EIRIK STEINHOFF

The Making of *Chicago Review:* The Meteoric Years

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 this instrumentalizing logic held for contemporary writing: "The emphasis in American universities has rested too heavily on the history and analysis of literature—too lightly on its creation." Notwithstanding this confident incipit, *CR* was hardly an immediate success. It had to be built from scratch by student editors who had to negotiate a sometimes supportive, sometimes antagonistic relationship with *CR*'s host institution, the University of Chicago. The story I tell here focuses on the labors of F.N. Karmatz and Irving Rosenthal, the two editors who put *CR* on the map in the 1950s, albeit in different and potentially contradictory ways. Their hugely ambitious projects twice drove *CR* to the brink of extinction, but they also established two idiosyncratic styles of cultural engagement that continue to inform the *Review*'s practice into the twenty-first century.

Rosenthal's is the story that is usually told of *CR*'s early years: in 1957 and '58 he and poetry editor Paul Carroll published a strong roster of emerging Beat writers, including several provocative excerpts from *Naked Lunch*, William S. Burroughs's work-in-progress. After the *Chicago Daily News* described *CR* as "filthy writing," the *Review* was suppressed by the University's Administration, and Rosenthal and Carroll resigned and started a new magazine, *Big Table,* to publish the suppressed material. This is a sensational story and well worth retelling. But we can get a more fine-grained sense of the magazine's history—and in particular of the magazine's unique relationship to the University of Chicago—by contextualizing the 1958 convulsion in light of Karmatz's tenure, which ran from 1953 to '55. In collaboration with Professor Reuel Denney, Karmatz refashioned *CR* from a modest

college magazine into a nationally distributed, closely read organ of intellectual record. Rosenthal, in turn, reinvented Karmatz's reinvention, presenting edgier fare to the mainstream audience Karmatz cultivated. Their inadvertent collaboration across time created the conditions of autonomy under which the magazine thrives to this day, even as their projects tested the limits of University sponsorship.

Chicago Review has been edited by graduate students at the University of Chicago since its inception. This is, on the face of it, an improbable model for survival. Other university-affiliated journals of CR's scale and longevity are typically edited by tenured faculty, an arrangement that tends to maximize editorial continuity and minimize friction with their host institution. *The Kenyon Review*, for instance, has had thirteen professor-editors since its inception in 1939; *The Yale Review*, founded in 1911, has had eight, two of whom edited for more than twenty years. In contrast, *Chicago Review* has had fifty-four different editors in the last sixty years. On hearing these figures, *Yale Review* editor J.D. McClatchy quipped, "What are you, a banana republic?" From the perspective of faculty-edited university-sponsored journals CR's structure may seem labile and unstable. But from another perspective (call it that of the purist outsider) the very fact of university sponsorship is seen to necessarily compromise a journal's aesthetic integrity. Praising a recent issue, poet Ron Silliman wrote that CR's success "is more or less impossible" given that it is a "*college magazine*" (his emphasis), and as such, must work against the fact of "typically cautious faculty sponsorships & rotating student editors." But CR's unique history reveals that for all its liabilities—and there are those—this structure has been a surprising source of strength that promotes improbable and enduring adaptations and keeps the magazine's agenda fresh and mobile and free from the predictable programs of more stable editorial models. Devin Johnston, CR's poetry editor from 1995 to 2000, recently observed that this structure makes it possible to "combine the university's intellectual earnestness with an irrepressible enthusiasm (from being young)." Karmatz and Rosenthal proved this in the 1950s, as have CR's fifty-two other editors, each in his or her own way. May the magazine thrive and expand in new directions for another sixty years to come!

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The *Review*'s first six years were wobbly. Funding was limited and editorial tenures were particularly concise: twenty editors topped the masthead between 1946 and 1958. Edited by students such as Ned Polsky (who went on to write an influential sociological study of pool, *Hustlers, Beats, and Others*) and V.R. "Bunny" Lang (a poet who became muse and confidante to Frank O'Hara before her early death in 1956), *CR*'s early issues included fiction by Kenneth Patchen, poems by Paul Éluard and Tennessee Williams, and critical prose by Louis-Ferdinand Céline and Marianne Moore. There's a range of contributions from University of Chicago professors and notable alumni, including Jackson Mac Low and Susan Sontag (her first time in print).

But there was also a lot of chaff—most of it student work—interspersed among the more memorable proceedings. Larzer Ziff recently described the challenges faced by the 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. (42:3/4)

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

> 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.

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 the format switched to eight-page newsprint for two issues. Circulation was modest as well: fewer than 700 copies were printed of any given issue, and distribution was primarily local.

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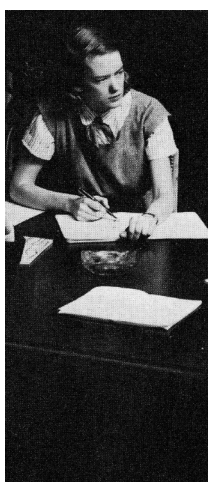

F.N. "Chip" F

All this changed with the Spring 1953 issue. This handsome ninety-six-page perfect-bound book with a conspicuous logo marked the arrival of 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 authors and critics and set a strong precedent for engagement with contemporary US culture. Just as significantly, he created a robust national distribution system, which placed the magazine's circulation in another league altogether. George Jackson, on staff for most of the 1950s, remembered Karmatz as the editor "who turned the *Review* from a campus literary magazine into a major quarterly." 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." It's clear he did just that: by spring 1955 Karmatz could proudly announce to his readers that CR had "the largest circulation of any cultural quarterly or 'little' magazine" (9:1).

The titles of two special issues published during Karmatz's tenure—"Contemporary American Culture" (8:3) and "Changing American Culture" (9:3)—accurately denote the focus of the *Review* at the tail end of the McCarthy Era. "I did everything I could to keep the *Chicago Review* apolitical or neutral," Karmatz told me last year. "We were a cultural publication, open to all cultural viewpoints." This liberal pluralism is reflected in the pieces Karmatz published,

F.N. "Chip" Karmatz (right) and staff at a Chicago Review *meeting in 1954.*

by the likes of Leo Strauss, Ben Shahn, and Henry Miller, and on topics ranging from *Brown v. Board of Education* to Abstract Expressionism. Karmatz's upgrade also included poems by William Carlos Williams and e.e. cummings and stories by Nikos Kazantzakis and Philip Roth (his first published story). CR-sponsored readings at the University by Edith Sitwell and e.e. cummings (Dylan Thomas died a few days before his scheduled reading) contributed to the cultural prestige *Chicago Review* was accumulating, and generated necessary revenue for the journal's increasingly ambitious print runs.

Karmatz also injected memorable energy into the business of editing the magazine. George Starbuck, who joined the staff towards the end of Karmatz's tenure, 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.

George Jackson noted 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*.

Karmatz told me that this appealing lore was somewhat overstated—he only had one phone, never published Rexroth, and everyone on staff sold ads locally—but his energetic presence, and the influence it had on his staff, is amply evident.

The good working relationship between Karmatz and his staff was complemented by his fruitful collaborations with CR's faculty advisors Gwin Kolb (Professor in English) and Reuel Denney (in Sociology). Karmatz was especially close with Denney, 1939's Yale Younger Poet and co-author of *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), a groundbreaking, bestselling analysis of conformity and individuality in the postwar

us. They were tennis partners, and a folder in Denney's papers at Dartmouth College traces the brainstorming sessions that transpired between them. Most of these notes focus on the "new model" *Review* that emerged under Karmatz: lists of potential contributors, distribution strategies, circulation figures for *CR* in comparison to other little magazines, and a parsing of *CR*'s efficient cause, formal cause, material cause, and final cause (neo-Aristotelianism was all the rage at the University in those days). There are several documents focusing on staff structure and training, but it is worth noting that faculty oversight is mentioned only once in passing: Kolb and Denney's involvement was apparently so seamless and healthy as to not require consideration of possible antagonisms or conflicts of interest.

The fuzziness of this relationship worked well for Karmatz. "Editorially, if Gwin Kolb or Reuel Denney OK'd a particular issue's content," he explained to me, "Dean [of Students] Strozier allowed the publication to go ahead. However, I don't think this was a formal process and I am not aware of the communication between them." Karmatz's told me that *CR* was defined as "a student publication endorsed by the Administration": "Strozier simply covered our printing debts, if there were any, for any given period. […] Dean Strozier never explained how it worked—wasn't student business." This opacity was unproblematic for the duration of Karmatz's tenure, but it led to an almost fatal crisis shortly after his editorship ended.

A notice in the *Chicago Tribune*'s "Literary Spotlight" set the scene: "*Chicago Review*, the quarterly owned by and published at the University of Chicago, recently issued its second annual copy […] in a special printing of 22,500 copies." Karmatz had his reasons for this optimistic print run (exactly twice the circulation of *Partisan Review*, the largest little magazine of the day): he was anticipating an essay by former President Harry Truman. It fell through, but a new distributor remained sanguine and the print run was not adjusted. A massive printing bill arrived several months later in tandem with a flood of unsold copies, long after Karmatz had graduated and passed on the *Review*'s editorship. The Dean of Students threatened to close down the magazine rather than pay the bill, but Karmatz's colleagues interceded on *CR*'s behalf.

Denney and Elder Olson (a professor who, like Denney, was both a longtime supporter of the *Review* and an occasional contributor)

convinced Dean of Humanities Napier Wilt to assume direct administrative and financial responsibility for *CR*. Two years after this crisis, Wilt explained the changes:

> Since the spring of 1957, when the Dean of Students in the University asked to be relieved of fiscal responsibility for the *Chicago Review*, the magazine has been "located," administratively, under the Division of the Humanities of the college. The change was made to ensure continuation of the *Review* at a time when its future was precarious.

The newly installed Faculty Board "was to serve solely as a 'financial watchdog' and was to have no voice in editorial policy" (as Albert N. Podell put it in *San Francisco Review* in 1959). David Ray, one of Karmatz's successors, had argued to the University administration that

> Editorially, one of the strong points of the magazine has been its freedom and independence. Comparing magazines subsidized by other universities and edited largely by university faculties, one notes a dryness the *Review* has never encouraged. I, for one, would hate to lose this strength by an overly strong faculty supervision.

The fiscal relocation and the formalization of faculty oversight of *CR*'s finances saved *CR*, but it also drew the magazine more closely into the University's administrative orbit, establishing conditions for a crisis of a different sort.

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If little magazines are barometric instruments, as Lionel Trilling described them, then editor Irving Rosenthal (whose one-year tenure began in 1957) produced a magazine that made as much weather as it measured. Where Karmatz successfully emulated the stately *Sewanee* and *Kenyon Reviews*, it was the younger, hipper *Evergreen Review* and the avant-garde *Black Mountain Review* that captivated the editorial imaginations of Rosenthal and poetry editor Paul Carroll. With these models in hand Rosenthal and Carroll effected a reconversion of *CR*'s intellectual energy, shifting the focus from analysis of a "Changing American Culture" to actually *changing* American culture by pub-

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In an essay on "The Role of the Writer and the Little Magazine"—published two issues before Rosenthal took the helm—University of Chicago professor and novelist Isaac Rosenfeld staked out a staunchly heretical position that antipated this shift in the magazine's self-fashioning:

> 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. (11:2)

Rosenfeld did not spare *CR* from his assessment of the baleful affiliation between little magazines and the academy. But in the following issue poetry editor Paul Carroll ratcheted up Rosenfeld's rhetoric and bluntly named names, initiating a dissent different in kind from what the *Review* had published to date:

> [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 no-nonsense 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. (11:3)

A few factors put Carroll's "Note on Some Young Poets" in a sharper, more personal light: he had, in fact, been published in the very anthology he so vehemently decries. The anthologist, Richard Stern, was a young novelist and new professor at the University of Chicago who had been recently been appointed *CR*'s faculty advisor in the wake of Karmatz's overoptimistic print run. The intimacy of the attack is exacerbated further still by the fact that Carroll's "Notes" were printed directly after an essay by Stern on the poet Edgar Bowers. Where Karmatz played tennis with *CR*'s faculty advisor, Carroll enters into a

competition of an altogether different sort. In light of such brinksmanship, it seems a showdown with the University was inevitable.

Irving Rosenthal, who became *CR*'s editor with the next issue, turned the spasms of agitation articulated by Carroll into a full-fledged editorial program. 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"—a pointed contrast to Karmatz's pluralist ideal. And Rosenthal shared Carroll's knack for controversy. In a September 1957 letter to Vladimir Nabokov he writes "I would very much like to know the censorship story over *Lolita*." 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 Jack Kerouac, Robert Duncan, John Wieners, Michael McClure, Philip Lamantia, and Philip Whalen—the nucleus of the "San Francisco Scene" and an unmistakable antidote to the "anemic, academic verse" Carroll had deplored.

The thrust toward immediacy was explicit in one of Ginsberg's poems:

> Stop all fantasy!
>
> live
> in the physical world
> moment to moment
>
> I must write down
> every recurring thought—
> stop every beating second (12:1)

Kerouac's preface, "The Origins of Joy in Poetry," called this new work "a kind of new-old Zen lunacy poetry," which he contrasts explicitly with that "lot of constipation," "the [T.S.] Eliot shot." Along with these new poets, Rosenthal and Carroll published the first chapter of William S. Burroughs's *Naked Lunch*, which had come to *CR*'s attention via Allen Ginsberg:

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Paul Carroll (left) and Allen Ginsberg (right) in 1959.

> 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.

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 magazine full of idiotic poetry—so long as it's 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!
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> ALLEN GINSBERG
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> Ah! I forgot—I also enclose some final poison for your pot—Burroughs! He sent me this excerpt this week. (12:3)

The *Review*'s San Francisco issue strongly resembles the *Evergreen Review*'s influential 1957 feature on "The San Francisco Scene"—though the inclusion of Burroughs makes it a wager of a different order. CR had a more established audience than the *Evergreen Review*, and was able to lend the prestige of a strongly reputed, University-sponsored journal to the Beats' fledgling program. Perhaps for this reason, "Ten Poets from San Francisco" attracted considerable attention from the national media. None of it was favorable. *The New York Times Book Review* of April 6, 1958 quoted Kerouac's preface *en toto*, then asked, "All clear now?" A month later in the *Book Review* J. Donald Adams reported, "This spring the *Chicago Review* devoted a good part of its issue to the presentation of ten San Francisco poets, and I have been unable to find a memorable poem among them." *The Nation*, for its part, includes the issue in its "Post-Mortem on San Francisco."

The caption to a photo of a beatific and bearded Rosenthal and staff for a 1958 *Chicago Tribune* spread called CR a midwest "Beat" outlet, and faculty dismay at the association was evident. According to Rosenthal, Stern had warned him not to "turn [*Chicago Review*] into a magazine for San Francisco rejects," adding, "This is as if garbage had garbage." After Ginsberg's "poison for your pot" letter was published in the magazine, University Chancellor Lawrence Kimpton complained, "Even the business correspondence of these authors were sacred."

Rosenthal and Carroll's correspondence with Ginsberg and other authors exposes an avid avant-garde self-consciousness. In a 1959 letter to Robert Creeley, Carroll described Ginsberg's style of correspondence: "Allen G writes long epoundian epistles, full of care & love & total commitment, trying to turn me on to one young poet or another." Reflecting on Ginsberg's role in a letter to Carroll in early 1959, Rosenthal makes the analogy explicit: "Allen Ginsberg will at least do as much for literature as Pound did." Even if this prediction has proven extravagant, Ginsberg's letters to CR do have an energetic force similar to Pound's correspondence with two earlier editors of Chicago-based magazines, Harriet Monroe of *Poetry* and Margaret Anderson of *The Little Review*. Part annotated address book, part forceful interpretation of new work, Ginsberg's letters show a poet acting as agent and advocate for his coterie:

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Irving Rosenthal (front), Hyung Woong Pak (rear left), and Chicago Review *staff.*

> You must dig, that certain poems which appear at first formless like Jack Kerouac's or Corso's have either their own form which will be apparent with long familiarity with that style—or else the poet is looking for something else than new metrical form or nonmetrical form […] these are all experiments—you must not judge them by the standards of already written poetry, recognizable standards—the poems have to create standards of their own.

Willing as Carroll and Rosenthal were to work with these writers, they were not shy to reject some of the new work coming their way. A Rosenthal letter to Creeley shows an enviable candor and vulnerability:

> I am also returning a poem called "The Way," which, as you can see, came even closer to publication. I understand your stories better than your poems, yet you should send your poems too. I think it's a matter of an editor adjusting to a writer, and I'm on the verge of liking your work well enough, and so you might help by supplying it.

Here we see Ginsberg's inductive imperative—"the poems have to create standards of their own"—taking hold. To his credit Creeley did supply more writing to Rosenthal. His essay "Olson and others: some orts for the sports" arrived just as the crisis over the University's suppression started unfolding; it traveled with Carroll and Rosenthal to *Big Table*, where it was published in spring 1960 (and was subsequently reprinted in Donald Allen's *New American Poetry*).

Notwithstanding the negative publicity from the national press (and quite likely facilitated by it) CR's "Ten San Francisco Poets" went into a second printing, and Rosenthal turned his attention to a related, though less incendiary, topic: Zen Buddhism. The first anthology of its kind in the US, CR's Zen issue suggests that, in addition to a knack for controversy, Rosenthal had a keen intuition for emerging, influential ways of thinking.

Carroll remembered learning of the issue:

> One day I waltzed in to see [Rosenthal] and discovered 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." (42:3/4)

Anchored by Alan Watts's critical essay on "Beat Zen, Square Zen, and Zen" (a less than flattering appraisal of the Beat appropriation of Zen), the Summer 1958 *Chicago Review* included essays by three San Francisco Beat poets—Kerouac, Whalen, and Snyder—and pieces by D.T. Suzuki and eight others.

This issue, too, made it into the national weeklies, to much greater acclaim. *The Nation* mentioned CR favorably in an article on "The Prevalence of Zen." And in a flattering profile of Alan Watts, *Time* observed that "Zen Buddhism is growing more chic by the minute. Latest evidence: the summer issue of *Chicago Review*." A few weeks later Rosenthal wrote Kerouac: "we hit *Time* boyoboy didn't we. It

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Buoyed by this heady success—the issue sold more than 5,000 copies—Rosenthal set up a lecture series on campus for Watts in November and went to work on the *Naked Lunch* manuscript he had recently received 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 putting it, assembling it, for you—don't know how far he's gone. It overlaps, sometimes, a 400 page mss. […] composed of finished but discontinuous fragments. […] You would find there a huge mass of publishable material—tho much obscene, probably too much for your uses.

Obscenity notwithstanding, in June 1958 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 CR's Autumn 1958 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. (12:3)

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. A dealer named Lupita opines that "Selling is more of a habit than using" 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." The ten-page chapter ends with an ominous *"To be continued":* Rosenthal was preparing to publish another excerpt in the Winter 1959 issue.

That issue never appeared. On October 25, a few weeks after the Autumn 1958 issue was published, *Chicago Daily News*'s popular front-page "bluenose" columnist Jack Mabley denounced the *Review*

as "dangerous […] evidence of the deterioration of our American society." His 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.

There's misinformation and histrionics in the column: he thinks the authors published in *CR* are University of Chicago students, and he refuses to name the magazine, "because I don't want to be responsible for its selling out." But for all that, Mabley's last sentences would have been difficult to mistake or 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.

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!" But that last sentence found its mark. The University was saddled with substantial debt from the years under Robert Maynard Hutchins, the University's Chancellor from 1929 to 1951 whose "extramural politics," "pro-labor sympathies," and "doctrinaire defense of academic freedom" (as historian John Boyer put it) had tested the patience of the University's Trustees and drawn the unwelcome attention of conservative millionaires and red-baiting Congressmen. Hutchins's rather more staid successor, former VP for Development Lawrence Kimpton, had joined the University as chief administrative officer of Enrico Fermi's "Metallurgical Laboratory" and understood all too well the weight of public opinion.

Mabley's obscenity charge couldn't have come at a more inopportune moment. Kimpton's controversial urban renewal plan for Hyde Park (the University's immediate neighbornood), cosponsored by Mayor Richard J. Daley, was almost complete, but needed the approval of the City Council. Mabley's spotlight on *CR* threatened the already delicate balance between the University, the City of Chicago, and the Catholic Church (which had been scrutinizing the plan and making

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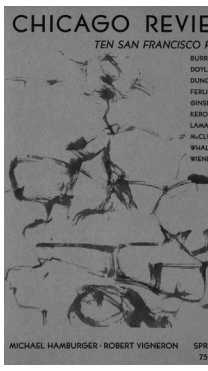


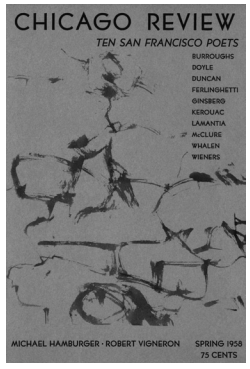
both University and City squirm). As it happened, the infamous renewal plan was approved in early November 1958, and it's tempting to speculate that *CR*'s suppression was a byproduct of that process.

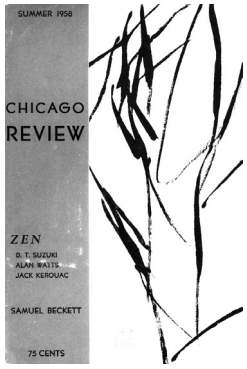
A pair of memos preserved in Kimpton's archives indicates the tenor in which the crisis was transacted in his offices. One describes a phone call from Kimpton's pointman on the urban renewal campaign: "Julian Levi telephoned at 4:45 pm to report that Hyde Park Police picked up a 13-year-old boy carrying a copy of the *Chicago Review*. The boy is suffering—also—from syphilis." The other is a memo from the University's legal department. Following Mabley, it labels *CR* "filth" and anticipates serious challenges in fundraising and public relations more generally:

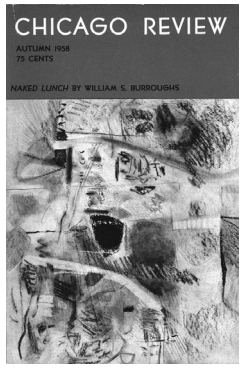
> The magazine contains filthy and obscene language that I associate with the gutter rather than the literary publication of an institution of higher learning. […] How this filth could be published in what must be regarded as a University publication will be very hard for the public to understand. We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

Sure enough, in the wake of Mabley's column Kimpton received a flood of letters, including an incisive three pages on Great Lakes Solvents letterhead:

> 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."

Dean Wilt was, according to Rosenthal, "the *Review*'s strongest backer on faculty"; he had, after all, helped save the magazine two years earlier when Dean of Students Strozier threatened to close it after receiving 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." Rosenthal had already delivered the Winter issue to press when he received Wilt's unambiguous instructions: "The winter issue must be completely innocuous." 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," Kimpton told the *Review*'s Faculty Board that "the legal situation is intolerable." Faced with the Board's unwillingness to abrogate CR's editorial autonomy—an unsigned memo to Kimpton confirmed that the board "basically regards itself as an auditor of finances"—Kimpton "felt that he himself would have to take the onus of some action. He felt that the University ownership of the periodical forced this on him" (this according to Reuel Denney as quoted in the University's student newspaper, the *Maroon*).

Kimpton told the Committee of the Council of the Faculty Senate (the University's governing body) 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.

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A month later, after the suppression, Kimpton told the *Maroon* a different story: "the *Review* was clearly in a rut" and Rosenthal was "completely infatuated with the San Francisco school to the point that he deemed no one else publishing." But *Chicago Review* was in peak performance when the University suppressed it. The multiple printings of both the San Francisco and Zen issues brought in enough income that Rosenthal could, for the first time in the *Review*'s history, promise payments to his contributors. A week after Mabley's column was published, CR hosted three well-attended lectures on Zen by Alan Watts. Moreover, CR had an ambitious range of issues in planning stages at the time of the suppression: Barbara Pitschel had made significant headway with an issue on German Expressionism and Doris Neider had begun soliciting authors for an issue on "New British Writing."

For all that, Rosenthal had a keen sense of just where things stood. The faculty board may have understood the limit of its authority as a fiscal watchdog, but the University's Chancellor could and would do as he pleased. In a dramatic letter to former Chancellor Hutchins, Rosenthal confirmed Kimpton's estimation of the forthcoming 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 his letter 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."

Three days later—three weeks after Mabley's column had appeared—Rosenthal called a staff meeting. As recorded in the minutes of this "tense three-hour meeting," Rosenthal

> informed the staff that it was his understanding that the very existence of the *Review* was at stake. He explained to the group that the University administration had informed him that if the magazine were to continue it must be under the following conditions:
>
> (1) The next issue must be of a non-controversial nature.
> (2) The *Review* must be subject to an annual appraisal by the faculty committee of the magazine.
> (3) In the future the editor shall check with the faculty committee before publishing any manuscripts which he thinks might be objectionable.

> Mr. Rosenthal said that he was told that if the magazine did not comply with these stipulations, it would in all probability be discontinued by the University of Chicago.

Rosenthal went on to propose two options for the *Review:* either refuse to comply with the University's conditions (and risk closure of the magazine) or "elect a new editor of the *Review* who could publish in good conscience" an issue acceptable to the University. Only one staff member, Hyung Woong Pak, felt that he could put together an acceptable issue in good faith; the staff voted 15-2 for the second option and elected Pak editor. Rosenthal and the rest of his staff resigned and (a few months later) founded *Big Table* to publish what had been suppressed.

In early 1959, the University of Chicago's Student Government issued a twenty-three-page 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. […] The 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. […] The primary reason for the University's actions was concern over public reaction to the use of obscene expressions in literature, and the other reasons are *a posteriori* justifications for that action. […] The Administration and Faculty have an obligation […] to insist vehemently on the independence of student judgments from outside intimidation and threats. In working to encourage the intellectual growth of its students, the University must provide the atmosphere for new ideas to be tried, new views to be expounded. *It is this atmosphere which we feel is most seriously challenged by the Chancellor's capitulation to the whim of the local columnist.*

Although the administration made much of CR's "anomalous position" in the immediate aftermath of the suppression, there were no changes in CR's structural relationship with the University. Pak told the *Maroon*: "I am free to print whatever I damn well please. As editor

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of the *Chicago Review* I have complete autonomy and the complete right to print whatever I choose." 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." Pak reverted to the relatively safer territory of the Karmatz years (his first issue was on "Existentialism and Literature"), and by the mid-1960s *CR* had sloughed any unseemly residue of Kimpton's suppression.

Rosenthal played a high-stakes game in publishing so much Burroughs. But in so doing, he also participated in the ambitions of Karmatz-vintage *CR*. The last sentence of the introductory note to 1954's issue on "Contemporary American Culture" could just as well apply to the magazine Rosenthal edited: "The *Review*, as a quarterly of ideas and creative literature, is […] an attempt to place genuine literature before an audience capable of carrying out its own processes of ratiocination" (8:3)—a serious, considered, and sometimes risky enterprise, in other words, that holds the state of the art and the intelligence of its audience in high esteem, regardless "the whim of the local columnist."

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." 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." It isn't hard to recognize that *Naked Lunch* belongs precisely to this tradition of writing that interrogates convention and upsets entrenched 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 *Big Table 1* (which contained "The Complete Contents of the Suppressed Winter 1959 *Chicago Review*") from the US 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 concludes that "clinical

appeal is not akin to lustful thoughts."

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 that followed the 1968 Chicago Democratic National Convention. William S. 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 appeared on the cover of *Esquire*'s November 1968 issue, exactly ten years after CR 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."

A NOTE ON SOURCES

Most citations from former CR staffers in this piece are from memoirs solicited in 1996 by former editor David Nicholls on the occasion of CR's fiftieth anniversary; a few of these were printed in CR's fiftieth-anniversary issue, and all of them are preserved in CR's papers in Special Collections at the University of Chicago's Regenstein Library.

I corresponded with Karmatz last spring. Most of Rosenthal's comments are quoted from Gerald E. Brennan's detailed two-part investigative piece on the 1958 episode, "Naked Censorship: The True Story of the University of Chicago and William S. Burroughs" (*Chicago Reader,* 29 September and 6 October 1995).

A shorter version of this essay appeared last year in the catalog *From Poetry to Verse: Essays on the Making of Modern Poetry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Library, 2005). That version includes a complete apparatus of citations, which will be of assistance to readers seeking the story's primary documents.

A few of the pieces mentioned in this essay (Carroll's "Note," an excerpt from *Naked Lunch*) are available—along with a trove of other material—as part of CR's sixtieth-anniversary online constellation at humanities.uchicago.edu/review.