - is the Auction / Of the Mind of Man," ${ }^{2}$ we see in this vulnerable and searching letter that the very act of introducing oneself to another is, by nature, deeply poetic. Precisely because the mind is so near itself, writers have always sought out a Maecenas, a Higginson, or a Harriet Monroe to say if their verse is alive; and so it seems not only appropriate but also somehow necessary to introduce this collection of essays published in conjunction with the exhibition "From Poetry to Verse: The Making of Modern Poetry" by surveying the
letters of literary self-introduction now archived in the University of Chicago Library.

If he had not led the nation's first black regiment into battle during the Civil War, Higginson would have assured his own place in posterity by his colossally obtuse editorial judgment. Not only did he convince Dickinson that her verses were unfit for publication in her lifetime, but he also proclaimed elsewhere, "It is no discredit to Walt Whitman that he wrote Leaves of Grass, only that he did not burn it afterwards." ${ }^{3}$ The fellowship, however, that Higginson offered merely by corresponding with Dickinson about her art may very well have been enough to sustain this poet creatively throughout her most productive period, from 1862 to 1865 . As she wrote seven years after introducing herself to Higginson, "Of our greatest acts we are ignorant - / You were not aware that you saved my Life" (SL, 197). While, in the end, anonymity suited Dickinson very well indeed, we encounter a distinctly different brand of anonymity in the contemporary archives of Verse magazine, in the following letter from a talent agency (that most quintessentially modern of literary institutions) that identifies itself as the Fenton Entertainment Group:

## Dear Andrew:

Submitted for your consideration are "Etudes," a collection of original poems by Powell B. Knighton, a pseudonym for a well-known U.S. Congressman, [name and constituency omitted]. The poems are augmented with the paintings of John Singer Sargent.

Ranging from humorous to horrific, the poems are songs: the sorrows, sins, and strength of the human spirit. Each painting, while not inspiring its paired poem, was chosen to mirror and amplify the work's emotional crux. In conjunction with the poem, the collection's impact is stunning. ${ }^{4}$
"Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them the same, I receive them the same" writes Whitman in Song of MYself; ${ }^{5}$ and here, the ekphrastically minded politician's desire for anonymity reflects a particularly democratic impulse within the making of modern poetry. (Alas, this anonymity seems to have been secured all too well in the
congressman's case; an internet search turns up no collections of poetry under the name of Powell B. Knighton, either with Verse or with any other publisher). Yet lest we should wax too idealistic, there is always the practical corrective of today's literary marketplace: "Incidentally," concludes the letter from Fenton Entertainment, "if it will assist the Marketing and promotion campaign to use the Congressman's name, we have his permission."

At best, literary introductions can lead to lasting friendships, and the Verse archive chronicles the endlessly elaborating web of friendship that continues to weave itself through the practice and promotion of contemporary poetry today. From the chorus of voices-Jerome McGann, Alice Quinn, Dana Gioia and many others-raised in support of Verse when financial woes threatened the journal's existence in the last decade to the encyclopedic repartee between the current editors, Brian Henry and Andrew Zawacki, on matters ranging from Søren Kierkegaard's Works of Love to Allen Iverson's performance during the 2001 NBA championships, the correspondence in the Verse archive testifies to Virgil Thomson's famous observation, "One of the strange things about poets is the way they keep warm by writing to one another all over the world." (The fraternal warmth that pervades these papers is no doubt due to the fact that Zawacki and Henry are, in addition to being literary editors, practicing poets-a common bond they share with Paul Carroll and Harriet Monroe, two other poet-editors featured in this exhibition.) With the acquisition of the Verse material, the University of Chicago Library has come into possession of a living archive, one that tells the ongoing story of the making of modern poetry in "real time"-for sifting through the boxes of e-mail printouts, letters, and postcards that swell the collection is like viewing a tutorial on how to stay afloat as an innovative literary magazine in the twenty-first century. Zawacki's essay on Verse for this collection tells the magazine's story from its origin to its present-day flourishing; it is a story that will most certainly continue to enrich our literary Zeitgeist in the years to come.

Moving backward in time from the contemporary e-mails and faxes of the Verse papers toward the legendary dawn of Poetry magazine
nearly a century ago, it is worth pausing en route to consider the correspondence of the poet, teacher, and literary impresario Paul Carroll during his editorship of another remarkable Chicago magazine, Big Table, in the postwar era. Though Big Table ultimately produced only five issues before folding-a story that Jenny Ludwig outlines in her contribution to this collection-it managed to draw the attention of many grizzled demigods of today's poetic pantheon at the outset of their careers. Here, for instance, is one recent winner of the Yale Younger Poets' Award, writing to Carroll from Paris in the spring of 1960 (plate i2):

Dear Paul,
Just a line to tell you how pleased and thrilled I am that you want to publish my poem "Europe." It's the best news since the Treaty of Utrecht [. . .]. ${ }^{6}$

The wit, of course, is vintage John Ashbery, and the poem in question will eventually provide the centerpiece for the radical experiment in literary and grammatical collage known as The Tennis Court Oath. While Big Table is most commonly associated with Beat writers and Black Mountain poets-Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Denise Levertov, Robert Duncan, Robert Creeley-the range of Carroll's correspondence covers a greater number of schools and movements than has previously been registered. Consider for instance this disarmingly candid self-introduction by Ashbery's fellow New York School poet James Schuyler: "I'm an anxiety type, but my anxieties are sometimes based on a fairly harsh and varied experience. ${ }^{7}$ At times it can be difficult to ascertain whether such effusions are addressed to an editor or to an analyst, and in fact Big Table-with the irrepressible Carroll at its helm-exerted a deeply therapeutic influence on a dizzying array of poetic sensibilities during its brief tenure, from outlaws such as William S. Burroughs to erstwhile Southern gentlemen like James Dickey, who wrote:

I am in no sense a "literary man": I work eight hours a day at a damned hard job, and try to write whenever I get a chance, which is
not nearly often enough, I assure you [. . .]. I mention these things simply to let you know that your support came to me at a time I really needed it: when I had all but lost, not the creative drive, but the incentive, the interest in poetry even. And now I am blazing away on all fronts. ${ }^{8}$

Big Table derived its name from the editors' mission of creating a forum-a "big table"-capacious enough to accommodate a spectrum of emerging voices and diverse aesthetics. For writers who might otherwise have lost both the "incentive" and "interest" in poetry under the cultural regime that prevailed during the Cold War in America, Big Table provided a means of "blazing away on all fronts" indeed.

Like Athena, sprung ready for battle from Zeus's pained cranium, Big Table came into the world as the unruly offspring of the university's own Chicago Review. Eirik Steinhoff's carefully researched essay examines the controversy surrounding the advent of Big Table following the university's suppression of the Winter 1959 issue of Chicago Review-a controversy that raises important questions regarding the relationship between little magazines and their institutional sponsors. If nothing else, we have this complex affair to thank for a variety of other Chicago poetry institutions whose papers are now housed in the University of Chicago Library's archive: Chicago Review begat Big Table; and Big Table, as Kenneth Clarke points out in his essay here, begat the Poetry Center of Chicago. Lest we forget that Hyde Park is only one among many outposts of poetic culture in this city, the editors of $L V N G$ magazine have also contributed a thoughtful article on the genesis of their journal and its innovative efforts at reaching a broad poetry audience throughout the city, "from skate punks to office workers in the Loop." Each in its own way, Chicago Review, the Poetry Center of Chicago, and LVNG continue a long tradition in Chicago of introducing new poets to new audiences through new and inventive methods.

Alas, with the growing professionalization of poetry in the latter half of the twentieth century, something has been lost to the art of literary introductions. Verve, grace, and eccentricity are being steadily effaced by the word-processed cover letter laser-printed from a template on one's hard drive and sent out in the literary equivalent of
mass mailings. Fortunately for visitors to the University of Chicago Library's collection, however, Harriet Monroe had the foresight nearly a century ago to save some unusual correspondence from aspiring contributors to Poetry in a file that she referred to as her "Museum." Listed as "Crank Letters" the library's finding aids today, these selfintroductions range from the grandiloquent-"I am American Citizen [sic] my People being among the First Landowners of America. They Bought - not Stole - their Lands from the Indians receiving Recepits [sic] from the Tribes Signed by their Queen, by a Cross of Blood, as Signature" ${ }^{9}$-to the unctuous:

Editor: Poetry, A Magazine of Verse
Please accept this sonnet which I have written in honor of you. Perhaps you will think my poem a little too uplifting, but it is not. The tribute is mild, to say the least. I hope you will not hesitate to publish it in your magazine. When my poem is printed, please send me a copy in which it appears. Also, let me hear from you in regard to this sonnet, which I am submitting to you.

Hoping you will accept it, I am,
Yours Respectfully, Sam Heller ${ }^{\text {10 }}$
In the case of this latter submission, Monroe declined to publish the enclosed encomium, perhaps because she might have found lines such as "Yours will be the pomp of royal weight, / And all the Earth will to you glory bring" to be rather too uplifting in the end. While surveying these "crank" letters may strike one as a somewhat guilty pleasure, in a sense Monroe's literary "Museum" ultimately demonstrates the editor's curatorial fastidiousness and largesse; rather than allowing these documents to slip into oblivion, she secures their authors a modest yet lasting niche in posterity: "Fame is a bee," writes Dickinson. "It has a song - / It has a sting - / Ah, too, it has a wing" (CP, 713).

Of course, a wealth of material in the Poetry archive derives from authors who need no introduction to a contemporary reader. H.D., Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore, Carl Sandburg, and Louis Zukofsky
are only a few of the poets whose work appeared in the pages of the magazine as it cleared the path for literary Modernism in Chicago and beyond. Two essays in this collection explore archival material that should prove to be of genuine interest to scholars working on early twentieth-century American poetry: David Wray's article examines the manuscript of Zukofsky's First Half of "A"-9 and related correspondence in the collection; and Matthias Regan investigates Monroe's correspondence with Edgar Lee Masters-or, more particularly, with characters such as Lucius Atherton and Elmer Chubb from Masters's Spoon River Anthology. It is easy to forget, among such canonical abundance, that the poets of the Poetry archive required an introduc-tion-to an editor, to fellow writers, to the general reading public-at some point in their careers in order to leave their anonymity behind. With this in mind, it seems fitting to close with one of the most pithily memorable literary introductions in the collection:

Dear Miss Monroe:
My autobiography is, necessarily, very brief; for I have published nothing. I am grateful to you for your notes and, of course, for the check.

Very truly yours, Wallace Stevens ${ }^{\text {II }}$

Stevens's letter seems to be the least lyrical and the most mundane of introductions. And yet it rings true. More often than not, our supreme fictions are cobbled together with the aid of a friendly editor's notes and a timely check; and here, in a nutshell, we have the practical elements necessary to the making of modern poetry.

Srikanth Reddy teaches creative writing and literature at the University of Chicago. His first collection of poetry, Facts for Visitors, was published by the University of California Press in spring 2004. His work has appeared in various journals, including APR, Fence, jubilat, Ploughshares, and Verse.

## NOTES

I. Emily Dickinson to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, in Emily Dickinson, Selected Letters, ed. Thomas H. Johnson (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), I7I (hereafter cited as SL).
2. Emily Dickinson, Complete Poems, ed. Thomas H. Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960), 348 (hereafter cited as $C P$ )
3. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, The Magnificent Activist: The Writings of Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1823-1911), ed. Howard N. Meyer (Cambridge, Mass.: Da Capo Press, 2000), 437.
4. Robert L. Fenton to Andrew Zawacki, March 17, 2004. Box 4, "Verse Correspondence 2004" Folder, Verse Records. All archival materials cited in this publication are in the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.
5. Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass: Authoritative Texts, Prefaces, Whitman on His Art, Criticism, ed. Sculley Bradley and Harold W. Blodgett (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), 34.
6. John Ashbery to Paul Carroll, March 15, i960. Box 5, "Big Table Poets i: Correspondence" Folder, Paul Carroll Papers.
7. James Schuyler to Carroll, August 30, 1960. Box 5, "Big Table Poets i: Correspondence" Folder, Paul Carroll Papers.
8. James Dickey to Carroll, January 6, 1959. Box 5, "Big Table Poets i: Correspondence" Folder, Paul Carroll Papers.
9. Helen O'Sullivan Dixon to Harriet Monroe, December i6 [year not specified]. Box 45, Folder 15, Poetry: A Magazine of Verse Records.
10. Sam Heller to Monroe, August 25, 1916. Box 45, Folder 15, Poetry: A Magazine of Verse Records.
ii. Wallace Stevens to Monroe, November 6, 1914. Box 40, Folder 28, Poetry: A Magazine of Verse Records.

# CULTURE JAMMING IN THE ARCHIVE 

The Correspondence of Elmer Chubb, Dr. Atherton, and Harriet Monroe

Sometimes known as media hacking, information warfare, or poetic terrorism, [culture jamming is] an assault on [. . .] consumer culture involving the deliberate disruption, distortion, or subversion of mainstream media messages to expose their hidden meanings.
-Notes from Nowhere ${ }^{\mathrm{I}}$
On February i, i9I8, Edgar Lee Masters, the most popular voice of New American Poetry at the time, sent the following letter to the offices of Poetry magazine:

Gents:
I have your letter of the 3Ist in which you speak of me as a low down poet. I do not care for that except that I would not want it known; and the letter was opened here in the office by a party named L. Shannon. Inasmuch as it was read by this party there has been a technical publication of the libel and I intend to institute suit tomorrow for \$50,000 damages. To use an old argument, I must say that anyone who thinks my work unnice is himself unnice. I am just as nice as Phidias or Praxiteles and have never put anything in verse that you cant see in marble at the Art Institute, and perhaps more vivid in marble than you can see in what I write. I am not allowed equal protection of the laws when you permit liberty of expression in Praxiteles which you deny to me. ${ }^{2}$

Typed on his law office stationery, this letter possesses a physical appearance that perfectly matches its content (plate i). Both are strikingly different from the pleasantries Masters had been scrawling (in soft pencil on onion skin) to "Dear Harriet" Monroe every couple of weeks for the previous four years. Even if the absurd amount demanded in damages guaranteed that Masters was kidding, the letter's appearance and tone must have caused a momentary shock, the temporary doubt necessary for any good practical joke. Masters's law practice is seldom mentioned in other letters, and the sudden transformation from small-town poet to big-city lawyer is stunning. It's one thing for a poet to threaten legal action; quite another when the threat comes on the official stationery of the man who had been Clarence Darrow's law partner for five years. Sitting in the Special Collections Research Center with the Poetry archives eighty-seven years later I found myself reading this letter over and over, just as Alice Corbin Henderson and Harriet Monroe must have done. ${ }^{3}$

Arguing for the importance of reading the politics of "material culture," Stephen Greenblatt described the realm of everyday, elusive interactions between thoughtful bodies as well as the quotidian practices, discourses, and institutions that govern and are created by them. As Greenblatt argued, "The most effective disciplinary techniques practiced against those who stray beyond the limits of a given culture are probably not the spectacular punishments reserved for serious offenders, but seemingly innocuous responses: a condescending smile, laughter poised between the genial and the sarcastic, a small dose of indulgent pity laced with contempt, cool silence." ${ }^{4}$ Enculturation requires successfully negotiating the doubts, small hesitations, and moments of embarrassment through which appropriate behavior is disciplined. The letters and poems Masters sent to Monroe between 1914 and i933 function at this level. They record moments of quotidian discipline, use speech rhythms to focus our attention on the small hesitations and half-hidden suggestions that occur as voices negotiate culture, and seek to provoke such responses in their intended audiences. As such, they reveal features of modern poetry that the present fascination with the aesthetics championed by Ezra Pound
and other High Modernists obscures. Masters's letters, read alongside his poems, point to the contingency of the modern canon by revealing a poetic form-culture jamming-that operates in material culture.

Born in 1868 , Masters was admitted to the bar in 1891, and shortly thereafter moved to Chicago, where he practiced law until i920; Darrow, already famous for defending the Haymarket Anarchists, asked Masters twice to be his partner before he accepted. During the years of their practice together ( $1903-08$ ), both were active supporters of William Jennings Bryan, Illinois governor John Peter Altgeld, and other Populist politicians who were spearheading the midwestern Progressivisim that can be found at the heart of the Chicago poetry renaissance. ${ }^{5}$ Like other Populists, Masters had a world-view informed by a mixture of socialist, nationalist, and libertarian perspectives rarely articulated today. ${ }^{6} \mathrm{He}$ was a particularly ardent opponent of the Comstock Act; he saw any law banning sexually explicit literature as a governmental imposition of religious-based fetters on freedom of speech and, because applications of the law implied that everyday practices (such as unmarried sex) were shameful, personal liberty.?

Masters's Spoon River Anthology, a meditation on the material culture of shame in post-bellum America, was the first really successful modern poem (see plate 2). ${ }^{8}$ The litany of voices confessing from beyond the grave to acts of private shame and civic irresponsibilitycorporeal and corporate corruption-appeared serially in the magazine Reedy's Mirror beginning in 1914. As John and Margaret Wrenn wrote, "no other American literary work has received such immediate and widespread popular and critical attention." ${ }^{9}$ When Pound read them in 1915 he proclaimed in London's Egoist: "AT LAST! At last America has discovered a poet." ${ }^{10}$ Soon, as Eunice Tietjens recalled, "critics throughout the country were carried away by it in a wave that almost amounted to hysteria." ${ }^{\text {"I }}$ With critical acclaim came popular success; the poems were soon collected into the famous anthology, which went through eight printings in its first eight months and remains in print today.

While many poets and critics discussed Masters's use of free verse, the popularity of Spoon River Anthology was the result of its scandalous
content. H. L. Mencken later observed, "What made the fame" of Spoon River "was [. . .] simply the public notion that it was improper [. . .] It was read, not as a work of art, but as a document" (quoted in $B C R, 9)$. Masters flaunted contemporary codes of decency and disobeyed puritanical traditions by describing in plain, unapologetic language adultery, abortion, abuses of power, and everyday sadism between husbands and wives, bosses and workers, sheriffs and vagrants. Dell Floyd characterized Masters's poems as "sordid and splendid, pathetic and obscene"; Amy Lowell described the Anthology as "one long chronicle of rapes, seductions, liaisons, and perversions" (quoted in SRP, 27, 25).

Wary of the harm to his reputation and legal career such shameful subject matter might occasion, Masters originally published his monologues under the pseudonym "Webster Ford." It was fortunate that he took this precaution because, as his friend A. M. Sullivan recalled, this modern "document" of "perversions" caused much furor among the Babbitts of its day:

> Midwestern Chambers of Commerce attacked the poems as canards, resenting criticism of their communities even while they themselves were making sporadic efforts to remove the blemishes pointed out in the poems. Women's clubs and ministers, mayors and school teachers, began to gun for the elusive Webster Ford" (quoted in $B C R$, Io).

Masters's monologues, each in the voice of a fictional character who confessed to performing or witnessing shameful acts that had previously been kept a secret, were a form of literary embodiment that functioned as prophylactic and conduit at once. Always writing in the voice of someone else, Masters used poetry to create a mask of shameful, glorious physicality that the modern citizen could don, making himself the citizen-confessor of his tribe. Poetry shielded the poet from the burden of shameful authorship while allowing him to embody voices that could expose the everyday censorship of material culture.

As Masters's letters suggest, he considered the overturning of sexual mores to be a crucial part of what Pound called the "American

Risorgimento." Like Pound and Monroe, he referenced classical art in order to defend his simple, unabashedly naked style. The reference to the Chicago Art Institute in particular corresponds to Monroe's attempts to valorize and defend her new magazine by comparing poetry to the artworks such museums made available to the general public. In her letter to potential contributors, she promised awards like those "offered to painters and sculptors at the annual exhibitions," and to Poetry's initial detractors she argued, "The world which laughs at the experimenter in verse [. . .] goes seriously, even reverently, to the annual exhibitions in our cities, examining hundreds of pictures and statues without expecting even the prize-winners to be masterpieces" (quoted in APL, 252, 292). Masters's practical joke turns Monroe's anonymous, art-loving citizen against its author by recasting this figure as a potentially dangerous spy and witness, whose glimpse of Monroe's letter is imagined to have serious consequences for Masters's reputation. By adopting his legal voice and, through the use of stationery, its material "face," Masters was reminding Monroe of the potential consequences of inappropriate language. In particular, this letter points to the intersection between art and law by comparing the poet's and the lawyer's relative control over linguistic practices. In doing this, Masters was also parodying the culture of modern conservatism-the "ministers, mayors and school teachers" who attempted to shame his book. The very notion of legal responses to literature was abhorrent to Masters, who was an outspoken crusader against "Comstockery."

Spoon River Anthology was Masters's response to Comstockery, which he saw as a modern form of puritanical fundamentalism. By giving voice to the private desires and regrets of citizens of small-town America, Masters sought to expose the inevitability and naturalness of "shameful" practices in the heartland, that geographical repository of national nostalgia. Other poems described the acts of censorship he was writing against. In "The Spoon River Pageant," for example (plate 3), the town's mayor puts a halt to a 1917 "Pageant of War" because he discovered that "the figure of Cleopatra / Who wore a kind of Scottish Kirtle / That made her look like a circus rider / And showed the slender calves and thighs" "Was his bony virtuous daughter." ${ }^{12}$ In "Spoon

River Revisited," the speaker returns after years away to discover that in its efforts to modernize itself, his home town has adopted Comstockery:

> And then he took me to the circulating library
> And introduced me to the librarian,
> A woman with creaking joints and nose glasses.
> And she told me they didn't allow no books there
> Written by bad men.
> For only a good tree produces good fruit.
> And she thought Byron and the French fellows
> Were bad,
> And that anarchists and disturbers,
> And people dissatisfied with the world as God made it
> Should be suppressed, as they were suppressed
> In the library of Spoon River. ${ }^{13}$

The genius of Spoon River Anthology, however, lies in the relationships that develop between the monologues, rather than in any single character's speech, and the diminishment in quality of Masters's later poems might be ascribed to his adoption of more freestanding lyric and epic forms. If the primary subject of Masters's poetry was the "disciplinary techniques practiced against those who stray beyond the limits of a given culture," it makes sense that his best poems were those that enacted an embodied perspective upon these techniques. Modern poets were teaching readers to "Go in fear of abstractions"; for Masters the abstract expressions of authorship and audience were what was to be dreaded. His best poetry works precisely because it temporarily convinces us that it exists as a document. The monologues, like the letters investigated here, caused readers to imagine that they were dealing with the real rather than the literary world. As documents, these poetic fictions exposed the nuanced meanings of material culture.

In Spoon River, Masters re-created the social within the fictional by anthologizing monologues that contained competing descriptions of overlapping events. In a series of pseudonymous letters to Monroe, he used correspondence to do the same thing. Using different names and stationery, he mailed Monroe letters that, taken as a whole, called
attention to the unspoken social codes in which Poetry was immersed. Because Masters eventually ceased writing monologues altogether, it is in these unpublished letters that his best post-Spoon River responses to Comstockery reside. The most interesting are missives in the voices of Elmer Chubb and Dr. Lucius Atherton, Spoon River characters to whom Masters gave extraliterary life. Expanding on his i918 letter, Masters obtained stationery similar to that he used in his law office, but with the names of his fictional creations on the letterhead. One set belonged to "Elmer Chubb, L.L.D., P.H.D." and advertised Chubb's "Lessons in Philosophy / Rhetoric and / Correct Thinking"; the other was printed for "Lucius Atherton, M.D." and included the salacious suggestion that a "Private appointment / can be arranged."

Between March io and May i7 of 1920, Masters used this stationery to initiate a satirical correspondence with Monroe. The first letter, on Chubb stationery, is addressed "Dear Madam," and begins "I have written an epic on the Mormons.[. . .] This epic would fill your magazine for about ten years and would not only increase its circulation but would do much to uplift the spiritual state of our beloved country now suffering much in indifference and sin." ${ }^{14}$ The next, on the letterhead of Lucius Atherton, describes how "At a recent banquet" its author was approached "by a lady who insisted in arguing with [him] in Hegelian dialectic" and is followed the next day by a note that inquires after the "cost to insert [his] professional card in the advertising pages of your valued publication."15 Monroe kept a copy of her reply to this one; signing herself as Poetry's "Advertising Department," she wrote:

Dear Sir:
We should be very glad to have you insert your professional card in the advertising pages of POETRY. No doubt you would receive many returns on such a notice as our magazine caters to a very special class, a class so exclusive that it is very difficult to approach its members through the usual channels.

To show our interest we shall make you very special rates - say \$ioo a line - and we believe we could set up a very attractive announcement in approximately five lines. ${ }^{16}$

Having solicited this reply, Masters sent the following typed letter on the stationery of William Slack (an actual lawyer and close friend of Masters):

## Dear Madam:

It has come to the attention of my client, Mr. Elmer Chubb, LLD., PhD., that you are contemplating an insertion of the professional card of Dr. Lucius Atherton in the pages of Poetry.

It would be idle to recount to you the efforts of my worthy client in the interest of the morals of this nation, but even a very superficial knowledge of his activities along these lines would at once suggest to you the possibility of a protest from him.

As he even now contemplates accepting a position on the Vice Commission (if he should be called to such high duties), he feels it is his present duty to register, in timely anticipation, a protest against your worthy publication accepting lucre (the Professor is a stickler for classical expressions) which has passed thru the pockets of this M.D.

We pass without comment those rumors of things which, if true, would completely exonerate Dr. Myers in the affair of the unfortunate Minerva Jones, the village poetess, but, as the Professor would say, "verbum sapiens sufficiens est." ${ }^{\text {17 }}$

Thus the trap was sprung: using the letterhead of an actual lawyer, Masters threatened to sue the magazine on behalf of one character objecting to another character's association with the publication. Chubb, the fictional embodiment, or (to use a term Pound favored for his own poems) "persona," of Comstockery, holds Poetry accountable for its transactions with Atherton, who represents America's businessoriented middle class. Monroe's reply-a joke about poetry's relationship to professional advancement-is viewed as immoral by Chubb and then translated into the sphere of legal relations by the use of Slack's voice and stationery.

Culture jamming, also known as "guerrilla art" or "citizen art," is the practice of parodying public and quasi-public speech-acts, such as advertisements or brochures. As Naomi Klein observed, "The most
sophisticated culture jams are [. . .] interceptions-counter-messages that hack into a corporation's own method of communication," usually in order to expose falsehoods, corruption, or greed. ${ }^{18}$ Formally, culture jams rely on "one key characteristic: the subversion should feel and look like the real thing [...]. [T]he more closely the jam can mimic the media it is trying to distort, the more successful the action will be" (WAE, 244). This mimicry can produce a satirical effect, but need not. Its real impact is the moment of hesitation it produces-a moment when conventional social codes are rendered strange. In a manner quite different from the High Modernist aesthetic, culture jamming replicates, rather than distances itself from, consumer culture forms. It momentarily solicits methods of reading that are very different from those upon which so much modern poetry, with its erudite allusions, non-normative syntax, and word-play, depends.

Masters's letters function as an act of culture jamming in their intention, subject matter, and form. Written at a time when artistic interventions in the politics of daily life through the production and dissemination of simulacral artifacts were only beginning to be realized, they offer an early version of the art. "Art" in this case calls attention to the ideological circuits and regimes of power that interact in the real world of publishing just as they do in the imagined world of Spoon River. Merging imaginary texts with real bodies, these letters show us how events in the quasi-public realm of correspondence may reveal the practices of material culture. They should also remind us of the extent to which some modern poets engaged in the political struggles of their time, and of the canonical contingency the modern poetry archive can reveal.

Matthias Regan is a graduate student at the University of Chicago, where he studies twentieth-century American poetry and politics. He is a poet whose work has appeared in Verdure, Fence, and Partisan Review.

1. "Culture Jamming," in We Are Everywhere: the Irresistible Rise of Global Anticapitalism, ed. Notes from Nowhere (New York: Verso, 2003), 244 (hereafter cited as WAE).
2. Edgar Lee Masters to Harriet Monroe, February 1, i918. Box 37, Folder 23, Poetry: A Magazine of Verse Records.
3. Certainly it made a strong enough impression for Monroe to quote from it in her autobiography, as an example of Masters's "whimsical mood." Harriet Monroe, A Poet's Life: Seventy Years in a Changing World (New York: Macmillan, 1938), 380 (hereafter cited as APL).
4. Stephen Greenblatt, "Culture," in Critical Terms for Literary Study, ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (University of Chicago Press, 1995), 225-26.
5. From Vachel Lindsay's brass-band melodies to Carl Sandburg's portraits of urban laborers, many features of Poetry suggest that during its first years the magazine gave poetic form to the "modern" ideologies associated with Populism, Progressivism, and the "Jazz Age," but Arthur Ficke's comment upon first hearing of Monroe's project is most salient. "I rejoice to see," he wrote, "that the Bull Moose movement is not confined to politics" (APL, 253).
6. He fought Prohibition, Roosevelt, and the Comstock Act; blamed "east coast jews" for midwestern economic and cultural woes; defended strikers and supported Eugene V. Debs; was an atheist with a profound respect for the Bible; and wrote a biography of Abraham Lincoln that argued, as he says in one of his letters to Monroe, that the Great Emancipator "was a rail splitter, and by that token could fool the plain people, who thought they were getting liberty when they were in fact getting monopoly." See Masters to Monroe, March 28, 1927. Box 37, Folder 26, Poetry: A Magazine of Verse Records.
7. The Comstock, or Federal Anti-Obscenity, Act had become national in 1873; it had been used to suppress Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie (1900) for twelve years, and would be used to suppress the publication of James Joyce's Ulysses in 1920. At the time of Spoon River's initial publication, the term was most notoriously being used by Margaret Sanger, who in response to the banning of pamphlets on birth control declared, "Comstockery must die!" See Margaret Sanger, "Comstockery in America," International Socialist Review 15 , no. I3 (July i915), 46-49.
8. I am here adopting Masters's own view, as it is expressed in a letter to Monroe (December 3I, 1924, Box 37, Folder 26, Poetry: A Magazine of Verse Records) signed "Dr Lucius Atherton" in which he argued against her statement that Edwin Arlington Robinson was modern American poetry's pioneer. Robinson, Masters wrote,
blazed no trail for any one. Let us argue the literary matter as lawyers argue the facts and the law of a case. As for myself I never heard of Robinson, I never had read a line of him until the early part of 1916 [. . .]. There is such a thing as parallelism in literature, as in cultures; [. . .] And as for blazing the way neither Frost nor Robinson sold or were much known until Spoon River mounted to 50,000 and then to 80,000 , and by psychology of an interest excited carried what was good to better appreciation and a larger audience.
9. John H. Wrenn and Margaret M. Wrenn, "Introduction," in Edgar Lee Masters (Boston: Twayne, I983), n.pag. (hereafter cited as ELM).
io. Ezra Pound, quoted in John T. Flanagan, Edgar Lee Masters: The Spoon River Poet and His Critics (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1974), 27 (hereafter cited as SRP).
II. Eunice Tietjens, quoted in Robert Donald Narveson, "Edgar Lee Masters' Spoon River Anthology: Background, Composition and Reputation" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1962), 8 (hereafter cited as $B C R$ ).
10. This poem, which Monroe did not publish and which was not included in Spoon River Anthology, accompanies a letter to Monroe dated December 7, 1917. Box 37, Folder 23, Poetry: A Magazine of Verse Records.
11. Masters, "Spoon River Revisited." Unpublished manuscript. Box 38, Folder I, Poetry: A Magazine of Verse Records.
12. Masters [signed Elmer Chubb] to Monroe, March 1920. Box 37, Folder 24, Poetry: A Magazine of Verse Records.
13. Masters [signed Lucius Atherton] to Monroe, March i920. Box 37, Folder 24, Poetry: A Magazine of Verse Records; ibid.
14. Monroe to Masters, March 15, 1920. Box 37, Folder 24, Poetry: A Magazine of Verse Records.
15. Masters [signed William Slack] to Monroe, March 17, 1920. Box 37, Folder 24, Poetry: A Magazine of Verse Records.
16. Naomi Klein, No Logo (New York: Picador, 2002), 28I; as Klein explained, the term "culture jamming" was coined by the audio-collage band Negativland in 1984, but the concept can be traced back through Situationist and New Left practices to Depression-era, Surrealist, and Dadaist sources.

## LOUIS ZUKOFSKY'S <br> FIRST HALF OF "A"-9

Zukofsky has spent five years on the first half of the ninth movement of his long poem " $A$ ". He uses the canzone form which, according to Dante, embraced the whole art of poetry. The form appears only once before in literature, in Guido Cavalcanti's Donna mi Prega. Intent on "the whole art of poetry," " A "-9 places the canzone in the thought of our time.

The poet's notes, showing the development of his poem, are included in this volume and will not be reprinted in any complete edition of " $A$ ".

Strictly limited to 55 autographed copies
numbers 16 to 55 for sale
Quarto, oaktag covers, $4^{1} \mathrm{pp}$. mimeographed

This publicity announcement appears on one side of a small card archived along with some correspondence in the University of Chicago Library's archive of records from Poetry: A Magazine of Verse. ${ }^{\text { }}$ Beneath the typewritten text, the indication to turn the card over is in a cursive hand identifiable as Zukofsky's own. A reader who follows instructions soon discovers that the makeshift card is in fact making an offer of sale and standing ready for dispatch: "Kindly send me $\qquad$ copies of Louis Zukofsky's First Half of "A"-9 at [the price is left blank] the copy." The purchase order is typed on the card's reverse, followed by three blank lines for an eventual buyer's name and address. Then, to the right of a bisecting vertical stroke, the typist (almost certainly

Celia Zukofsky) has added Gotham Book Mart's 47th Street address and, at the top, a reminder ("Stamp"). Finally, just in case this side was up when you first saw the card, another cursive indication to turn it over has been added at the bottom right corner.

The document up for sale, First Half of " $A$ "-9, explains (and includes) a poem that would later be published in the June i94I issue of Poetry, under the title "A'-9 (First Half )." Zukofsky spent long labor on this seventy-five-line canzone, even if the publicity announcement's claim of "five years" includes planning time as well as writing time, as other available reckonings of Zukofsky's work and output suggest. In any case, he had finished it by late 1939, very near the midpoint of his own life (1904-1978). November 24 of that year is the date on his foreword to First Half of " $A$ "- 9 , the set of "poet's notes" he self-published in a limited edition of fifty-five mimeographed copies, although another full year passed before Zukofsky released any for sale or presentation. In a letter dated November 27, 1940 he announced to William Carlos Williams:

As soon as I hear from the Register of Copyrights and can release Celia's mimeographing of " A "-9, I'll send it to you. Your copy was set aside some time ago with I4 others for presentation. If I can sell the remaining 40 -well, I have the beginning of an audience. ${ }^{2}$

A poet in search of an audience, Zukofsky in the foreword calls First Half of " $A$ "-9 a set of "aids" presented in chronological order, with
the poem last, so that if the intention to have it fluoresce as it were in the light of seven centuries of interrelated thought has at all been realized the poem will explain itself. In any case, the aids may forestall exegesis.

The forty-one pages of First Half of " $A$ "-9 contain, as Zukofsky enumerates in the preface, ( I ) the Italian original of "Guido Cavalcanti's Donna Mi Prega, its music and emotion of intellect"; (2) "Marx's Capital, extracts from Chapters $\mathrm{I}-\mathrm{I} 3$ and Value, Price and Profit," quoted in the 1932 Everyman edition; (3) "some concepts in modern physics" extracted from a 1932 physics textbook Electrons and Waves:

An Introduction to Atomic Physics, by H. Stanley Allen; (4) translations of Cavalcanti's poem made by Ezra Pound in 1931 and i939, plus a pair of dialect versions by Jerry Reisman and Zukofsky; (5) "the mathematical analogy to the form of the poem"; (6) the text of " A '-9 (First Half )"; and (7) a prose Restatement. Item (5) refers to a single page on which Zukofsky explains that " A " -9 not only follows the complex rhyme scheme of Cavalcanti's poem-in which "each strophe," as Pound had explained (and Zukofsky quotes), "is articulated by 14 terminal and 12 inner rhyme sounds, which means that 52 out of every 154 syllables are bound into pattern"-but also adds a further constraint over and above the rhyme scheme (that Pound had pronounced practically impossible to reproduce in English). ${ }^{3}$ Namely, "the first 70 lines are the poetic analog of a conic section-i.e. the ratio of the accelerations of two sounds ( $\mathrm{r}, \mathrm{n}$ ) has been made equal to the ratio of the accelerations of the coordinates ( $\mathrm{x}, \mathrm{y}$ ) of a particle moving in a circular path with uniform angular velocity." What this means in practice is that a strictly regular pattern prescribes the frequency of occurrence of the sounds $r$ and $n$ in each seven-line unit of the canzone, excepting the five-line coda. ${ }^{4}$

Zukofsky ultimately made the second half of " A "-9 (completed in 1950) reproduce the formal constraints imposed on the first halfkeeping the exact same rhyme sounds and (except in the free coda) the exact same distribution of $r$ and $n$ sounds-although he replaced the language of Marx and physics with language taken from Baruch Spinoza's Ethics (so that Spinoza is made, in the most literal sense possible, to rhyme with Marx). Speaking purely at the level of form, the two halves of " A "-9 thus have a plausible claim, at least an entertainable one, to being the single most intricate linguistic artifact in "the whole art of poetry"-what Dante, quoted by Zukofsky, had said the canzone form embraced. From its first inception (middle or late I930s) to its final completion (1950), " A "-9 embraces by far the longest production time span of any movement of " $A$," itself a labor of almost half a century.

Add First Half of " $A$ "-9 to the consideration, and a further superlative suggests itself. It is very hard to point within the history of
literature to a more striking instance of so difficult a poet so desirous of being not just read but understood. At any rate, Pound, Elder Olson, and the other makers of Modernist long poems never offered comparable aids to their readers. But Zukofsky's stated aim of making the poem "explain itself," thereby "forestall[ing] exegesis" of "'A'-9 (First Half )" was, if fully serious, optimistic in the extreme. Williams received his mimeographed copy in December 1940. That same month he wrote back "somewhat confused"-ostensibly about "A"-9's relation to the whole, but pretty clearly about the whole as well-and then, in a second letter, utterly baffled:

No other word [from me] as yet about it for I really wonder how to read the poem-or how to tell anyone how to read it. It has me stumped. For you do not consider human abilities or attention \& application. You abandon all that. Well, we go on! (WCW, 278)

It was however in large measure thanks to Williams (by the end of March i940 he had written letters to both parties, urging the poet to submit and the editor to publish) that Zukofsky sent the canzone to George Dillon, then editor of Poetry, and that Dillon wrote back immediately, by return mail, accepting the poem for publication.

The June 194I "Notes on Contributors" to Poetry mentioned, of course, that Zukofsky had guest-edited the magazine's February i93I issue. Zukofsky, in his covering letter to Dillon of April I, 194I, had not. The intervening decade, while productive for Zukofsky, had not afforded the measure of recognition he might have hoped for on the heels of the "Objectivist" number of Poetry (plate 4) and the subsequent An "Objectivists" Anthology. Later in 194I things would be looking, if not up, at least different: his collection 55 Poems would be published (by contract) through the Press of James A. Decker in Prairie City, Illinois. But at the time of his writing to Dillon, publication and publishability were delicate subjects for Zukofsky, especially with regard to the poem he was submitting. After an opening reference to Williams's recommendation, he explained:

I have not thought of sending the canzone to you myself, since it has already been published and copyrighted in a format explained by the
enclosed card. However, since I myself published the volume and own the copyright, I see no objection to reprinting the canzone by itself in "Poetry," if you think fit.

Aside from 17 copies given away to friends, and 2 to the Library of Congress, and two sold to the Lockwood Memorial Library and Gotham Book Mart, I have received no orders for the remaining 34 copies, which I shall not attempt to dispose of, unless Gotham B [ook] M [art] orders one from time to time.

I am giving you all this information by way of explaining that the canzone has had no public circulation at all, practically, and that printing it in "Poetry" would really not be a case of reprinting something already published.

Should you find the poem acceptable, I should be grateful if you would use the information on the attached card for a contributor's note. ${ }^{5}$

The following week, in a letter dated April 9, 194I, Zukofsky thanked Dillon for accepting "A'-9 (First Half)" and informed him that "a review copy of the original publication" (the one now held in the University of Chicago Library's archives) would be sent to him separately. In a pair of letters dated September of the same year, Zukofsky asked Dillon to write a Guggenheim Fellowship recommendation and then thanked him for agreeing to do so. ${ }^{6}$
"'A'9 (First Half )," like Marx on a famous page of Capital, speaks in the voice of commodities. What things would say "were things words" is what the poem sings. One of the things things would say for themselves as words is this: "our centers do not show the changes / Of human labor our value estranges." Things as words are a kind of question. The end of the poem points toward a kind of answer, a delicate and intense kind, by writing its song into the voice of the speaking things we call "made things" or (in Greek) "poems." The coda says:

We are things, say, like a quantum of action Defined product of energy and time, now In these words which rhyme now how song's exaction Forces abstraction to turn from equated Values to labor we have approximated.

In 1978 Sotheby's sold a copy of First Half of " $A$ "-9 for eight hundred dollars. Barry Ahearn, then writing what would become the first book of criticism on "A," had shown up at the auction with fifty dollars and the hope of acquiring the copy. Ahearn conveyed the story to Zukofsky, who thanked him for the invaluable information and, later that same year (the last of his life) decided to distribute his last collection of poems, 80 Flowers, through self-publication.

In his reply to Ahearn dated April I4, 1978, Zukofsky wrote: "Our labor value has gone up $400 \%$ since our two sales ( $\$ 2$ each) on publication, \& the rest all giveaways except the few we kept." The language in which he tallied up the market fortunes of First Half of " $A$ "-9 nicely recapitulates the language of Zukofsky's own poem. But the increase in value over time needs recalculation: it's actually 40,000\%. ${ }^{7}$

David Wray teaches classics and comparative literature at the University of Chicago. He writes mostly about Greek and Roman poetry and sometimes translates it. He is currently writing a book on Seneca's Phaedra and preparing a bilingual edition of Louis Zukofsky's Latin translations.

## NOTES

I. Louis Zukofsky, First Half of "A"-9, 1939. Mimeograph. Series II, Box 7I, Folder 25, Poetry: A Magazine of Verse Records (hereafter cited as FH). The University of Chicago Library's copy of First Half of "A"-9 is numbered 52 of 55 and bears an autograph signature on the copyright page.
2. Barry Ahearn, ed., The Correspondence of William Carlos Williams and Louis Zukofsky (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2003), 276 (hereafter cited as WCW).
3. FH, 37; Ezra Pound, "Cavalcanti," in Literary Essays of Ezra Pound, ed. T. S. Eliot (New York: New Directions, 1968), 168. Pound's essay first appeared in Make It New (1934).
4. Zukofsky's notes in First Half may not "forestall exegesis" of the poem, but they do give us enough clues to find interest and meaning in this "mathematical analogy." The first excerpt from Marx quoted in the notes reads: "As values, commodities are nothing but particular masses of congealed labour time" (FH, 4). Then, in the passages from Allen's physics textbook, we read: "In Applied Mathematics a quantity called 'action' is employed, which is defined as the product of energy and time" (FH,27) and "Radiation of a definite kind is, as we know, associated with a certain wave-length _ or a certain frequency of vibration _. These two quantities _ and _ are connected by the relationship $\mathrm{c}=\ldots$, where c is the velocity of light" $(\mathrm{FH}, 26)$. What Zukofsky wants us to see, I think, is that (I) Marx's definition of commodity value as "congealed labour time," (2) the applied mathematical definition of action as "the product of energy and time," and (3) the scientific formula equating the velocity of light to the product of "a certain wave-length" and "a certain frequency of vibration" are all being called—across "seven centuries of interrelated thought"-into a relation of analogy with Guido Cavalcanti's definition of love as sung and enacted in the canzone with its "music and emotion of intellect." My thanks to Joel Calahan for showing me how the "mathematical analogy" of the conic section works and that Zukofsky doesn't let it break down at the end.
5. Zukofsky to George Dillon, April I, 194I. Box 7I, Folder 25, Poetry: A Magazine of Verse Records.
6. Zukofsky to Dillon, September 1941. Box 71, Folder 25, Poetry: A Magazine of Verse Records.
7. Inestimable thanks are due to Barry Ahearn for pointing me to Zukofsky's correspondence in the Poetry records, recounting the story of First Half of " $A$ " 9 at auction, and sharing his personal correspondence with Zukofsky.


PLATE 1
Edgar Lee Masters to Poetry magazine, February $1,1918$.


PLATE 2
Cover of Edgar Lee Masters, Spoon River
Anthology (New York: Macmillan, 1915).

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\text { buc }{ }^{1} 917
$$

## THE SPOOI RIVER PAGRAM?.

3rs. Benjemin Pantier at the Pazeant of Far
Iet all the giris wear akirts to their knees -
411 but one:
That wes the flgure of Cleopatra
Tho wore s kind of Scottish Kirtle
That made her look like a circus rider
And showed the slender ealves and thighs
of the beantifal cleopetra.
But when the curtain went up at last
The insolent sons of the Sensculottes
In the beak of the homes
Set up a roar of "Swamp Crane" "Heron"
At the beantiful cleopatra.
And they yelled and laughed so loud thet the meyor.
The Honorable A. D. Blasd,
Bushed in and pinched the show and stoppod it
Pos being obseene.
But when he lined up the girls befire him
And started in on his lectrere
About the pure in heart
He ehoked and gasped end neerly tainted
Seeing the beautiful cleopatra
Fas his bany virtuans danghter.

PLATE 3
Edgar Lee Masters, "The Spoon River
Pageant," Typescript, [1917].


PLATE 4
Cover of "Objectivists," special issue of
Poetry: A Magazine of Verse 37, no. 5
(June 1931).

The originals may lu piety lust the hanalatrin unithe soul English pets int air vim right D Reit thick these are. than 11 MiningDittrict" "yod for Sprig. Mae Comments.
 sewtoen
"Mining District": shouldn't last lime of first stanza (or bunch) be "heraldrically"? I agree this is the best of them. I think that the fact of the jumbled fime-sequence comes across early enough end clearly enughy and that it is fairly vivid and provocative. But I'm a sucker for this kind of stuff. Why not get the original, find a Scoede... Ok wal, chm better? 6. Starbuck
these are so studiedly "modern poetry" that I Gem overwhelmed by their cuteness. I doit dink most readers would bother reading past line 41. "mining District" is best, if one must choose! gillie
$\qquad$
It seems to me that all Sthemfail except "Mining District'" which would be quite good for suing. $l+$ seems to me also that "heralstrically" is the word. Herzog
"Miming District" the hest is nat well translated 9 think (the


PLATE 5
Comments by editorial staff of Chicago
Review on Werner Aspenström's "Mining
District," [1956].


PLATE 6
e.e. cummings, "Poem," Page proofs, [1955].

## SPECIAL ISSUE: CHANGING AMERICAN CULTURE

## CHICAGO <br> REVIEW



## WALT KELLY-

> -POGO'S POLITICS

BERNARD BERENSON-
-FROM MY DIARY

RUSSELL KIRK-
-CONSERVATIVE AGE

HENRY MILLER -
-AMERICAN LITERATURE

FALL 1955: 50 CENTS

PLATE 7
Cover of "Changing American Culture;" special issue of Chicago Review 9, no. 3
(Fall 1955).


PLATE 8
Photograph of Irving Rosenthal with editorial staff in front of Chicago Review offices, Autumn 1958.


PLATE 9
Allen Ginsberg to Paul Carroll, February 12, 1959.

## BIG工EIBIE

THE COMPLETE CONTENTS OF THE SUPPRESSED WINTER 1959 CHICAGO REVIEW

JACKKEROUAC
OLD ANGEL MIDNIGHT

## EDWARD DAHLBERG

THE GARMENT OF RA
FURTHER SORROWS OF PRIAPUS

WII.1AMS, BURROUGHS
NAKED LUNCH

PLATE 10
Cover of Big Table 1 (Spring 1959).


PLATE 11
Photograph of Paul Carroll and
Allen Ginsberg, January 29, 1959.

Dear Paul,
Just a lane to tell you how pleased and thrilled $I$ am that you wont to publist my poem "Europe." It's the test news since the Treaty of UTrecht.

Id love to come out to chicago and read with Frank and Keareth. Hel be coming bock to the states in early september. will that be time enough?

I havent gotten IS Cq Table 3 yet, but no doubt ot will assure one of these days. I may be mooing soon but til rend you my address as soon as $J$ do $-m$ any case thong will be forwarded.
Bet

$$
\text { John }(\operatorname{ashbem})
$$

PLATE 12
John Ashbery to Paul Carroll, March 15, 1960.

## History of the Airplane

And the Wright brothers said they thought they had invented something that could make peace on earth (if the wrong brothers didn't get hold of it) when their wonderful flying machine took off at Kitty Hawk into the kingdom of birds but the parliament of birds was freaked out by this man-made bird and fled to heaven

And then the famous Spirit of Saint Louis took off eastward and flew across the Big Pond with Lindy at the controls in his leather helmet and goggles hoping to sight the doves of peace but he did not Even though he circled Versailles

And then the famous Flying Clipper took off in the opposite direction and flew across the terrific Pacific but the pacific doves were frighted by this strange amphibious bird and hid in the orient sky

And then the famous Flying Fortress took off bristling with guns and testosterone to make the world safe for peace and capitalism but the birds of peace were nowhere to be found before or after Hiroshima

And so then clever men built bigger and faster flying machines and these great man-made birds with jet plumage flew higher than any real birds and seemed about to fly into the sun and melt their wings and like Icarus crash to earth

And the Wright brothers were long forgotten in the high-flying bombers that now began to visit their blessings on various Third Worlds all the while claiming they were searching for doves of peace

And they kept flying and flying until they flew right into the 21st century and then one fine day a Third World struck back and stormed the great planes and flew them straight into the beating heart of Skyscraper America where there were no aviaries and no parliaments of doves and in a blinding flash America became a part of the scorched earth of the world

And a wind of ashes blows across the land And for one long moment in eternity There is chaos and despair

And buried loves and voices Cries and whispers
Fill the air


Limited edition number 3 of 50
The Poetry Center


This letterpress broadside, featuring Lawrence Ferlinghetti's poem "History of the Airplane," was specially printed for Mr. Ferlinghetti's reading at The Poetry Center on October 17, 2002. Set in Arrus type and printed on Somerset paper. Image by Ed Paschke. Designed by Amy Rowan and The Poetry Center. O 2002 Lawrence Ferlinghetti

PLATE 13
Lawrence Ferlinghetti, "History of the Airplane," broadside illustrated by Ed Paschke, The Poetry
Center of Chicago, 2002.


PLATE 14
Cover of Verse 1 (1984).

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## To Whom It May Concern

Verse is one of the most valuable poetry magazines published in the Englishspeaking world. It is important because of the poets it has published, the critical standards it maintains and the sheer extent and focus of its coverage. Australia, Ireland, Scotland, United States - its attention to poets in these and other areas has been unique. It has created an acoustic within which significant voices from all parts of the English-speaking world have been picked up, amplified and comprehended in a wonderfully renovating way.

This has been due to the quality of the editing. I know from personal experience how unselfishly Robert Crawford and Henry Hart have worked on Verse over the years. In particular, I have watched Hart grow from a devoted graduate to an authoritative critic and scholar, deeply respected within the profession; but the astonishing thing is that as well as conducting a distinguished career as teacher and professional academic, Hart has also managed to maintain a second life as editor and animator of Verse. He is one of those whom W. B. Yeats once called "hearers and hearteners of the work." His service to letters has been constant and large and, in one sense, underappreciated.

It would therefore be an act of the greatest significance if The College of William and Mary could recognize Henry Hart's long-standing service in this area and create working conditions which would not just give him the opportunity to devote time to editing but also reward him by making some form of institutional commitment to the magazine itself. I believe that this is a moment of real opportunity for Verse. A change of editors could be prelude to a change of format and a renewed energy and visibility. A stronger connection with Virginia could mean a surer future for one of the most valuable literary enterprises of our late century. I have the highest regard for Henry and hope that his own hopes in this area can be realized.


PLATE 15
Seamus Heaney, "To Whom It May Concern,"
April 15, 1994.


PLATE 16
Michael Basinski, cover of "Great Lakes," special issue of LVNG 8 (Winter 2000).

# THE MAKING OF CHICAGO REVIEW 

The Meteoric Years (1946-1958)

Chicago Review's Spring 1946 inaugural issue lays out the magazine's ambitions with admirable force: "rather than compare, condemn, or praise, THE CHICAGO REVIEW chooses to present a contemporary standard of good writing." This emphasis on the contemporary comes with a sober assessment of "the problems of a cultural as well as an economic reconversion" that followed World War II, with particular reference to the consequences for contemporary writing: "The emphasis in American universities has rested too heavily on the history and analysis of literature-too lightly on its creation."1 Notwithstanding this confident incipit, Chicago Review was hardly an immediate success. It had to be built, more or less from scratch, by student editors, who had to negotiate a sometimes supportive, sometimes antagonistic relationship with the University of Chicago (the Review's host institution). The story I'll tell here focuses on the labor of two of those editors, F. N. Karmatz and Irving Rosenthal. If their hugely ambitious projects twice drove $C R$ to the brink of extinction (as we will see), they also established two idiosyncratic styles of critical cultural engagement that continue to inform the journal's editorial practice into the twenty-first century.

The Review's first six years were wobbly, largely due to limited funds. Editorial tenures, too, were particularly concise: there were twenty editors between 1946 and 1958, with a full twelve in charge in the first six years. (In contrast, the Paris Review, founded in 1953, was edited for a half century by George Plimpton; his tenure ended with
his death in 2003.) Edited by students such as Ned Polsky (who authored an influential sociological study of pool, Hustlers, Beats, and Others, in i967) and V. R. "Bunny" Lang (an interesting poet, muse and confidant to Frank O'Hara before her early death in 1956), each member of the editorial staff commented on submissions as part of the selection process (plate 5). CR's early issues included fiction by Kenneth Patchen; poems by Paul Éluard, Karl Shapiro, e. e. cummings and a young Jackson Mac Low; and critical prose by Louis-Ferdinand Céline and Marianne Moore (see plate 6). There's a range of contributions from University of Chicago professors and alumni, such as the neo-Aristotelian Elder Olson, the sociologist Reuel Denney (1939's Yale Younger Poet), the nonconformist Paul Goodman (author, in 1960, of Growing Up Absurd: Problems of Youth in the Organization System—a signal countercultural text for the decade that followed), and Susan Sontag (her first time in print).

But there is also a lot of chaff-most of it student work-interspersed among these more memorable proceedings. Larzer Ziff (who was then on CR's staff ), recently described the challenges faced by a start-up student-run magazine:

> When we went out in search of material and wrote asking established writers to give us something although we couldn't pay we sometimes received interesting pieces. We also, of course, read unsolicited manuscripts and published those that attracted us, but I feel there was always too wide a gap between the two and so an unevenness amounting to uneasiness in our pages. ${ }^{2}$

Money was a constant source of concern. Albert N. Stephanides remembered the early Review's bakesale-style fundraising:

Our main problem in those days was to raise enough money to bring out an issue. The only material aid we had from the University was use of office space in the Reynolds Club and the right to use classrooms in the evenings as part of our fundraising. Our main sources of fundraising were to persuade popular U of C professors of the day to give lectures (gratis to us, charged to attendees) and to show movies. ${ }^{3}$

The journal's format in its first six years reflects this scarcity of funds. Most issues were saddle-stapled chapbooks of roughly fifty pages. During one especially dry stretch in 1949 the format switched to eight-page newsprint for two issues. Circulation was modest as well. Fewer than seven hundred copies were printed of any given issue, and distribution was primarily focused locally.

All this changed with the Spring 1953 issue. This handsome ninety-six-page perfectbound book with a conspicuous logo marked the arrival of editor F. N. "Chip" Karmatz, who presided over the Review for three years (nine issues in all) and gave the magazine a welcome sense of direction, focus, and substance. He solicited and published "well-known" ${ }^{4}$ authors and critics, and set a strong precedent for engagement with contemporary American culture. And just as significantly, he solidified the journal's national distribution, placing it in another league altogether. George Jackson, on staff for most of the 1950s, remembers Karmatz as the editor "who turned the Review from a campus literary magazine into a major quarterly." ${ }^{[5}$ Lucy B. Jefferson recollected that he was "determined to get the Review up there with The Sewanee Review and others of the 'respectable academic journal' class." ${ }^{6}$ It's quite clear he did just that. By Spring 1955 Karmatz could proudly announce to his readers that $C R$ had "the largest circulation of any cultural quarterly or "little' magazine" (CR 9, no. I [1955], I).

The titles of two special issues published during Karmatz's tenure-"Contemporary American Culture" (8, no. 3 [1954]) and "Changing American Culture" (9, no. 3 [1955])-accurately denote the engagements that animated this crucial iteration of the Review (plate 7). Earlier this year, Karmatz told me: "I did everything I could to keep the Chicago Review apolitical or neutral on political issues. [. . .] [W]e were a cultural publication, open to all cultural viewpoints." ${ }^{7}$ This liberal pluralism is reflected in the cultural analysis and critique Karmatz published, which include essays by artist Ben Shahn, political philosopher Leo Strauss, psychologist Bruno Bettelheim, sociologist David Reisman, and Pogo cartoonist Walt Kelly; other essayists treat such diverse and pressing topics as Brown v. Board of Education, McCarthyism, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Alfred North Whitehead, Abstract Expressionism, and jazz. Karmatz's ambition to publish recognized
authors shows in the poetry, fiction, and literary criticism he published as well: his issues include poems by William Carlos Williams, e.e. cummings, and Paul Valéry; fiction by Nikos Kazantzakis, Mark Van Doren, and Philip Roth (his first published story); Kenneth Burke on "The Language of Poetry"; and art by Paul Klee and Pablo Picasso.

Karmatz also injected memorable energy into the business of editing the magazine. George Starbuck recently recalled the charismatic boss:

> If he had a fedora, it would have been crushed, worn on the back of his head, and thrown, on occasion. He liked to sit in the Chicago Review offices with his shirt unbuttoned and his tie on but askew, handling two phone calls at once, East and West coasts, because nobody had told him he couldn't badger e.e. cummings for poems or Rexroth for a think piece. ${ }^{8}$

George Jackson recollected new modes of moneymaking that Karmatz devised to fund his renovation:

> The ways in which Karmatz managed the transformation were ingenious and amusingly devious. One tactic was to slick down his hair, put on his leather coat, turn up his big collar and with his best gangster manners visit neighborhood merchants to solicit ads for the Review. 9

Readings by top-shelf poets like Edith Sitwell and e.e. cummings also generated revenue and contributed to the considerable cultural prestige Chicago Review was accumulating. (Dylan Thomas died a few days before his scheduled reading.)

But Karmatz's last issue (Summer 1955) also almost broke the bank. A notice in the Chicago Tribune's "Literary Spotlight" sets the scene: "Chicago Review, the quarterly owned by and published at the University of Chicago, recently issued its second annual copy, devoted to 'Changing American Culture,' in a special printing of 22,500 copies."10 This was, needless to say, an overly optimistic print runtwice the circulation of the largest "little magazine" of the day, Partisan Review. The fact that the quarterly was "owned by" the University became a point of sore contention several months later (well after

Karmatz had graduated from the university and resigned as editor) when the printer's bill arrived in tandem with a flood of unsold copies. The overstock was warehoused in the basement of Cobb Hall, and the Dean of Students threatened to close down the Review. One of Karmatz's successors, David Ray, remembered,
> [a]s a result of this indebtedness Dean Strozier told the staff that the magazine would have to cease publication in order to apply the current year's student activities subsidy to paying off the past indebtedness. ${ }^{\text {II }}$

Ray consulted Professors Elder Olson and Reuel Denney, both longtime supporters of the Review (not to mention occasional contributors), who convinced Dean of Humanities Napier Wilt to assume administrative and financial responsibility for $C R$. Two years after this crisis (and in the midst of another), Wilt explained, "The change was made to ensure continuation of the Review at a time when its future was precarious." ${ }^{12}$

This fiscal relocation saved CR's life, but it also drew the magazine more closely into the university, establishing the conditions for a crisis of a different sort. After $C R$ was described as "Filthy Writing" on the front page of the Chicago Daily News in late 1958 (the Review had been publishing excerpts from William S. Burroughs's Naked Lunch), University of Chicago Chancellor Lawrence Kimpton invoked the university's "ownership" of $C R$ in his unprecedented intervention in the journal's editorial practice. The university's suppression of the Winter I959 issue and the consequent resignations of editor Irving Rosenthal and several of his staff is by far the most famous episode from CR's early years. The story deserves the attention it has received, but it has also largely occluded the less sensational but no less fascinating story of how a student-edited magazine came to be a widely distributed, closely read organ of intellectual record. That was the work of F. N. Karmatz, and he deserves recognition for the accomplishment.

If little magazines are "barometric" instruments, as Lionel Trilling described them, ${ }^{13}$ then editor Irving Rosenthal (whose one-year tenure
began in 1957) produced a magazine that made as much weather as it measured (see plate 8). Where Karmatz successfully emulated the stately Sewanee and Kenyon Reviews (edited by New Critics Allen Tate and John Crowe Ransom), it was the younger, hipper Evergreen Review (helmed by Donald Allen, who would go on to edit the monumental New American Poetry anthology in 1960) and the avant-garde Black Mountain Review (edited by Robert Creeley) that captivated the imaginations of Rosenthal and his collaborator, poetry editor Paul Carroll. With these models in hand, Rosenthal and Carroll effected a reconversion of $C R$ 's intellectual energy, shifting the focus from analysis of a "Changing American Culture" to actually changing American culture by participating center stage in a cultural convulsion around "obscenity."

But this shift in the magazine's self-fashioning is also less seismic than it may have first seemed. Interspersed among the essays published by Karmatz and Ray are several pieces (by banned novelist Henry Miller and anarchist Leonard Lipton, among others) that explicitly strain against the McCarthy-era conformist habits and Cold War orthodoxies of The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit and The Organization Man (to mention two contemporary book titles that indicate the Zeitgeist), and against the consequences these tendencies had for writers of poetry and prose. The most remarkable of these essays, University of Chicago professor and novelist Isaac Rosenfeld's "On The Role of the Writer and the Little Magazine," staked out a staunchly heretical position for the writer:

> I am used to thinking of the writer [. . . ] as a man who stands at a certain extreme, at a certain remove from society. He stands over against the commercial culture, the business enterprise, that whole fantastic make-believe of buying and selling they would have us believe is the real world ( $C R$ II, no. 2 [1957], 4).

Rosenfeld did not spare $C R$ from his assessment of the baleful affiliation between little magazines and the academy (i2). But what he could not have known (he died before the piece was published) was that a major wager was waiting in the wings.

In the next issue guest poetry editor Paul Carroll continued Rosenfeld's line of agitation in his "Notes on Some Young Poets." He also ratcheted the rhetoric up a notch, and bluntly named names.
> [R]eading some of the recent Yale younger poets, the Lamont prize winners, and, say, an anthology like Mr. Richard G. Stern's tidy, judicious American Poets of the Fifties (Western Review, Spring 1957), one becomes spooked by the image of the young poet prematurely corseted with aldermen, thinning hair, tenure, and routine nononsense sex life. Cozy middle-aged verse. Absent are most of the expected vices and virtues of the young poet: no technical howlers; no tears for a lost garden of earthly delights; no ranting and raving against the established society; no bumptiously imperative subjective moods. Able, academic, anemic verse instead (CR ir, no. 3 [1957], 76).

A few factors put this "Note" in a sharper, more personal light: Carroll had, in fact, been published in the very anthology he so vehemently decries (presumably he's the exception that proves the rule?). The anthologist under attack, Richard Stern, was a young novelist and professor at the University of Chicago who had been appointed CR's faculty advisor in the wake of Karmatz's overoptimistic print run. The intimacy of the association is exacerbated further still by the fact that Carroll's "Notes" were printed directly after an essay by Stern on the poet Edgar Bowers. In light of such brinksmanship, which as we shall see increased by other means in subsequent issues, it seems a showdown with the university was inevitable.

Rosenthal (who became CR's editor with the next issue) turned the spasms of agitation articulated by Carroll and Rosenfeld into a full-fledged editorial program. Like Carroll, he had an avid appetite for new writing and little regard for the niceties of the gray flannel suit. Carroll remembered Rosenthal saying he wanted "only the best poems' and to hell with literary politics or equal representation of all schools of contemporary poetry" ${ }^{14}$-a pointed contrast to Karmatz's pluralist sense of the Review. And Rosenthal also shared Carroll's knack for controversy. In a September 1957 letter to Vladimir Nabokov, he wrote "I would [. . .] very much like to know [. . .] the censorship story over Lolita." ${ }^{15}$ Within a month, another highly publicized censorship
story would come to a close in San Francisco: on October 3, 1957, Judge Clayton Horn dismissed the obscenity case against City Lights publisher Lawrence Ferlinghetti for publishing Allen Ginsberg's Howl.

Finger on the pulse, Chicago Review's Spring 1958 issue featured a constellation of "Ten San Francisco Poets." In addition to Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti, this issue included poems by Robert Duncan, Jack Kerouac, Philip Lamantia, Michael McClure, Philip Whalen, and John Wieners-the nucleus of the "San Francisco Scene" broadcast to the mainstream audience cultivated by Karmatz, sending an unmistakable challenge to the "academic, anemic" verse Carroll had deplored two issues previously. The thrust toward immediate contemporaneity was made explicit in one of Ginsberg's poems:

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    Stop all fantasy!
    live
        in the physical world
moment to moment
I must write down
    every recurring thought-
stop every beating second
(CR I2, no. I [I958], iI)
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Kerouac's preface, "The Origins of Joy in Poetry," called this new work "a kind of new-old Zen lunacy poetry," which he contrasted explicitly with that "lot of constipation," "the [T. S.] Eliot shot" (3). Along with these new poets, Rosenthal and Carroll published the first chapter of William S. Burroughs's Naked Lunch, ${ }^{16}$ which had come to $C R$ 's attention via correspondence with Ginsberg:

Only one unpublished in US so far is Burroughs who is equal to Jack K. in prose strength. [. . .] You would do a great service if you can find a place to introduce Burroughs. [. . .] He's in Tangiers. Most of his work is too raw but I asked him to send something printable by US censor standards. ${ }^{17}$

Two weeks later another letter from Ginsberg arrived, this one less cautious about the raw and the cooked:

Don't worry about what people will say if you turn out a screwey [sic] magazine full of idiotic poetry-so long as its alive-do you want to die an old magazine editor in a furnished room who knew what was in every cup of tea? Put some arsenic in the magazine! Death to Van Gough's [sic] Ear!
Help!

ALLEN GINSBERG
Ah! I forgot-I also enclose some final poison for your potBurroughs! He sent me this excerpt this week (CR I2, no. 3 [1958], 49).

Burroughs's close-to-the ground account of the life of a junkie on the run begins, "I can feel the heat closing in, feel them out there making their moves" (25), and you certainly can: by the end of the year the University of Chicago would suppress $C R$ for printing one toxic excerpt too many from Naked Lunch.

CR's San Francisco issue strongly resembles the Evergreen Review's massively influential 1957 feature on "The San Francisco Scene." But it also signaled a bold move on Rosenthal and Carroll's part-a boldness driven home by the inclusion of Burroughs. $C R$ had a somewhat different profile than the Evergreen Review, and was able to lend the prestige of a strongly reputed, university-sponsored journal-i.e., $C R$ as Karmatz had reinvented it-to the Beats' fledgling program. Perhaps for this reason, "Ten San Francisco Poets" attracted considerable attention from the national media. None of it was favorable. The New York Times Book Review quoted Kerouac's preface in toto, then asks, "All clear now?" ${ }^{18}$ The Nation, for its part, mentions the issue in its "Post-Mortem on San Francisco."19 Needless to say, to be "Beat" in I958 was a conspicuous and scarcely positive affiliation, and faculty dismay was evident. One professor blurted "this is as if garbage had garbage," ${ }^{20}$ and later that year Chancellor Kimpton would count Rosenthal's undue "infatuation" with the "San Francisco poets" as one of the grounds for the Review's suppression.

Notwithstanding such responses (and quite likely facilitated by the negative publicity), "Ten San Francisco Poets" went into a second printing, and Rosenthal turned his attention to his next feature, on

Zen Buddhism. The first anthology of its kind in the U.S., CR's Zen issue suggests that, in addition to a knack for controversy and an uncompromising commitment to new writing, Rosenthal had a keen intuition for emerging, influential ways of thinking. It also shows the intensity of his convictions. Carroll remembered arriving at CR's office one afternoon for a meeting with Rosenthal

> and discover[ing] that the office had been swept clean of manuscripts, books, posters; in their place was a solitary peacock feather protruding straight out next to a small printed sign: "Think Zen." I'd heard of Zen, but knew nothing about it; most of the other editors were in the same boat ( $C R 42$, no. $3 / 4$ [1996], 48).

The issue was anchored by Alan Watts's lucid essay "Beat Zen, Square Zen, and Zen," which labels "Beat Zen" a facile imitation of the real thing; but the issue also included essays by three of the "Beat" San Francisco poets-Kerouac, Whalen, and Gary Snyder-along with pieces by D. T. Suzuki and eight others.

This issue, too, made it into the national weeklies, to much greater acclaim. In a flattering profile of Watts, Time observed, "Zen Buddhism is growing more chic by the minute. Latest evidence: the summer issue of Chicago Review. ${ }^{\text {.2I }}$ A few weeks later, Rosenthal wrote Kerouac: "we hit TIME boyoboy didn't we. It would be really immodest of me to tell you what the Zen issue did to our circulation. ${ }^{.22}$ Like "Ten San Francisco Poets," this issue went into multiple printings, selling more than five thousand copies. In the wake of this heady success, Rosenthal was able to offer his authors modest payments for their contributions-a remarkable step up from the budgetary crisis of 1956. He organized two lectures on campusWatts in November, Ginsberg in December (Ginsberg canceled after the suppression)-and went to work on the Naked Lunch manuscript he had recently received, again, via Ginsberg:

Left Bill Burroughs in Paris, now I hear he's ill \& taken off to kick in Spain. The long mss you're publishing is finished, in messy sections \& fragments, and he's been [. . .] assembling it for you [. . .]

You would find there a huge mass of publishable material-tho much obscene, probably too much for your uses. ${ }^{23}$

Obscenity notwithstanding, Rosenthal wrote to Burroughs, "Chapter III is so good I want to lead with it, and your name on the outside cover." And that's exactly what he did. This Burroughs excerpt, published in the Autumn i958 issue, was more subcutaneous and outré than the first:

> She seized a safety pin caked with blood and rust, gouged a hole in her leg which seemed to open like an obscene festering mouth waiting for unspeakable congress with the dropper which she now plunged out of sight into the gaping wound (CR I2, no. 3 [1958], 4).

There's pus, miasma, evil, bugs, meat, cocaine and nembies, alligators and bats, pimps and judges, narcotics commissioners and schizophrenic detectives: "episodism, to coin a word, under complete control," Rosenthal wrote to Burroughs. ${ }^{24}$ A dealer named Lupita opines that "Selling is more of a habit than using" (8) and a desperate buyer kisses his District Supervisor's hand, "thrusting the fingers into his mouth," and begs, "Please Boss Man. I'll wipe your ass, I'll wash out your dirty condoms, I'll polish your shoes with the oil on my nose" (io). The ten-page chapter ends with an ominous "To be continued." And indeed Rosenthal was planning on another excerpt from Naked Lunch for the next issue (Winter 1959), along with prose by Kerouac and Edward Dahlberg.

But that issue never appeared. On October 25, a few weeks after the Autumn I958 issue was published, Chicago Daily News's popular frontpage columnist Jack Mabley denounced the Review as "dangerous" "evidence of the deterioration of our American society." His notorious column-titled "Filthy Writing on the Midway," and accurately subtitled "Jack Rips Mag"-begins:

Do you ever wonder what happens to little boys who scratch dirty words on railroad underpasses? They go to college and scrawl obscenities in the college literary magazine.

The column's conclusion was a little bit harder to ignore:

> I don't put the blame on the juveniles who wrote and edited this stuff, because they're immature and irresponsible. But the University of Chicago publishes the magazine. The Trustees should take a long hard look at what's circulated under this sponsorship. ${ }^{25}$

Reading this a few days later in the Review's offices Carroll quipped, "'A long, hard look'—Irving, we have to get him to write for us!" ${ }^{26}$

But in that last sentence Mabley hit his mark, and set the clockwork in motion. The university's trustees were saddled with substantial debt from the heady years under Robert Maynard Hutchins, and Chancellor Kimpton, former Vice-President in Charge of Development, was "an adroit fundraiser" ${ }^{27}$ who understood all too well the weight public opinion carried. (Kimpton's controversial urban renewal plan for Hyde Park, cosponsored by a young Mayor Richard J. Daley, had been approved by the city council a few days before Mabley's column appeared.) A memo dated October 30 from the university's legal department articulated what Kimpton must have already known:

> The magazine contains filthy and obscene language that I associate with the gutter rather than the literary publication of an institution of higher learning. [. . .] How this filth could be published in what must be regarded as a University publication will be very hard for the public to understand. We think that this publication will have a very serious effect upon fund raising, enrolment and our public relations generally. ${ }^{28}$

And indeed, in the wake of Mabley's column, Kimpton's office received a flood of letters, including an incisive three pages on Great Lakes Solvents letterhead from an incensed $C R$ subscriber:

Obscenity is not just dirty words. It is action that took place "off scene" in the theatres of antiquity. It is the vulgarity and ugliness of real life which a society that still has a respect for values shields from public view. Just because garbage cans behind our house are necessary concomitants of human life, must we go sit in them?
[. . .] We business men are busy, but not too busy to think about the consequences of ideas in gestation in our universities. As you know, we are continually asked to contribute corporate funds to universities.

Kimpton passed this letter on to Dean of Humanities Napier Wilt: "I attach a fan letter of a somewhat more thoughtful kind than I have been receiving. It really is hurting us with some more superior people."29

Dean Wilt was a strong supporter of the Review: he had, after all, helped save the magazine two years earlier when Dean Strozier threatened to close it rather than pay the bill for Karmatz's last issue. But Kimpton's authority was meteorological. "When it rains," Wilt told Rosenthal, "you have to put on a raincoat." ${ }^{\circ}$ Rosenthal had already delivered the Winter issue (which included another excerpt from Naked Lunch, along with salacious prose by Kerouac and Dahlberg) to press when he received Wilt's unambiguous instructions: "The winter issue must be completely innocuous." ${ }^{3 \mathrm{II}}$ If it wasn't, Wilt made clear, the Review would be shut down for good.

Referring to the "anomalous position" of having a student-edited magazine "owned by the University but not under its supervision,"32 Kimpton told the Review's faculty board, "The legal situation is intolerable. ${ }^{333}$ And he told the Committee of the Council of the Faculty Senate that "some remedial action should be taken" because there was "reason to believe that the tone of the new issue will be gamier than the number presently under consideration. To publish such copy under present conditions [...] would result in further attacks by the press." ${ }^{34}$

In a dramatic letter to former President Robert Maynard Hutchins, written three days before he and five other $C R$ editors resigned, Rosenthal confirmed Kimpton's estimation of the forthcoming Winter I959 issue: "I do not at this point see how I can publish an issue with the criterion of innocuity. As we've got it planned, it won't be innocuous." But Rosenthal's letter to Hutchins also indicated his willingness to compromise: "I am willing to suppress it as an issue of the Chicago Review, if it means the magazine will not be killed." ${ }^{\text {" }}$

On November 18, three weeks after Mabley's column appeared, Rosenthal, Carroll, and four other sub-editors resigned, leaving the Review in the hands of Hyung Woong Pak, the only one of the seven
who felt he could operate under the university's oversight. ${ }^{36}$ In early 1959, the university's student government issued a report on CR's suppression. Its conclusions were blunt and severe:

> The resignation of the editors and the failure of the Winter issue to appear were both due to pressure imposed by the Administration on the editors. The University threatened to prevent publication of the Review if the editors attempted to print manuscripts which might cause further adverse press comment about the University. [. .] [T]he principle reason the University imposed pressure on the editors was that the University itself was under pressure from persons financially interested in the University to prevent the appearance of another such issue. ${ }^{37}$

Some have called this entire episode a publicity stunt on Rosenthal's part. He and Carroll certainly turned "the tactical defeat" of the suppression into a "strategic victory": $3^{8}$ the first issue of their new magazine Big Table declares itself to contain "The Complete Contents of the Suppressed Winter 1959 Chicago Review." But if this was a stunt, it depended centrally on the extraordinary agency of Chancellor Kimpton, whose actions surprised almost all parties involved. ${ }^{39}$ Although Rosenthal, too, had a (self-admitted) dictatorial streak, ${ }^{40}$ his letter to Hutchins shows that he also understood that $C R$ didn't belong to him any more than it belonged to the university. The Review was (and is) an entity held in trust by both the university and the student editors. When the university moved to breach that trust-for the sake of avoiding "further attacks by the press" and appeasing "persons financially interested in the University"41—Rosenthal recognized that the only way to save the Review would be to resign. There's no question Rosenthal played a high-stakes, kamikaze game in publishing so much Burroughs. But in so doing, he also participated in the ambitions of Karmatz-vintage $C R$, which described itself as "an attempt to place genuine literature before an audience capable of carrying out its own processes of ratiocination" (CR 8, no. 3 [1954], 6)-i.e., an enterprise that had no truck with "the whim of the local columnist." ${ }^{42}$

The Chicago Review Anthology, published in 1959 by the University of Chicago Press, excludes any trace of CR's Beat episode from its pages. But it does conspicuously foreground Isaac Rosenfeld's "The Role of the Writer and the Little Magazine" by making it the first item in the anthology. In his review of the anthology in the Nation, Nelson Algren wrote that Rosenfeld "knew that the artist is the man who endures society's hostility and even its scorn in order to point out the sickness at its heart." ${ }^{43}$ It isn't hard to recognize that Naked Lunch belongs precisely to this tradition of writing that refuses convention and upsets pious habits in order to gain critical leverage on an otherwise intractable set of practices and assumptions. I wish this were an argument original to me. But it is articulated in exactly these terms by none other than Judge Julius Hoffman in his 1960 decision to release the first issue of Big Table from the U.S. Postmaster General's quarantine. Naked Lunch's "dominant theme or effect," Hoffman wrote, is to "shock the contemporary society, in order perhaps to better point out its flaws and weaknesses." Citing Judge John M. Woolsey's landmark 1934 decision lifting the ban on Ulysses, Hoffman concluded, "clinical appeal is not akin to lustful thoughts." ${ }^{44}$

Judge Hoffman is better remembered for a less happy relationship to free speech: in 1969 he ordered that Black Panther Bobby Seale be bound, gagged, and chained to a chair during the conspiracy trial of the Chicago Eight. The trial followed the convulsions of the ig68 Chicago Democratic National Convention. Burroughs was sufficiently habilitated into the mainstream by then to be dispatched to Chicago by Esquire to report on the convention and the bloody anti-Vietnam War riots surrounding it. He appears on the cover of Esquire's November ig 68 issue, exactly ten years after Chicago Review had been suppressed for trying to publish one excerpt too many of Naked Lunch. "A functioning police state," he writes in that book, "needs no police."

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## FURTHER READING

The best unfiltered source for contemporary reactions to $C R$ 's suppression is the University of Chicago's student-run newspaper, the Chicago Maroon; see especially the issue dated December 12, 1958. The January 28, i959 "Report of the Special Committee of the Student Government in re: Chicago Review" offers valuable analysis and interpretation, as well as interviews with the principals (there is a copy in the CR Records; Leon Kass, now George W. Bush's bioethicist, was on the student government committee). Former CR staff member Albert N. Podell's piece "Censorship on the Campus: The Case of the Chicago Review," San Francisco Review I, no. 2 (Spring 1959), 7I-87, is similarly packed with useful details. Irving Rosenthal's introduction to Big Table I (1959), 3-6, offers testimony from the horse's mouth (it has been conspicuously cut out of the University of Chicago's circulating copy of Big Table). Former CR editor Peter Michelson reflects on the suppression and its aftermath in "On The Purple Sage, Chicago Review, and Big Table," TriQuarterly 43 (Fall 1958), 34I-75. Gerald E. Brennan's meticulously detailed two-part investigative piece, "Naked Censorship: The True Story of the University of Chicago and William S. Burroughs"-likely the definitive account of the 1958 episode-was published in the Chicago Reader on September 29 and October 6, 1995. Richard Stern, who was chairman of CR's faculty board in 1958, has written about the episode in his "Monologue" in What Is What Was (University of Chicago Press, 2002). It must be said that all of these pieces, like the one I have just written, reflect the authors' embedded biases in one way or the other.

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I owe maximum thanks to Hannah Woodroofe, F. N. Karmatz, Alastair Johnston, David Keegan, Adam Weg, and to the patient, persistent staff of the Special Collections Research Center.

## NOTES

1. Chicago Review i, no. I (1946), 3 (hereafter cited as $C R$ ).
2. Larzer Ziff, quoted in $C R 42$, no. 3/4 (1996), 225. In 1996 editor David Nicholls contacted several former editors, staff members, and contributors for reflections on their time at $C R$. Selections from this invaluable correspondence were included in CR's Fiftieth Anniversary issue (42, no. 3/4); the letters have been archived in CR's papers.
3. Albert N. Stephanides to Nicholls, February 14, 1996. Box 3, CR Records (1996 deposit).
4. F. N. Karmatz, e-mail message to author, April 2, 2005.
5. George Jackson to Nicholls, February I4, 1996. Box 3, CR Records (1996 deposit).
6. Lucy B. Jefferson to Nicholls, May 6, i996. Box 3, CR Records (1996 deposit).
7. Karmatz, e-mail message to author, April 6, 2005.
8. George Starbuck, "Wonkiness," in An Unsentimental Education: Writers and Chicago, ed. Molly McQuade (University of Chicago Press, i995), I76.
9. Jackson (note 5). In an e-mail to me earlier this year (April 2, 2005) Karmatz said these stories are somewhat "overstated": he remembered having only one phone, for instance, and said all on staff solicited ads.
10. Chicago Sunday Tribune Magazine (October 9, 1955), 14. Karmatz explained the print run in a letter to me earlier this year (May 17, 2005):

I based the number to print on the number of subscribers, the number we could sell directly and the number of copies the distributors requested. Our new Chicago distributor, who had a stranglehold on periodical distribution in the area, ordered about $80 \%$ of the total. He said he could sell them in midwestern news agencies, bookstores, university bookstores, etc. Initially, we had told him of our likely content and that we expected a piece by [former president] Harry Truman. We thought his contribution would be a coup and a winner. We also advised him later when we knew Truman wouldn't come through what our situation was. He was still optimistic. (In hindsight, I would make a different decision.) [ . . ] [T] he editor who followed me, was responsible for collection of monies from the distributors.
II. David Ray to Peter [Michelson], May 15, 1964. Box 8: Ray, CR Records (unprocessed). Ray's tenure ran from 10:3 (1957) to 11:3 (1958); he also edited The Chicago Review Anthology (University of Chicago Press, 1959).
12. Napier Wilt, quoted in "Wilt, Streeter Tell Position," Chicago Maroon (December 12, 1958), 3 .
13. Lionel Trilling, paraphrased in the editorial to $C R 8$, no. 3 (1954), 6.
14. Paul Carroll to Nicholls, n.d. [1996]. Box 3, CR Records (1996 unprocessed).
15. Irving Rosenthal to Vladimir Nabokov, September io, i957. Box 8: N-R, CR Records ( 1969 deposit). Lolita was published in France in 1955 by Olympia Press (which would eventually publish Naked Lunch) and then three years later in the U.S. and U.K. by Penguin/Putnam, resulting in a storm of controversy and bannings from libraries-but no censorship.
16. Although this is often touted as Naked Lunch's first appearance in print, it should be noted that a five-page excerpt had appeared in Black Mountain Review 7 (Autumn 1957) under the pseudonym William Lee.
17. Allen Ginsberg to Carroll, December 9, 1957. Box 4: Ginsberg, CR Records (1969 deposit). The full letter was printed in CR I2, no. 3 (1958), 47, much to the chagrin of Chancellor Kimpton: after the suppression he complained, "even the business correspondence of these authors were sacred"; Chicago Maroon (note i2).
18. Lewis Nichols, "In and Out of Books," New York Times Book Review (April 6, 1958), BR8.
19. Guy Daniels, "Post-Mortem on San Francisco," Nation (August 2, 1958), 53+.
20. Quoted in Albert N. Podell, "Censorship on the Campus: The Case of the Chicago Review," San Francisco Review i, no. 2 (Spring 1959), 8ı.
2r. Time, July 2r, 1958, 49. The Nation, too, mentions $C R$ favorably in "The Prevalence of Zen," Nation (November I, 1958), 3II+.
22. Rosenthal to Jack Kerouac, August 9, 1958. Box 7: Kerouac, CR Records (1969 deposit).
23. Ginsberg to Rosenthal, August 30, 1958. Box 4: Ginsberg, CR Records (1969 deposit).
24. Rosenthal to William S. Burroughs, June 10, 1958. Box 2: Burroughs, $C R$ Records (1969 deposit).
25. Chicago Daily News (October 25, 1958), I. In a Weblog entry for October 29, 2004, a hale ninety-year-old Mabley, recently retired from his column for the Daily Herald, confessed, "my reputation is being wrong more than right"; http://jackmabley.blogspot.com.
26. Carroll, quoted in Gerald E. Brennan, "Naked Censorship: The True Story of the University of Chicago and William S. Burroughs," Chicago Reader (September 29, 1995), 2I.
27. John Boyer, "The 'Persistence to Keep Everlastingly At It': Fund Raising and Philanthropy at Chicago in the Twentieth Century," University of Chicago Record 39, no. I (February 3, 2005), 15. See also Boyer's Academic Freedom and the Modern University: The Experience of The University of Chicago, Occasional Papers on Higher Education 10 (College of The University of Chicago, 2002) for an extended account of Hutchins's militant independence in the face of adverse public opinion-a feature of his character that frequently rankled some of the trustees.
28. Memo, October 30, 1958. Box 49, Folder 6, Presidents' Papers (1952-1960).
29. Lawrence A. Kimpton to Wilt, November 3, I958. Box 49, Folder 7: Comments, Presidents' Papers (1952-1960).
30. Wilt, quoted in Brennan, 5.

3I. Wilt, quoted in Rosenthal to Robert Maynard Hutchins, November 15, 1958. Box 24: Secret Letter, $C R$ Papers (1969 deposit).
32. Paraphrased in "Report of the Special Committee of the Student Government in re: Chicago Review," January 28, 1959, 7. Box 24, Folder 1, CR Records (1969 deposit) (hereafter cited as "Report").
33. Kimpton, quoted in notes taken during the student government committee's interview with Kimpton, December 17, 1958, 5. Box 49, Folder 6, Presidents' Papers (1952-i960).
34. "Report," ir.
35. Rosenthal to Hutchins (note 31).
36. Curiously enough, although so much was made of $C R$ 's "anomalous position" in the immediate aftermath of the suppression, there were no changes in CR's structural relationship with the university. Pak's successor, Peter Michelson, remembered that Pak "had little to fear from the faculty, who had been so badly burned by the censorship controversy that they were more than happy to keep hands off"; "On The Purple Sage, Chicago Review, and Big Table," TriQuarterly 43 (Fall 1958), 356. "I am free and everything is up to me. I am free to print whatever I damn well please," Pak told the Chicago Maroon (December 12, 1958), 8 . To be sure, Pak reverted to the somewhat safer territory of the Karmatz years, but by the mid-ig6os $C R$ had quite clearly sloughed any unseemly residue of Kimpton's suppression.
37. "Report," 2-3.
38. Michelson, 346.
39. The student government report calls Kimpton's "capitulation to the whim of the local columnist" a manifest failure to "vehemently insist on the independence of student judgments from outside intimidation and threats"; "Report," 13. Six months after the suppression, in the summer of 1959, the story made waves in the national media when poet and translator John Ciardi wrote an angry (and somewhat distorted) column in the Saturday Review about the University of Chicago's "book burners"; "The Book Burners and Sweet Sixteen," Saturday Review (June 27, 1959), 22+.
40. Rosenthal, quoted in Brennan, 6.

4I. "Report," iI, 2-3.
42. "Report," 13 .
43. Nelson Algren, review of The Chicago Review Anthology, in Nation (June 27, 1959), 580.
44. Memo, June 30, 1960, io. Box 5, "Judge Hoffman" Folder, Paul Carroll Papers.

## BIG TABLE

Signpost to American Poetry, 1959-1960

I [also] want to comment on a statement made in "Standpoint" (Summer i960). "It's no longer possible," you write, "to start a publication with five poems, an experimental short story, a fine manifesto, and no cash." With the exception of the manifesto, BIG TABLE was begun with just such ingredients. In our year and a half of publication, I have not sought financial help from foundation or university or private Maecenes. If I am not mistaken, in fact, I believe that BIG TABLE is now the only quarterly among the half dozen big American quarterlies which is entirely self-supporting. ${ }^{\text {. }}$

Such was editor Paul Carroll's rebuttal to the then editor of the Kenyon Review in a letter of i960. Big Table, the short-lived but influential literary magazine Carroll edited, ran for only five issues between 1959 and ig6o yet managed in that brief time to become one of the most respected forums for new literary voices in the United States. It was founded on December 25, 1958, in response to the suppression of the Winter 1959 issue of Chicago Review by University of Chicago officials. Editors Irving Rosenthal, Paul Carroll, Charles Horwitz, Eila Kokkinen, Doris Nieder, and Barbara Pitchel resigned from the Review in protest, and Rosenthal and Carroll began to search for another venue for the suppressed material, an endeavor that led to their decision to start their own independent publication. The first issue of Big Table printed in toto the contents of the Chicago Review that had been suppressed by the university; after that first issue Carroll took over the
editorship of what would become one of the most important "little magazines" of the period for its short tenure.

But while Big Table's problems started with the university, they did not end there. The first issue of the journal (including Jack Kerouac's "Old Angel Midnight" and excerpts of William S. Burroughs's Naked Lunch) was published on March 17, 1959. "On April I7," Carroll explained, "we began getting complaints from advertisers, wanting to know where their copies were. That's when we learned the 400 copies [that should have gone through the mail] were never mailed." ${ }^{2}$ Those four hundred had been confiscated by the United States Postal Service, which claimed that the issue was "nonmailable because of obscenity and filthy writing."3

Rosenthal responded in the Chicago Maroon, "This is the result of pressures applied by officials high in the Republican administration because they are embarrassed by the satire on President Eisenhower in Big Table [in Burroughs's Naked Lunch]." 4 Paul Carroll, on the other hand, objected strenuously to the idea that Big Table might contain revolutionary or scandalous work. In his words,

> None of the authors we printed is interested in titillating the smugly salacious, nor in advocating rebellion against the government. Their sole purpose is the purpose of any serious and responsible artist: to tell the truth as he sees it, and by honest writing to give readers the chance to participate in a fresh and deep way of experiencing reality.5

The fight with the postal service over these obscenity charges lasted until Judge Julius Hoffman's decision in favor of Big Table in September 1960, a few weeks before the publication of Big Table 5, the periodical's final issue.

If Rosenthal's attitude was more pugnacious-in the first issue of Big Table, he declared the editorial intent "to found a literary magazine in Chicago which would not be subject to the review of a Chancellor loyal to the philistines" ${ }^{6}$-Carroll's was more idealistic. As he later described it, his intention was "just to publish good literature, like any little magazine: publish what is new, as well as what is old [. . .]. The idea was to publish only what seemed genuine and real, and stick
to our guns." ${ }^{7} \mathrm{He}$ said of himself and Rosenthal, "We believed that vital work was being suffered and created by American poets and writers [who had] come out of World War II and the McCarthy inquisition of the early i950s, and we tried to provide a free, open meeting house for that work." ${ }^{8}$ The title Big Table, suggested by Jack Kerouac, was intended to communicate the magazine's commitment to an editorial policy with room for many different voices.

While Carroll championed the Beat scene, he continually denied that he ran a "Beat magazine." He responded to Denise Levertov on this issue, claiming,

> The Beat PR scene disgusts me too: and the endless rubbish so many of Allen Ginsberg's boy scout troup try to pass off as writing. Please look again at BT 3 and see that the majority of texts are hardly Beat: or even fellow travelers with the Beats. ${ }^{9}$

Despite this proclamation, Ginsberg responded to a request for advice with detailed suggestions (plate 9). Big Table was and is best known for the notorious first issue, which marked a famous chapter in Beat writing during the Cold War era (plate io). In January of i960, a panel of celebrity judges (Saul Bellow, Louise Bogan, Charles Boni, Thomas B. Hess, Alfred Kazin, and Henri Peyre) for the Longview Foundation gave awards to Burroughs, Gregory Corso, and Edward Dahlberg for contributions in Big Table 1 and 2, and Carroll was understandably proud of his role in making these writers known to a larger audience. Thus James Dickey's irreverent question still seemed relevant in 1960:

I gather that BT is pretty much in tune with the Beats, though I remember your telling me (most emphatically!) that it is not a "beat" magazine. What do you stand for? What is your program? (All literary magazines have programs! $)^{10}$

The answer to Dickey's query is both in the material Carroll published and in the statements he made regarding his editorial policy. While Big Table's initial publication of excerpts from Burroughs's Naked Lunch and Kerouac's "Old Angel Midnight" made it infamous for daring to publish the Beat poets, Carroll supported not only fringe poetry but all
work that he found new and exciting. He felt that the energy of the Corso/Ginsberg reading he and Rosenthal organized in 1959 to finance the first issue of Big Table was a measure of the spirit not only of the age, but of the age to come (see plate ir). Rather than simply gauging the poetry of the moment, Carroll wanted to point the way to the future, auguring as much as possible what poetry would be like in the ig6os. Carroll saw his generation as an exciting new avant-garde, not yet but eventually to be recognized as the descendents of the Surrealist movement. After the reading by Corso and Ginsberg he wrote to Jack Kerouac:

I kept thinking: why, this is literary history, just like the good books say.
Their reading was spontaneous, lovely, sassy \& free: I am sure most of the 700 who heard them dug the fierce honesty \& right-on-the-button-this-is-1959 loveliness of their poems.

Talks with Allen boosted an intimation I have had that something hot \& sassy IS happening in USA writing/\& that a lot of it draws its energy from the climate Apollinaire created: free, experimental, fun, truth dug at the circus, burlesque stage, \& in the taxicab. So: I want the second issue to [be] a kind of valentine to Apollinaire. ${ }^{\text {II }}$

What is crucial for Carroll here is not the formal movement, the Beats, but rather his claim that the spirit of 1959-a revolutionary spiritwas akin to the buzz around the Surrealist movement. What he admired in both the writing of the ig20s and of ig60 was that they were "free, experimental, fun"-characteristics less of the work itself than the time in which poets were writing. As he wrote to Rosenthal in February of i959,

I want 2nd issue to [be] a kind of valentine to Apollinaire and his gang. The climate they manufactured in Paris around I900-1917 is EXACTLY wot I want for model. I dont want to carboncopy them/but to use their spontaneous, free, zany, angelic, sassy, valuable spirit as touchtone for 2nd issue [. . .]. Wot especially excites me is sense that the whole atmosphere is 1959/not a pretty anthology of old DadaSurrealFuturist. In other words: DadaSurreal on 57th \& Broadway/in Minskys /in MarshallField showwindows: right now,
1959. Surreal mit a good strong dose of Yankee horsesense. I think I tried to fumble towards some such idea in that essay we printed last winter on Kaleidoscope glasses. ${ }^{\text {12 }}$

This "second issue" would become Big Table 4: The New American Poets, a compendium that Carroll saw as both supplementing and surpassing Donald Allen's anthology The New American Poetry. He wrote to Robert Creeley,

> Allens Grove anthology will certainly fill a cavity. But I want to do something different: make a signpost pointing not only to where USA poetry of 50 's came from-\& that means you \& BM poets \& Allen G \& SF \& Merwin \& others-but what its like now, January 1960, \& turn spotlight on what it might be like in the 6os. ${ }^{13}$

As the "Kaleidoscopic Glasses" editorial puts it, Carroll was searching for a poetry that partook neither of the "stogy [sic] Gray Flannel school" nor of the "Howl \& Tantrum school [. . .] a poet who still wants to experiment not only with different styles but with different ways of looking at experience. ${ }^{14}$ Carroll's kaleidoscopic glasses provide a double image-"One lens would show the world with its everyday face. The other with its preternatural face"-that "embodies the seed of how to look at [one's own experience]," rather than a formal or methodological prescription. ${ }^{15}$ Thus while the American avant-garde that Carroll championed did indeed feature largely in the magazineBurroughs, Ferlinghetti, and Ginsberg were regulars-Carroll was equally prescient in publishing John Ashbery, Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, Kenneth Koch, Denise Levertov, John Updike, and James Wright (see plate i2). Carroll said later, "Every good poem is like a person: it has its own skin." His job as editor was simply to discover the poems that were good and true and to publish them in the stead of those that "illustrate this or that prejudice or preconception." ${ }^{16}$ In this credo, Carroll was faithful to the title of his magazine.

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## NOTES

I. Paul Carroll to Robbie Macauley, July 9, i960. Box 5, "Publishers and Publications" Folder, Paul Carroll Papers.
2. Carroll, quoted in "PO Rules New Quarterly as 'Obscene," New York Post, May 24, 1959.
3. "'Big Table' banned by US," Chicago Maroon (May 8, 1959), i.
4. Ibid.
5. Draft of press release, Rito \& Siegel PR, i959. Box 5, "Barbara Siegel PRs" Folder, Paul Carroll Papers.
6. Irving Rosenthal, "Editorial," in Big Table I (1959), 6.
7. Carroll, "A Student in Plato's Academy," in An Unsentimental Education: Writers and Chicago, ed. Molly McQuade (University of Chicago Press, 1995), 15.
8. Carroll, "Big Table: The Way It Was," Choice 2 (1962), $156-58$.
9. Carroll to Denise Levertov, February 8, ig6o. Box 5, "Big Table Poets i: Correspondence" Folder, Paul Carroll Papers.
ro. James Dickey to Carroll, September 6, 1960. Box 5, "Big Table Poets i: Correspondence" Folder, Paul Carroll Papers.
iI. Carroll to Jack Kerouac, February 4, 1959. Box 5, "Correspondence: Bell, Berrien, Bly [. . .]" Folder, Paul Carroll Papers.
12. Carroll to Rosenthal, February 4, I959. Box 5, "Irving Rosenthal/Paul Carroll: Correspondence" Folder, Paul Carroll Papers.
13. Carroll to Robert Creeley, October 3, i960. Box 5, "Robert Creeley" Folder, Paul Carroll Papers.
14. Carroll, "For Sale: Kaleidoscopic Glasses," Chicago Review ir, no. 4 (1958), 47.
15. Ibid., 48, 47 .
16. Carroll, The Poem in Its Skin (Chicago: Big Table Publishing, 1968), vi.

## THE POETRY CENTER OF CHICAGO

When It Began

The Poetry Center of Chicago pioneered the first public reading series in the city in 1968; over the subsequent decades it has played a pivotal role in contributing to and sustaining interest in the community for poetry and live poetry readings. Lisel Mueller noted that offering poets a venue in which to read their own works was revolutionary at the time, remarking, "A poem does not exist on the page alone. It has a voice that needs to be heard, and no one can unlock that voice more memorably than its author. The Poetry Center allows Chicagoans to hear our best poets read from their work month after month, and that is a rare gift." ${ }^{\text {I }} \mathrm{A}$ dizzying array of poets have participated in the series, including, to name only a few,

John Ashbery, Amiri Baraka, Ted Berrigan, Robert Bly, Eavan Boland, Joseph Brodsky, Gwendolyn Brooks, Paul Carroll, Billy Collins, Robert Creeley, James Dickey, Mark Doty, Rita Dove, Kenward Elmslie, Clayton Eshleman, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Allen Ginsberg, Louise Glück, Jorie Graham, Thom Gunn, Paul Hoover, Ted Hughes, David Ignatow, Galway Kinnell, Kenneth Koch, Yusef Komunyakaa, Ted Kooser, Maxine Kumin, Stanley Kunitz, Li-Young Lee, Denise Levertov, Philip Levine, Campbell McGrath, W. S. Merwin, James Merrill, Czeslaw Milosz, Paul Muldoon, John Fredrick Nims, Ron Padgett, Marjorie Perloff, Charles Simic, W. D. Snodgrass, Gary Soto, Stephen Spender, Mark Strand, James Tate, Derek Walcott, and Charles Wright.

Posters, fine art broadsides, handbills, and brochures made for Poetry Center readings are now housed at the University of Chicago Library. For example, scholars can now find an event poster from a 1974 benefit featuring William S. Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg, one of more than eighty such posters from the center's early years. ${ }^{2}$ In the future, audio recordings, videos, and documents from Poetry Center readings will be available through the archive.

The foundations of the Poetry Center were laid in 1968, when Paul Carroll organized and hosted readings at the Museum of Contemporary Art to promote the new Big Table Books series, published independently and by Follett Publishing Company. Like Big Table magazine before it, Big Table Books proved to be influential. When Jorie Graham read for the Poetry Center in 200I, she picked up the Big Table Book The Young American Poets (1969) from a shelf, saying, "This book was like the bible." Carroll published Andrei Codrescu's first book, License to Carry a Gun (1970), The Naomi Poems: Corpse and Beans by Saint Geraud (ig68), and a couple other titles. Like Big Table, Big Table Books was short lived, but the readings Carroll put together to promote the series became the core of the Poetry Center. Carroll recruited a dedicated team of poets and activists-Martha Friedberg, Lisel Mueller, Mark Perlberg, and John Rezek-to serve as the founding board of the Poetry Center; they remained active during these pivotal early years and beyond. In I975 Carroll quit the organization, but before resigning, he secured Paul Hoover as the Poetry Center's second president.

The founding and subsequent history of the Poetry Center are both directly linked to issues of artistic freedom, literary excellence, and accessibility. Carroll was editor of Big Table magazine, which (as Jenny Ludwig notes in her essay) was known for its inclusiveness and dedication to all forms of poetry. The Poetry Center continued this spirit. A press release from 1974 describes the center's first official event, "Poets Look at Paintings," a reading including more than twenty Chicago poets held at the Museum of Contemporary Art:

[^0]which was recently organized on a not-for-profit basis [. . .]. The Poetry Center proposes a program of activities geared to make poetry more accessible to the public and to provide a common ground for poets and poetry. ${ }^{3}$

The Poetry Center has continued to produce multimedia presentations of poetry, including performances by musicians such as Billy Corgan, Jill Scott, and Lucinda Williams. Prominent novelists, writers, and playwrights such as Scott Turow, P. J. O'Rourke, David Mamet, and Michael Crichton have been featured in the series as well.

The Poetry Center also continues to feature visual art through the lens of poetry. Originally established at the Museum of Contemporary Art, the center is now in residence at another great visual arts institution, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Works by emerging and established artists-including Tony Fitzpatrick, Richard Hull, Wesley Kimler, Vera Klement, Laura Letinsky, Claes Oldenburg, Ed Paschke, and Aaron Siskind-have been featured on season brochures and broadsides. One of the more significant artworks in the Poetry Center archive is a broadside for a reading by Lawrence Ferlinghetti illustrated by Ed Paschke (plate 13). Among other things, Carroll organized Ferlinghetti's first reading in Chicago in 1959 and interviewed Paschke for the April 1980 issue of Interview magazine, just as the artist was gaining new prominence. The Poetry Center broadside is the only place the Paschke image exists, and is the only place where these influential American artists, brought together by Carroll, collaborate. ${ }^{4}$

The archive at the University of Chicago will include the papers of a Poetry Center program called Hands on Stanzas, which ten thousand students have participated in since 200I. Through the program, the Poetry Center hires Chicago poets to be in residence at a public school and to conduct sixty poetry classes over the course of twenty weeks. They lead students in the reading and discussion of published poems by established artists and in the writing and presenting of their own work. At the end of the year, the Poetry Center publishes an anthology; nearly seven thousand students have been published and as many anthologies have been distributed, making it a "best seller" by any poetry standard. In addition to providing benefits such as improved
confidence, motivation, and vocabulary, reading and listening to poems has been shown in recent studies using brain-imaging technology to improve the way children and adults learn and remember. Other studies find that arts education levels the playing field for inner-city students and other socioeconomically disadvantaged youth. ${ }^{5}$ Papers from the Hands on Stanzas program will be useful materials for scholars researching the practice and impact of educational poetry programs.

In the year 2005, the Poetry Center has a lot of work to do. The audience for poetry, like the Poetry Center itself, is still small. There was a time when the center was all but alone in providing poetry readings for the enjoyment of a general public; now it is surrounded by friends, allies, competitors, and critics. Pop culture itself is embracing poetry, and corporations are using it to sell everything from trucks to soft drinks. The table is definitely bigger. It will be fascinating to watch what poetry accomplishes in the coming decades and where it leads us. Billy Collins wrote, "The Poetry Center of Chicago [. . .] has long acted as a hub for a host of poetry activities. Lifting poetry awareness, it redirects our attention to this vital art and provides a lens to bring our best language into focus." ${ }^{6}$ The Poetry Center's archive at the University of Chicago Library provides documentation for this "host of poetry activities" for the benefit of scholars interested in researching an organization dedicated to building the audience for poetry and providing professional opportunities for its practitioners.

Kenneth Clarke is in his sixth year as Executive Director of the Poetry Center of Chicago, and is the curator of the center's broadside series. He was awarded Columbia College Chicago's Paul Berger Arts Entrepreneurship Award for outstanding not-for-profit management and has served on the City of Chicago's Advisory Board of the Department of Cultural Affairs. Clarke worked for a range of cultural institutions, including as Development Officer at the Ohio Historical Society and Coordinator for the Greater Columbus Arts Council's Columbus Arts Festival. Clarke also worked for the Ohio Alliance for Arts Education, Ohio's Kennedy Center for the Arts affiliate, and for the Ohio Arts Council. Clarke has an M.A. in literature/creative writing from Miami University in Ohio. He has published poetry in periodicals such as Indiana Review and Poet Lore.

## NOTES

I. The Poetry Center of Chicago, "About the Poetry Center," http://poetrycenter .com/about/index.html (accessed July 18, 2005).
2. Box 2, "Broadsides 1974-1975" Folder, The Poetry Center of Chicago Records.
3. October I, i974 Poetry Center Press Release, http://www.poetrycenter.org/ involved/news/i974pressrelease.pdf (accessed July 18, 2005).
4. Box 2, "Broadsides 200I-2003" Folder, The Poetry Center of Chicago Records.
5. On the results of brain-imaging studies, see Richard Gray, "Verse Broadens the Mind, the Scientists Find," Scotland on Sunday, April 30, 2005, http://news.scotsman.com/arts.cfm?id=352752005 (accessed June 26, 2005). On the advantages of arts education, particularly for inner-city youths, see Edward B. Fiske, ed., Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning (Washington, D.C.: Arts Education Partnership: President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, 1999) and "The Progress of Education Reform 2004," Arts in Education 5, no. I (January 2005).
6. "About the Poetry Center" (note I).

## A SHORT HISTORY OF VERSE

I was a graduate student at Oxford ten years ago and, like graduate students everywhere, perhaps especially Americans living in England, I was depressed. Unconvinced that my research had a future, I wondered if I was cut out for footnotes and French theory, folios and fascicles, while the student poetry "scene" at the university was dominated by a small clique of relatively uninteresting but nonetheless gradually ascending writers, some of them from the States. Despite my best intentions toward a literary expatriation modeled on the Modernists who had fled to Europe entre deux guerres, my life seemed suspended between a stultifying academic regimen and an equally unexciting "poetry society" society.

If Brian Henry's invitation to serve as United Kingdom editor of the poetry journal he was in the process of resuscitating was not initially felt as relief, it certainly came as a welcome distraction and a project I could put my flagging hopes into. As he set about compiling The Best Verse, an anthology of poems from the magazine's first decade and companion volume to the Talking Verse retrospective of interviews that had announced the previous editors' resignations, I organized a reading series. The Shelley readings, named for the poet who had been sent down from University College and later, of course, canonized within the same halls I now walked daily, were hardly a blockbuster affair, but they were a start. Verse founding editor Robert Crawford was among my several invitees, as were Slovenian writer Ales Debeljak, American poet Phillis Levin, and Irish poet Matthew

Sweeney, while area poets who attended included Jamie McKendrick, Bernard O'Donoghue, Tom Paulin, Craig Raine, and others. My new affiliation with the magazine sent me to London for the T. S. Eliot Awards the year Paul Muldoon's Annals of Chile won, and excursions to visit aging writers like David Gascoyne and his wife Judy on the Isle of Wight assumed greater importance for me in light of their relation, however vague, to my new editorial responsibilities.

As undergraduates at the College of William and Mary in Virginia, Brian and I had directed the student literary journal, the William and Mary Review, he as poetry editor and I as editor-in-chief. I was writing an honors thesis on contemporary American poetry and mysticism under Henry Hart, another founding editor of Verse, who was also supervising Brian's independent study in creative writing. Although not close in any regular social way during our upper-class years, Brian and I developed a mutual respect where writing, criticizing, and editing poetry were concerned, and we often said that one day we ought to steer a full-fledged magazine together. In the shorter term, we proudly saw to it that our William and Mary venue published non-student poets, either writers we liked or, thanks to a campus literary festival and our own limited contacts, could simply approach.

That Brian's invitation to cover the European angle of Verse arrived in the form of an e-mail message now seems to possess an appropriateness it could not have had in 1995 . While the Internet had been around for a couple of years, I did not become a regular e-mail user until abroad. With the new Verse editor in Amherst, Massachusetts, pursuing an M.F.A., and his sidekick on the other side of the ocean, e-mail quickly became a necessity. It would continue to serve as our staple mode of communication throughout the following decade, when life, or love, or the feeling of falling into or out of both, would find us scattered across the globe and rarely in the same locale at the same time. If e-mail has facilitated our work and our camaraderie, though, it also represents a serious hindrance to these archives. Brian has been more consistently attentive than I at saving and printing the thousands of messages that have traversed our computers, but I can only wonder how many missives, of whatever degree of interest, have
slipped into the black holes of cyberspace, never to be recovered. The rapid acceleration of technology likewise makes me sensitive to the current illegibility of many of our old diskettes, to the irretrievability of communiqués from systems that crashed or simply went out of style. Writing, as Maurice Blanchot has theorized, moves inexorably and invisibly toward its disappearance, and the erasure and obsolescence of e-mails would be only the banal, blatant emblem of this motion.

Verse was founded in 1984 by Robert Crawford and David Kinloch, both from Scotland, and their American friend Henry Hart, all of whom were doctoral candidates at Oxford (see plate 14). Upon graduating, Crawford taught at St. Hugh's College, Oxford, and at Glasgow University, before taking a position at the University of St. Andrews, where he is still located. Kinloch went to Salford, then to Wales, and now works at Strathclyde University in Glasgow. After a two-year stint at the Citadel, Hart began teaching at William and Mary, which remains his home (see plate 15). The magazine was edited and financed from Scottish and American poles until the announcement of its final number in 1995. It was technically defunct when Brian, along with William and Mary professor Nancy Schoenberger, resurrected it and asked me to oversee the overseas. Due in part to aesthetic and procedural differences, Nancy would leave the journal after three years, at which point Brian and I became coeditors, with myriad poets around the world acting as U.K. editors, contributing editors, assistant editors, and managing editors. Verse continued to focus on contemporary English-language poetry and poetry in translation, each issue including interviews with poets and a range of criticism, such as individual and round-up book reviews, longer essay-reviews, and extended essays.

During the academic year 1996-97, Brian was concluding his studies in Amherst, while I went north of Edinburgh to study under Crawford and Douglas Dunn, in their nascent writing program at St. Andrews. Having previously released features on the prose poem and on Slovenia, where I'd participated in a pair of annual conferences, Brian and I now compiled a Scottish issue, returning the magazine to its roots, as it were. I spent my year at St. Andrews writing my earliest
serious book reviews, for the Times Literary Supplement, Poetry Review, and P.N. Review, as well as for a slew of upstart, Anglo-based journals, likewise edited by young writers committed to poetry and criticism, such as Metre, Thumbscrew, and Oxford Quarterly Review. I could not have said that a movement was afoot, for poetics and politics varied widely and welcomingly across these magazines, but it certainly felt as if something unanimously disparate were happening among a generation of twentysomething poet-critics, all of us aware of each other and contributing to one another's publications. Brian was meanwhile publishing much criticism of his own, in the U.S. as well as the U.K.

On my trips back to the States, between semesters, Brian and I would sometimes arrange to get together. Usually this meant a brief breakfast in his hometown of Richmond, Virginia. On various occasions, however, we met for a few days in New York City, where we heard John Ashbery and Pierre Martory read in a West Village bookstore and where we first met Ales Debeljak following a New School event with Charles Simic. Further down the road, when I lived and worked in New York, Brian visited more frequently from Plymouth, New Hampshire, where he had corralled his first teaching job. It is with not a little nostalgia that I recall our hanging out, late into a summer night, at Tomaz Salamun's apartment on East 14th Street, two floors above my own, with Olena Kalytiak Davis, Elizabeth Powell, and Peter Richards, or midwinter at the bar in the Gramercy Park Hotel with James Tate, Dara Wier, and Matthew Zapruder. Brian came into the city to deliver a paper at a conference at Barnard College days before I flew to Belgium to deliver one myself, and we connected in the Big Apple yet again, for a reading at KGB Bar, the month our first books were both released-each of them, amazingly to us, with a page count tallying exactly seventy-two, which was also the year we were born.

Such encounters were always intense and telegraphic, exemplary of the infrequent but charged meetings we have stolen over a decade otherwise characterized by shadowy near-misses and parallels. Brian, for example, enrolled in the Yeats school in Sligo, Ireland, for whose director, Ronald Schuchard, I would teach a course in British literature
several summers after. I attended the Vilenica international writers' conference and the Days of Poetry and Wine younger poets festival in Slovenia, later holding a fellowship at the Slovenian Writers' Association, a few years before Brian would participate in the same literary reunions and even stay in the same writers' union flat. After graduating with his master's, Brian took a Fulbright to Melbourne, Australia, where he organized a Verse feature on the poetry from that continent. As he guest-edited Meanjin from down under and attended the Adelaide festival, I guest-edited an issue of Nova revija from the former Yugoslavia and traveled to the Belgrade book fair. While affiliated with a different university, I also landed a Fulbright Scholarship, to the same antipodean city, two years after Brian, and at one point we found ourselves e-mailing each other, I from the Melbourne that had been his haunt, he from the Ljubljana that had been mine.

The longest period we finagled in the same zip code occurred in fall i999, when the United States Information Agency, having contracted us as American Cultural Specialists, flew us to Moscow and St. Petersburg for two weeks of lectures, panels, readings, interviews, and meetings with Russian writers and editors, in celebration of coincident Pushkin and Frost anniversaries. Clinton was still in office then, so the chance to represent our country's government did not horrify us the way it would have a mere "election" later, nor did previous hostility between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. hamper our exchange of verse and conversation with local students, translators, journalists, and artists. As Brian and I wandered the Kremlin on the day of our departure, astonished at the sheer ability to do so when childhood had shown us images of a snowy Red Square hiding a spectral enemy, a renewed sense of common destiny-not unmixed with irony and, in the shadow of the GUM department store, a feeling of utter insigni-ficance-caused us to joke of ourselves as a Doppelgänger. Or rather: as Doppel and Gänger, though I have since forgotten who bears which half of the divided name, a proper name without property, less in propria than persona.

Soon after I arrived at the University of Chicago to undertake a doctorate, Brian relocated to the University of Georgia. He was the
father of a baby daughter, whose godfather I happily became, and Verse had since given birth to Verse Press. Designed to bring into daylight a number of manuscripts that were being regrettably neglected, the book press made an equal commitment to authors whose first collections had been published by winning national competitions but whose follow-up volumes were ignored by the houses who had printed their debuts. While I was technically a board member of the new house, voting on initiatives and making suggestions on manuscripts under consideration, Brian had been both the brains and brawn behind the project, along with Matthew Zapruder, and would remain integral to the press until turning it over entirely to Matthew. Verse Press has recently been sold to Charlie Wright and absorbed by Wave Books. Doubled in size and split into halves, the venture still operates under Matthew in the east, where the current roster will be maintained and younger American poets stay at the fore, while the West Coast branch, edited by Joshua Beckman, will publish translations, reissues, work by mid-career writers, and other projects.

Brian's access, as an English department faculty member, to institutional funding structures has put him in the position of caretaking Verse finances more directly than I. My student affiliation with the Committee on Social Thought has precluded a Chicago editorial address, University of Chicago support, or engaging student assistants, though I have been responsible for securing a number of ad hoc grants, from the Scottish Arts Council and elsewhere. Indeed, St. Andrews remained a satellite office for a while after I left there, with John Burnside and then Lilias Fraser in charge, and William and Mary has generously renewed its funding each year, with Henry Hart revisiting the magazine as a managing editor. Brian's greater technological acumen has likewise meant a more proactive role in designing the magazine, its Web site, and its recent Weblog, notwithstanding a pair of years when I suffered through the print layout. He subsequently devised a course on magazine editing, which has offered valuable experience to students and invaluable help to increasingly beleaguered coeditors.

It is, however, perhaps also a diversity in our temperaments that has contributed to the sense, or my sense anyway, that the journal has
always been a little more intimately connected to what makes Brian tick, as an evaluator and advocate of poetry, than it has to my corollary impulse. Nonetheless, the decade during which we have run the magazine has been characterized by a highly concentrated, I dare say passionate, borderline obsessive cooperation: brainstorming possible feature issues and abandoning those that lose luster, reading mountains of manuscripts, soliciting poetry and non-fiction, lining up book reviews and chasing them down, initiating interviews, editing and copyediting texts before they go to print, exorcising ghost fonts from PageMaker files, verifying proofs with contributors, and a hundred other labors of love, sleep deprivation, and intermittent aversion. If e-mail has been a channel of communication from opening day, our postal boxes are constantly stuffed, too, with hard copies bearing airmail stamps, heavy packing tape, and return addresses sometimes outdated by the time the envelope arrives.

Although it publishes an array of work, ascribes to no single style, and believes in divergence and discrepancy, Verse has probably become best known, however modestly, for promoting younger American poets working within or against the lyric tradition. Poems from the magazine have appeared in the 1997, 1999, 2001, and 2002 editions of The Best American Poetry and have been awarded the Pushcart Prize. Subscribers and contributors alike, however, hail from nearly fifty countries, and the four eyes that Brian and I claim between us are incessantly squinting at the corners of the globe. Recent contributors have included Rae Armantrout, John Ashbery, Charles Bernstein, Lee Ann Brown, Pam Brown, Elke Erb, Clayton Eshleman, Mark Ford, Allen Grossman, Barbara Guest, Christine Hume, Lisa Jarnot, Barbara Jordan, John Kinsella, Kenneth Koch, Emma Lew, Timothy Liu, Medbh McGuckian, Heather McHugh, Edwin Morgan, Jena Osman, Marjorie Perloff, Ana Ristovic, Tessa Rumsey, Tomaz Salamun, Reginald Shepherd, Charles Simic, Gustaf Sobin, Mark Strand, Jesper Svenbro, James Tate, John Tranter, Joe Wenderoth, Dara Wier, C. D. Wright, and Charles Wright, among others. Special issues of Verse have comprised a focus on female Irish poets, a triple issue with features on Mexican and Indian poetry, and a number devoted to younger American poets.

The double issue i9.3 and 20.I also appeared online in collaboration with Jacket. Our decision to publish a diptych of prose features stemmed from a desire to collapse generic boundaries while affording us the privilege of publishing established writers we admired, such as Javier Marías, Gerald Murnane, and Diane Williams, alongside emerging writers-Natasha Cho, Joshua Harmon, Adam Novy, to name only three-whom we wanted our readership to admire. It was also an opportunity to broaden the journal's critical scope, hence Hélène Cixous's texts on Jacques Derrida and further investigations of Maurice Blanchot, Jean-Luc Marion, W. G. Sebald, and other thinkers working at the periphery of "verse." Since then, our gargantuan twentiethanniversary issue, dubbed by one contributor "the White Pages," was released earlier this year, and The Verse Book of Interviews is due soon. We are already collecting material for features on the poetic sequence and on contemporary French poetry and poetics, while our Weblog showcases poetry and book reviews in greater quantity, not to mention more quickly, than the print journal could ever accommodate.

During the short span of days I've been writing this account, Brian and I have rehearsed yet another scene in our "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" routine. I accepted a position in English and creative writing at Georgia-just in time for my would-be colleague to exit, bound for the University of Richmond. Such is the masquerade and momentum of our friendship: one showing up where the other just left, ever present to each other not despite, but on account of, our reciprocal absence. It is our poetry, along with our formal and informal commentary on others' work, that traffics back and forth between us, in place of us, and Verse has been the catalyst to this essential, if eccentric, rapport. Robert Crawford once remarked to me, tongue in cheek, that Brian played manic to my depressive. While that quip is probably not as true now as it once surely was, I continue to stand by its fundamental observation: my conspirator and I remain, to an increasingly conscious extent, a pair of hands in an Escher sketch, one writing and written by the other.

Andrew Zawacki is the author of two poetry books, Anabranch (Wesleyan Poetry, 2004) and By Reason of Breakings (University of Georgia Press, 2002), as well as a chapbook, Masquerade (Vagabond, 2001). He edited Afterwards: Slovenian Writing, 1945-1995 (White Pine, 1999), and his criticism has recently appeared in Boston Review, Talisman, New German Critique, Religion and Literature, and elsewhere. He is a doctoral candidate in Social Thought at the University of Chicago and assistant professor of English at the University of Georgia.

## LVNG

A History

LVNG is a free journal of poetry, fiction, essays, and art. We have never accepted advertising and have never received institutional support. Instead, all eleven issues have been produced with our own money and the generous help of friends. From its inception, LVNG has been an experiment in literary community, whose primary purpose is to provide a location for the ideas and aspirations of a collection of writers. It is a record of the literary development and social networking of this group, which includes the informal mentoring of older artists invited to participate in the free serial. As the community has developed and expanded, our ideas about disseminating the magazine have evolved. What began as little more than a photocopied pamphlet shared among friends is now a finely produced journal available online and in disparate communities across the country.

Originally conceived as a response to ongoing literary activities at Kenyon College, the first issue of $L V N G$ was published by Michael O'Leary and Jay Sullivan in the fall of i990. Because Kenyon's main undergraduate literary magazine was supported by the college and distributed to students free of charge, O'Leary and Sullivan, wondering who would buy their competing magazine, decided to bear the production costs of LVNG alone. Inspired in part by the audacity of Wyndham Lewis's Blast and the do-it-yourself aesthetic of early punk rock 'zines, O'Leary and Sullivan collected poetry and artwork from friends in Detroit and Chicago and stapled together eighty copies of the thirty-six-page inaugural issue. It featured a green cover on which
a faux-Roman lettercutting of $L V N G$ had been stamped. The name of the journal was taken from a song titled "The Lung" by Dinosaur Jr., a favorite of both editors. But their undergraduate enthusiasm for classical orthography allowed for the possibility that LVNG was an abbreviation of Living, or even Loving. These copies were largely distributed around Kenyon College, left next to cafeteria trays for students to pick up.

In the spring of i991, O'Leary was enrolled in a seminar taught by Lewis Hyde that explored the relationship between modern artistic production and traditional gift economies such as those communities studied in Marcel Mauss's The Gift and Bernard Malinowski's Argonauts of the Western Pacific. Gift economies are based on circular exchange as opposed to the reciprocal giving found in capitalist societies. In a reciprocal exchange, we give and you receive, which results in an indebtedness, whereupon you return our favor at a later time. Circular giving, by contrast, involves one party giving to us and then us giving to another party, who, in turn, gives to still another party. Hyde wrote that in an economy of circular giving, "I have to give blindly. And I will feel a sort of blind gratitude as well [. . .]. When the gift moves in a circle its motion is beyond the control of the personal ego, and so each bearer must be a part of the group and each donation is an act of social faith. ${ }^{11}$ In the hopes of initiating such an exchange, O'Leary and Sullivan made a commitment to keep LVNG free. Thus the second issue, edited and produced as poorly as the first, was freely distributed at Kenyon and sent to friends across the Midwest.

LVNG III was the product of what would turn out to be two decisive events in the life of the magazine. Through the generosity of a friend and printer, one thousand copies of the issue were produced, allowing us to circulate the magazine in new, broader environments. We began to distribute LVNG for free around Detroit and Chicago in cafés, bookstores, and record stores. This experience would profoundly influence our ideas about dissemination and the editorial mission of LVNG. Peter O'Leary also joined the founders as an editor. Broadly expanding the community represented in LVNG, he clarified and helped realize the experimental goals of the magazine.

After the publication of LVNG IV and following his graduation from Kenyon, Michael O'Leary moved to Chicago to work at Morningstar, a financial publishing company where LVNG contributor John Tipton was his boss. Jay Sullivan pursued a publishing career in Boston and New York and became less involved in editorial decisions, removing himself from the masthead by the time the sixth issue was published in 1996. Joel Felix moved to Chicago from Downriver Detroit, where he had met the O'Leary brothers in the summer of 1989. In 1993 Peter O'Leary began graduate studies at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. Through a mutual friend in the English department, Peter met Devin Johnston. Along with Tipton, Johnston became part of the core LVNG community, one of whose projects was a reading group and workshop, modeled after that of the San Francisco Poetry Renaissance, held once a week in the apartment the O'Leary brothers shared in Ukrainian Village. These meetings included other poets and writers published in LVNG, such as Rick Snyder, as well as painter Rob Davis (who designed the cover for the tenth issue) and sculptor Holly Rittenhouse.

LVNG $V, 6$, and 7 are a synthesis of the ideas, excitement, and divergent interests of the reading group. They are marked not only by a switch from Roman to Arabic numerals, but also by a drastic improvement in editing and design. In counsel with a graphic designer at Morningstar, Tipton devised the page layout for LVNG 6 that has been used for every subsequent issue. At the same time, in 1996, Peter O'Leary's mentor Ronald Johnson gave him the text of a new poem, which was published as a broadside. Once again, Tipton provided a lucid design for Johnson's Blocks to Be Arranged in a Pyramid, in memoriam AIDS-one of the most beautiful productions LVNG has offered. The broadside inaugurated the Supplemental Series, an intermittent project that has featured the works of poets and artists, such as Catherine Felix, Al Butella, John Taggart, John Tipton, Márton Koppány, Devin Johnston, and Brian Calvin (who designed the cover for LVNG 7). Each Supplemental is a discrete entity, including a handmade artist's book, a page of designed stamps, a pamphlet, another broadside,
a series of postcard poems, and a chapbook. A Supplemental begun as a one-off in 2000, There May Be Absence of the Thing is now a chapbook serial devoted to an engagement with the idea of provincialism.

As the literary community coalesced throughout the i990s, we began to articulate our ideas about dissemination. Placing free copies of $\operatorname{LVNG}$ in commercial vestibules is not only an act of generosity, but a challenge to the order of marketing itself, which so often encourages divisive distinctions among consumers. To remain in the conventional poetry market is to be limited to a self-selected audience of poets. Making a well-designed, well-edited magazine available for free offers people who might never buy a poetry magazine the opportunity to read contemporary poetry. Through $L V N G$ 's unorthodox and informal distribution method, the audience for poetry is potentially opened, allowing for unforeseen connections. With these ideas in mind, we have expanded the boundaries of distribution by placing copies of the latest $L V N G$ on buses and trains, in grocery stores and doctors' offices. As editors and distributors, we have witnessed a wide and disparate audience scanning the pages of the magazine, from skate punks to office workers in the Loop.

LVNG has also relied on farther-flung members of the community to distribute the book in their own way. For instance, $L V N G 8$, "Great Lakes," published in 2000, was conceived as our first themebased issue, guided by the perception that poets, writers, and artists living along the edges of the Great Lakes make for a community deserving designation as much as, say, writers in the Bay Area (plate 16). The issue proposed a literary milieu that encompasses a variety of geographic locations, from urban centers such as Buffalo, Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, and Toronto, to places more removed, such as lakeside towns in Indiana, Michigan, and Ontario. To distribute this issue, we began to send boxes of books to contributors with the hope that they would share them in ways suitable to their own circumstances, whether in a classroom or in their respective artistic communities. Since then, several boxes of each new issue are sent to these friendscontributors and non-contributors alike-broadening the audience
for the magazine and continuing to subvert the literary status quo. After LVNG 8 was published, we were awarded an unsolicited prize from the Fund for Poetry, which allowed us to publish LVNG 9.

Curiously, the non-commerciality of the publication has stymied efforts to gain public and private foundation grants. According to one grant denial, without sales figures or a means of tracking our readership, there is no way to assess the value of LVNG's literary merit. What sounded like a death knell for the magazine has since confirmed that the primary value of the project has been its informality and freedom from institutional ties. Our only obligation is to the authors. We have published each issue and Supplemental because we were excited by the work. In this sense we have returned to the enthusiasm that first motivated O'Leary and Sullivan: to provide a literary magazine that in the freedom with which it is produced and given consolidates the communal imagination necessary for poetry to thrive. Since 1999 we have published three issues, including another special issue, LVNG 10, "Translations." In 2000 Michael O'Leary and Devin Johnston founded Flood Editions, a small-press literary publisher devoted to producing fine books of poetry and fiction. The inaugural publications were a book of Ronald Johnson's last poems, The Shrubberies, edited by Peter O'Leary, and a volume of poetry by LVNG contributor Pam Rehm, Gone to Earth. LVNG joined Flood Editions as a non-profit organization in 2003, which allows us to make newer issues available on the Flood Web site and to receive tax-deductible donations. While pragmatic concerns motivated our decision to join Flood Editions, it is especially appropriate because Flood was born in the environment fostered by LVNG.

In the fall of 2004, the University of Chicago Library agreed to house the LVNG archives, which includes correspondence related to each issue and Supplemental, artwork, drafts and commentary, and fundraising material. Our hope is that the archives will generate interest in $L V N G$, and, more importantly, remind younger generations of poets of what is possible.

Joel Felix is the author of Catch \& Release (Chicago Poetry Project, 2003) and teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Michael O'Leary, with Devin Johnston, founded Flood Editions. He is pursuing a Ph.D. in fracture mechanics at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Peter O'Leary is the author of Watchfulness (Spuyten Duyvil, 2001) and Gnostic Contagion: Robert Duncan and the Poetry of Illness (Wesleyan University Press, 2002). A new book of poetry, Depth Theology, is forthcoming from the University of Georgia Press. He teaches at the School of the Art Institute.

## NOTES

I. Lewis Hyde, The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property (New York: Vintage, 1983), 16.

The University of Chicago Library


[^0]:    The Poetry Center views the evening as an illumination of one art by another [. . .]. This will be the first event of the new Poetry Center,

