

Louis Zukofsky

“A” 1-7

An “Objectivists” Anthology text
with additional materials

Edited Jeffrey Twitchell-Waas

Z-site Publications
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The early typescript version of "A"-1 and -2 , including the two pages with
markings by Ezra Pound have been transcribed from materials held by the
Berg Collection, New York Public Library and the Beinecke Rare Book and
Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Zukofsky's personal copy of *An "Objectivists" Anthology* with corrections is
held by the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

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Preface

In the summer of 1942, Zukofsky revised the first seven movements of "A" (composed 1928-1930) – the only extensive and significant such revision he made to any of his poetry, which as a rule he almost never revised once allowed into print. The earlier version presented here is based on that in *An "Objectivists" Anthology* (1932), the first publication of these movements as a complete sequence and the closest we have to an authoritative text. In addition, there is a transcription of an even earlier, unpublished typescript of "A"-1 and -2, with Zukofsky's marked revisions. Zukofsky submitted this typescript to Pound for feedback, who marked up the first two pages, which are also transcribed here. I have appended detailed remarks on the texts, a textual apparatus registering emendations as well as variants in other early printings, and finally an afterword offering background and commentary on Zukofsky's revisions. Line breaks have been marked (>) when they coincide with page breaks.

"A" 1-7
FROM AN "OBJECTIVISTS" ANTHOLOGY

"A"

First
and Movements: "Come, ye Daughters"
Second

A
Round of fiddles playing Bach—
The double chorus.
 "Come, ye daughters, share my anguish—"
Bare arms, black dresses
 "See Him! Whom?—"
Bediamond the passion of our Lord,
 "See Him! How?—"
His legs, blue tendons bleeding,
Tinsel over his ribs
 "O Lamb of God most holy—"
Black, black full dress in the audience—
Dead century where is your motley,
Country people in Leipzig,
 Easter,
Matronly flounces,
 —starched, heaving,
Belly freighted—boom!
Cheeks of the patrons of Leipzig—
"Going to Church? where's the baby?"
"Ach, dort eilt sich der Kappellmeister—"
"Johann Sebastian! (twenty-two
 children!)."

 According to Matthew,
 Composed seventeen twenty-nine,
 Repeated here at Carnegie,
That was Thursday, 'twenty-eight, the fifth evening of April,
April, and the autos honking outside, all those
that were parked there.
 (*"Hearts turned to thee"*)
German lady
Auch ich war in Arkadien geboren.

>

The lights dim, and the brain when the flesh dims.
Hats picked up from under seats.
Galleries darkening.

“No suh!

Not past that exit, Zukofsky!”

“Agh, Satan! Agh—gh!”

Ecdysis: the serpent coming out,
gradual molting,

Blood staining the floor as the foot stepped,

Bleeding chamfer for shoulder:

“Not past that exit, Zukofsky!”

“Devil! what!—?”

“Blood of your desire to graft what you desire,
Consider the Angels who sang in the boys’ choir
God’s cherubs,

If seen near the ocean, stripped white skins, red
coat of the sunburn,—

They have mothers.”

“No, Satan, not heart that bled

Over boys’ voices, nor blood

Flowing for lost sons,—

I have harbored perfection.”

And as one who under the stars

Spits free across the sand dunes, and the winds

Blow thru him, and his spit seems to drown worlds,

I lit a cigarette, and passed free

Beyond the red light of the exit.

Asmodeus fading to “Camel” smoke,

Greasy, solicitous, eyes longing minutes after,

Smiling, a tramp’s face,

Lips looking out of a beard

Hips looking out of ripped trousers

and suddenly

Nothing.

But about me, the voices of those who had
been at the concert,

Feet stopping everywhere in the streets,

Stopping of turned necks for chatter:

“Poor Thomas Hardy he had to go so soon,

It was he who admired so our recessional
architecture,

What do you think of our new Sherry-Netherland!”

“Lovely soprano,

Nor any conscious effort,
Nor boiling to put pen to paper.
Perhaps a few things to remember
(Three there stealing in through the music
As pioneers moccasined stealing in through the music).

Atheling—"There are different techniques,
Men write to be read, or spoken,
Or declaimed, or rhapsodized,
And quite differently to be sung:"

Carlos—"I heard him agonizing,
I saw him *inside:*"

Estlang—"Everything which
We really are and never quite live."
Far into (about three) in the morning,
The trainmen the most wide awake
 "*Weary, broken bodies,*" calling

Station on station, under earth
A thousand fiddles as beyond—
 "*Cold stone above thy head—*"
Trainmen chanting

And again:

 "*He came and found them—*
 Sleeping, indeed their eyes were full of sleep."

Good night . . .

So the next day the reverses,
As if the music were only a taunt,
As if it had not kept, flower-cell in flower, liveforever
 before the eyes, perfecting,—
I thought that was finished, Zukofsky,
Existence not even subsistence,
Worm eating the bark of the street tree,
Smoke sooting skyscraper chimneys,
That which has been looking for substitutes, tired,
Ready to give up the ghost in a cellar.

Remembering what?

Love, in your lap, in a taxi, unwilling—
A country of state roads and automobiles,
But the greatest number idle, shiftless, disguised on streets,
The excuse of the experts
'Production exceeds demand so we curtail employment,'
And the Wobblies hollering reply,

Yeah! but why don't you give us more than a meal
to increase the consumption!
While the great Magnus, before his confreres in industry,
Swallow tail, eating a sandwich,
"Road map to the stomach," grinning,
To a chart pointing, and between bites.

Dogs cuddling to lamposts
Lonely—look—what—maybe broken forged iron—
"We ran 'em in chain gangs, down in the Argentine,
Executive's not the word, use *engineer*,
Single-handed, ran 'em like soldiers,
Seventy-four yesterday, and could run 'em today,
Been fishin' all Easter
Nuthn' like nature for hell-fire!"
 "*Ye lightnings, ye thunders*
 In clouds are ye vanished?
 Open, O fierce flaming pit!"

I crouched again, high—O my God, into the flower!

“Around Thy tomb here sit we weeping”
Just for the fun of it, *“O Saviour blest”*

And the double chorus singing,
The song out of the voices.

Third
and
Fourth Movements: “Out of the voices”

At eventide, cool hour of rest
It is your dead mouth singing,

Ricky,

Automobiles speed past the cemetery,
No gage measures,

No metre turns,
Sleep

With an open gas range
Beneath for a pillow.

The cat? paw brought back
Over her seat, velvet,

Leg, crooked;
Shape: elbow.

“Puss—puss—she doesn’t know
Her seat from her elbow.”

“Who smelt gas?
What, What?”

“Where is the Scotch?” “Would I lie!”
(Spilt—in a bush, a way back
from the running-board).

“No crossin’ bridges, Rick,
No, no bridges, not after midnight!”

“God’s-gift-to-’oman! when
'S after midnight

It’s all after midnight once
There’s a midnight,
>

It's all a matter of
Determining—

'Stand?!—*My* boy! Has the
American tragedy in his lap—

Tool's tarpaulin in
A tool chest,

Only not just
Tarpaulin,

Slicker, something
For seamen (semen)

That's to say, allow me to
Introduce—"Fishskin!"

How's the old naval (navel)
Encounter, otherwise

Clean as
Sapolio!"

Out of memory, a little boy—Rain alights:
It's rai-ai-nin', Ricky, Cœur de Lion.

What is in a name?
"Lion-heart," a horse bridled,

Trappings rise and surround
Princelet out of history;

And more trappings, churning,
Rise and surround,

Dark hair, two dark heads,
On white pillows, tall (dead)

Straight foreheads, the beautiful
Almost sexual brothers.

*"Go, my soul
Beg you His corpse!"*

>
I, Arimathaea
His mirror! lights either side,
Lord God!

Wish I
The Glass had been broken!

In another world
We will not motor:

So's your old—!
Your precursor who was,

Brought up in court,
He pays the speed-fine.

Dead mouth
(Cemetery rounded

By a gas tank)

The song reaches home
'Here are your dead,

Mes parents,—
Stanchion broken

Not yours—'

(As
of leaves)

Lion-heart, my dove,
Pansy-over-the-heart, ricky-bird—

Even the Death has gone out of us—we are void.

“He calleth for Elias”
(Clavicembalo!)

God, deafen us to their music
Our own children have passed over to the
ostracized

They have mouthed:
Fierce Ark!
Gold lion stomach—
Red hair in intaglio—
Religious, snarling monsters

Our own children have created a jargon:
“Rain blows light upon quiet water,
I watch the rings spread and travel,
Shimaunu-Sān, Samurai,
When will you come home?—
Shimaunu-Sān, my clear star.

To-day I gather all red flowers,
Shed their petals on the paths,
Shimaunu-Sān, at the dawning,
Red I go to meet him—
Shimaunu-Sān, my clear star.

To-morrow I tear cherry sprays,
Wreath them in my hair and at my temples,
Shimaunu-Sān will see my head's white blossom,
In the dark run towards me—
Shimaunu-Sān, my clear star.

Pledged have all turtle-doves
To fly and search him:
Shimaunu-Sān, at my little windows
Each night a tiny candle will be lighted—
Shimaunu-Sān, my clear star.”

“Yehoash”—
Were he alive to forgive
Misuse of his “jargon.”
Misrepresented (also) in an Anthology of—
Of the time,

By a translation;
Surely not for lack of a postage-stamp—
The story runs—‘Even his trousers, even
his trousers,
They, too left him’—

The Editor.
Perhaps he might repeat:
“I shall skip a pale and
Subtle poet who was not in fact
Lazy, but the meaning of whose
Painfully inarticulate soul forbids
Me to use him for any purpose, however,
Respectful.”—The Editor, (in a journal,—
Associations: we had a menorah, and
It is, indeed, an honor to be circumcised)
June 1927.

“And to the Sun! I bow.
On the gray
Mountains when you lie
Where multiply
The stairs of crags of my prayer
Will follow you, Still Heir—
Bestower of man and tree and sand,
When your face upon the land
Flames in last redness, allow me of your light”

“Yehoash”: song's kinship,
The roots we strike

“Heavier from day to day
Grow my limbs with sap of forests”

“Deep roots hammer lower”

“I will gather a chain
Of marguerites, pluck red anemone,
Till of every hostile see
Never a memory remain”

For the story of it:
My father's precursors
Set masts in dingheys, chanted the Speech,
>

“Wider is the ash around the fire”
“Treasures turned to sand”

“My petted birds are dead”

The courses we tide from—
Tree of the Bach family
Compiled by Sebastian himself.
‘ Veit Bach, a miller in Vechmar,
Delighted most in his lute
Which he brought to the mill
And played while it was grinding.
A pretty noise the pair must have made,
Teaching him to keep time.

But, apparently, that is how
Music first came into our family!’

Carousel—flour runs—
Song drifts from the noises.

Fifth
and Movements: "And I:"
Sixth

An animate still-life—(night).
In one hand, a leaf
So that after a time

all's autumn.
Thread: middle down the brown leaf.
In the next hand, a cigarette.
Approach brown leaf-edge with burning
Above which will be printed (as above ashes)
in autumn brown

Horizontal lettering
Held vertically
Held—held obliquely—
The city's university rise
trees' branches space—
airing out—

DUNHILL.
Comfort.

And palestra: Youths—
A wheel—women, trainmen—a wheel,
Felly, marble-blue, chisel-wedge, iron spoke,
Miner's legs,
Mill-oatmeal (that is how
Music first came into our family),
Ricky Cœur de Lion, carousel horse;

Kay: Flowers over the heart,
Offal (I'm kiddin' sure)
Offal-and-What, the imagination,
In case of emergency follow the
next lunatic.

The reason we're not further along (But this is a swell sun,
brother comrade,
Ask Faust aquaplaning, Go-ethe, his spiritual (whew)!
MacFadden,

(Hu!) he-er vent Hel-ee-ena squat from our Sidewalks,
(Ritornelle)

Ye Daughters:

Pledged turtle doves, (Yehoash) ripped up
Pebble-stones of our tessellation,
Liveforever! flower in flower heart;

Design

And past the leaf's edge
(Not in the central heart)
Two voices:

“How? without roots?”
“I have said the *courses we tide from*.”
“They are then a light matter?”
“Let it go at that, they are a light matter.”
“Isn't it more?” “As you say.”
“Your people?” “All people.”
“You write a strange speech.” “This.”

And I:
I shall continue one song
Tho' its sound go two ways,
My two voices
The words Matthew weeps
(Plaint Clavicembalo)—
 Chorale, the kids in the loft
 (*O love untold*, love lying close);
Or say, words have knees,
 water's in them, all joints crack,—
 (Yet, N. Y. tonight, the rat-lofts
 light
 with the light of a trefoil;

Purple clover,
She wore her shoes three years—
 (The soles new as the sunned black
 of her grave-turf;
Speech bewailing a Wall,
Night of economic extinctions
Death's encomium—

And day, leaves blowing over and over.

For I have seen it, I, writhed, self-taunt
tracked itself down in the mirror,
And then, Sleep, yet the face open,
the Flower, sea of Waves Shut, calm, looking
Outward

The edges of no one like it looking; everlasting;
Of an afternoon. Surrounding: a field, two fields,
Two windows breaking a wall,
A wall spacing two windows,
A heavy bulk which is she
moving back from the windows,
A field, and near left, gigantic in rubric,
green elves, Wrigleys in rubric;
“Eveline! Eveline!”
The bulk which is she moves and moves back
from a window
Immaculata concepcione B. V. M. the Fine Arts’ dogma
Pope Pius IX,
(Sad clothes line)
But, Madam, your laundered conception
of the B. V. D.!

(That Day the Jews eating not-leavened bread)

And behind ramshackle
Hid (chest to chest; Horse)
Field-weed,

Lie down you, I'll marry you!

(Said:)

Do you think we are sailors?
New are, the trees,
Purple in the violets’ swath,
Birds—birds—birds.
Against bark a child’s forehead
plein de rouges tourmentes—
Rimbaud (no glasses stopping from bark touch);
Forehead to bark, face to bark:

Under sky clarities
Winds' intercourse with the fields,
Breath, love hardly over, trembling.

Walking out:
The trees showing sunlight,
Sunlight trees,
Words ranging forms.

Tho' we know, from him, a melody resolves
to no dullness)

Is one identified—
a hundred years?

Thus outline we our matter,
These movements 1, 2, 3, 4, 5,
Sour taste,

Sailors, we, pushing up the daisies,
Sea,

Obligato, the melody, obligato,
The melody, the rest are accessory,—
Kay, but Anybody (caps) a particular,
Suspension,

Says you! my one voice; my other—is
An objective—rays of the object brought to a focus,
An objective—naturans—desire for what is objectively perfect,
Inextricably the direction of historic and
contemporary particulars.

J. S. B.: his life, a particular,
His Matthew Passion, a particular,
Kay, a particular,
Ludwig Van and Go-ethe
Of one century—
“Napoleon fills a barrel of rams horns
And sends it to Italy (observed from the Alps by Go-ethe),
The Great Boot fills a barrel with parts,
The men of parts, grant that they were that,—
(Ahi quanto a dir) ah, how hard it is to say—
All but their parts out of the barrel,
And sends it to Napoleon—“This
Is what we did to your soldiers”—
(Heard with trains' run over trestle
one Easter Sunday)
“That's history”—fills up spaced paper
and contention—
“A cheeseless mousetrap, that's history”—
Another kind of particular—you said it!
But we are after all realists capable of distinctions.

“Many people are too busy to be unemployed.”
(Especially those who have their own factories

to take care of.)

“If communism ever gets into a country
and raises Ned with it,
It’s because that country needs it.
Only about one family
In ten has a bathtub.
They should be made cheaper,
So that everybody could have them.
If goods don’t sell,” says Henry,
“It’s because they’re no good
Or are too high priced.”
Disposed of: the short change of labor.
As for Labor,

“There are more people
Who won’t try to do anything
Than there are who don’t know what to do.”
Says Henry,
“I am in the business of making automobiles
Because I believe I can do more good that way
Than any other.
Industry itself is a part of culture.
The fact that a man knows a lot
About industry does not prevent
His using good grammar,
Standing straight and appearing well.
We need beauty in everything, and culture
Should be a thing of practice,
Not something apart.
Everything should be a thing of beauty,
Well made and well thought out.”

Spilt from the running-board, Ricky!
The buildings have risen in heights,
All turrets with windows delight,
The ladies are garnered in tights
Of crimson tinselled with
white.

History: the records of taste and economy of a civilization.
Particular: Every fall season, every spring season, he
needs a new coat, (he loses his job)—
Poetry? it has something to do with his writing of poetry.
“That’s poetry,” he was corrected.

“It’s fiction, too, isn’t it,”

said Henry,

“I read poetry, and I enjoy it
If it says anything,
But so often it doesn’t say anything,”
says Henry.

The common air includes
Events listening to their own tremors,
Beings and no more than breath
between them,
Histories, differences, walls,
And the words which bind them no more than
“So that,” “and”—
The thought in the melody moves,
Lines, flash of photoplay.

Laughter. Kay, naked,
Pyjamas flung thru the crook of his elbow:
Zoo-kaw-kaw-someone opens his mouth and you copy,
When you’re phosphates, they’ll look you up and discover
For six years you was out of a job—
But J. S. B.—Polyphony—’e was a Latin instructor—

Ye daughters!—tiaras, tantrum, tiaras—or taught ’em
something of that sort or other—

Six jobs, six themes at once and fughatta, and all music—
The sea, yeh, yeh, the sea.

But who are we—
Pshaw, says who,
The unholyest is holy—
But I, says Kay, says Kay,
(Innocent as a kid calling himself by his
prænomen,

Mark an individual)
Pshaw, an aphorism.
All aphorisms dogs cuddling to lamposts;
Sorry, so sorry, for sad people, an author, ditto, soft minded—
Good night, Anybody!

>

Shift.

Tastes: Men of forty kiddin' themselves in blue overalls
With little blue and red trucks.

Septuagenarian actor's personal locomotive
For retired estate which his boy day dreams realized.

De gustibus bespeaks . . . the sparrow . . . pecking
at something unmentionable.

To find a thing, all things

On that morning when everything
will be clear,
Greeting, myself, Rimbaud
with glasses,
The world's earth spread a rose,
rose every particle,
The palm of the hand lie open
earth's lily,
One will see
gravel in gravel
Stray bits
of burnt matches
Glass,
disused rubber,
Scrape heels of shoes,
and not trip,
Not that one will get, see,
more than particulars,

Rest thee softly, softly rest.

Preparing to receive the captain of industry,
Emptied one full clothes closet and, when he came,
Said—"My dear Magnus, here is entirely to yourself
A closet for your suspenders."

And the time was—

By Mazola on Riverside Drive—

The heyday revival of western movies

Immediately after the cowboys

Who did their darndest, angels could do no more.

Seriously:

The young lady remorseful who had brought scandal

>

On the family by having taken to smoking—
You know the gray stockings she had always been wearing lately.

And the time was:
The gun shoots—go!
Glory of the Seas by Free Wash out of Tan Seamen,
Temper Awake by Splashed out of Sleep—
Dogs—I'll grant you dogs,
But a horse
That's
 an animal.

The time was:
The same woman, cries the kid,
With the same dog, and
The same man! and thus he gaged her speed.
The time was: Arcy Bell,
A nigger.
As had a city and a country (summer) home
And a rabbit patch outside on which
 he conveniently did shoot them
(In the spare hours when we did not
 work in the P. O. together,
He and I and Van—promontory of forehead—
 Dutch, flaxen, and inherited New England,
 slight,
 seafaring suavity
 “I dreamt that I tickled my grandfather's awls
 With the oily edge of a feather . . .
 “Arcy 'gainst the wall,
 Shoot high yaller 'gainst the wall . . .”)

And it was to the glory of Liza—Arcy's—
And Eliza Jane (her kids: “here lies a Jane!”), his friend's wife
 who came only on invitation,
That they walked only with their hubbies,—
Two individual families,
Having taken over standards that would

Have been impoliteness to Eskimos.

Seriously: As serious as
Four and a half decades kiddin' himself on a miniature golf course.
But I tell you this man had vistas:

Ties, handkerchiefs to watch,
Mufflers, dress shirts, golf holes,
Chocolate eclaires, automobiles and entrées.

Played polo.
And they—they—the very old stutterers, mumblytypeg in duplex Park Av. apartments,
Mumbling imperceptibly when the jack-knife stuck \$25 shoe leather.
Those who were their grandchildren
Who got jobs because “They didn’t believe in Santa Claus,”
Said Henry, “good boys, Unk Magnus, they come of good families!”
The time was: heretic,
The Church identified with aesthetics,
The heretics, seeking perfection, B. V. M., as if your
word were made out of lipstick,
Their logic the height of your pregnancy.
Naturally, they were offended for all religions
At the time when the Cross heaps were blasted in Moscow.

“It is more pleasant and more useful,”
Said Vladimir Ilytch,
“To live thru the experience
Of a revolution
Than to write about it.”
The women holding the world cornice,
The Red Army buttressed by women—

Venus au bain—
How are the sunsets
in elegant, imperial islands,
Mr. We-Own-your, This-Government—
Benefits-By-Our-Protection Man?
West also in Haiti?
And does Mars
Bloody
Tinker with the other
Stars?

Their accent, not any one nation’s,
Evidently a matter to attract the next diner.
Not royalty, but faces hollowed as royalty,
The grand passion growing urban as in Greece,—
The vague dream,—standing each other to drinks,
Aging eyes wandering impish,
(Overhanging, carafes on bars,

The steel works of Gary.
Stopped by Lake Michigan, Chicago,
And left note he was going to Berkeley.

Desolation. Brush. Foothills of the Rockies.
Green sea roof: desert shack in Nevada—
120 degrees in the shade—
Far away in the heat the monument of
a city.

Was, divorced from himself,
Advised in the night-life of Reno:
“You see this road thru the desert,
They call it the highway,
The Lincoln highway,
It’s time this country forked up
Coin for roadways.
They could if they didn’t have prohibition:
See this spittoon,
Empty it and there’s nothin’ in it:
You’ve got to fill the Treasury spittoon
with taxes,
And no reason why the poor purchaser
Shouldn’t have his swig as another.”

Was advised:
“It’s to laugh—
Bust-up automobile parts—
I had ’em during the war, Henry didn’t have ’em:
Just gravy,
Did I care?
I had ’em kept ’em
Till they wanted ’em, you bet they wanted ’em.”

Was advised:
“You’ve got to use things, too,
Keep ’em in circulation,
If I aint got it, he’s got it.”
Retired.
Hot n’ bothered?
'Ave an ice-cream cone!

Outside the voice of one word in a chorus
falling

“Asunder!”
A sole, a sole
A soldier boy was he

Two pis two pis
Two pistols on his knee
So everyday’s a love day to a sailor
And who’s the boy who would not see the wurrld,
Wand’r a sailor (example he of paler
Than yaller ’gainst his bunting flag unfurled:

Was told:
“Dem Rooshuns ain’t rational,
Why de damn fools would pard’n ’nfanticide
And make ’t (phwat nerrve!) international—
Bolshevik wher’d they git that stuff”

The voice of one word
falling—
“Asunder!”
On that Sunday, in the wind, in the night,
in the grasses,
Were prostrated a thousand asses—
Lads’ and lasses’.

Achieved:
A country of musty, inherited grants
And aged Indians,
Indians employed to establish
Proof of the grants to the white men,
“Not 150, that can’t be your age?”
asked cautiously the Indian’s counsel,
“No . . . No . . .! That wrohng! lleast 200!”

Achieved:
San Francisco’s hills and fogs;
In one of its newspapers—
“Some of our best and largest dowagers
almost do the split”;
Sing Fat Co.—merchants.

Across
The Pacific
The roving Red bands of South China,

Who rests?

That is Venus come up!

And I,
How shall I—
Her soles new as the sunned black of her grave turf,
With all this material?

To what distinction,

Horses, she saw?

My—

Seventh Movement: "There are different techniques"

Horses: who will do it? out of manes? Words
Will do it, out of manes, out of airs, but
They have no manes, so there are no airs, birds
Of words, from me to them no singing gut.
For they have no eyes, for their legs are wood,
For their stomachs are logs with print on them,
Blood red, red lamps hang from necks or where could
Be necks, two legs stand A, four together M.
"Street Closed" is what print says on their stomachs;
That cuts out everybody but the diggers;
You're cut out, and she's cut out, and, the jiggers
Are cut out, No! we can't have such nor bucks
 As won't, tho' they're not here pass thru a hoop
 Strayed on a manhole—me? Am on a stoop.

Am on a stoop to sit here tho' no one
Asked me, nor asked you because you're not here,
A sign creaks—LAUNDRY TO-LET (creaks—wind—)—SUN—
(Nights?) the sun's, bro', what month's rent in arrear?)
Aighuh—and no manes and horses' trot? butt, butt
Of earth, birds spreading harps, two manes a pair
Of birds, each bird a word, a streaming gut
Trot, trot—? No horse is here, no horse is there?
Says you! Then I—fellow me, airs! we'll make
Wood horse, and recognize it with our words—
Not it—nine less two!—as many as take
To make a dead man purple in the face,
Full dress to rise and circle thru a pace
Trained horses—in latticed orchards, (switch!) birds.
>

Just what I said—Birds!—*See Him! Whom? The Son
Of Man*, grave-turf on taxi, taxi gone,
Who blabbed of orchards, strides one leg here, one
Leg there—wooden horses? give them manes!—(was on
A stoop, *He found them sleeping*, don't you see?)
See him! How? Against wood his body close,
Speaks: My face at where its forehead might be,
The plank's end 's a forehead waving a rose—

Birds—birds—nozzle of horse, washed plank in air . . .
For they had no manes we would give them manes,
For their wood was dead the wood would move—bare
But for the print on it—for diggers gone, trains'
Run, light lights in air where the dead reposed—
As many as take liveforever, "Street Closed."

"Closed"? then fellow me airs, We'll open ruts
For the wood-grain skin laundered to pass thru,
Switch is a whip which never has been, cuts
Winds for words—Turf streams words, airs untraced—New
The night, and orchards were here? Horses passed?—
There were no diggers, bro', no horses there,
But the graves were turfed and the horses grassed—
Two voices:—Airs? No birds. Taxi? No air—

Says one! Then I—Are logs?! Two legs stand "A"—
Pace them! in revolution are the same!
Switch! See! we can have such and bucks tho' they
Are not here, nor were there, pass thru a hoop
(Tho' their legs are wood and their necks 'ave no name)
Strayed on a manhole—See! Am on a stoop!
>

See! For me these jiggers, these dancing bucks:
Bum pump a-dumb, the pump is neither bum
Nor dumb, dumb pump uh! hum, bum pump o! shucks!
(Whose clavicembalo? bum? bum? te-hum . . .)
Not in the say but in the sound's—hey-hey—
The way to-day, Die, die, die, die, tap, slow,
Die, wake up, up! up! *O Saviour*, to-day!
Choose Jews' shoes or whose: anyway Choose! Go!

But they had no eyes, and their legs were wood!
But their stomachs were logs with print on them!
Blood red, red lamps hung from necks or where could
Be necks, two legs stood A, four together M—
They had no manes so there were no airs, but—
Butt . . . butt . . . from me to pit no singing gut!

Says you! Then I, Singing, It is not the sea
But what floats over: hang from necks or where could
Be necks, blood red, red lamps (Night), Launder me,
Mary! Sea of horses that once were wood,
Green and, and leaf on leaf, and dancing bucks,
Who take liveforever! Taken a pump
And shaped a flower. "Street Closed" on their stomachs.
But the street has moved; at each block a stump
That blossoms red, And I sat there, no one
Asked me, nor asked you. Whom? You were not there.
A sign creaked—LAUNDRY TO-LET—(creaked—wind—)—SUN
(Nights?) the sun's, bro', no months' rent in arrear—
Bum pump a-dum, no one's cut out, pump a-
Ricky, bro', Shimaunu-Sān, yours is the

Clavicembalo—Nine less two, Seven
Were the diggers, seven sang, danced, the paces
Seven, Seven Saviours went to heaven—
Their tongues, hands, feet, eyes, ears and hearts, each face as
Of a Sea looking Outward (Rose the Glass
Broken), Each a reflection of the other.
Just for the fun of it. And 't came to pass

(Open, O fierce flaming pit!)

three said: “Bother,

Brother, we want a meal, different techniques.”
Two ways, my two voices . . . Offal and what
The imagination . . . And the seven came
To horses seven (of wood—who will?—kissed their stomachs)
Bent knees as these rose around them—trot—trot—
Spoke: words, words, we are words, horses, manes, words.

(To be Continued)

1928-30.

II. Two pages of early version of “A”-1 marked by Ezra Pound

This typescript was sent to Pound with a 12 Dec. 1928 letter. Although the letter indicates the entire early version of “A”-1 and -2 was sent, Pound only marked up the first two pages and scrawled on the back of the first page: “suggest you continue this system of crit th[r]ough the poems.”

"A"

First and Second Movements: "Come, ye Daughters"

Tautology
Bach they play / music

A
Thousand fiddles playing Bach -
The clear music.

obviously if fiddles play

rubbish =
probably about 30 possibly 16

"Come ye daughters, share my anguish - "

Length of bare arms and black dresses

"See Him? Whom? - "

Bediamond, blue tinsel and jewels

already blue

Bediamond the passion of our Lord, ladies,

"See Him! How? - "

His legs, blue tendons of his legs bleeding,

Blue tinsel^d over his ribs

half repeat / of diamond + not precise.

"O Lamb of God most holy - "

Black, black full dress in the audience -

Or dead century where is your motley,

Country people in Leipzig,

Easter;

White matronly flounces, cloth

Over two breasts - starched, heaving,

Belly freighted - boom!

Cheeks of the patrons of Leipzig -

"Going to church? where's the baby?"

"Ach, dort eilt sich der Kappellmeister - "

flounce usually is cloth

obviously NOT gents bare arms.

? change from visual to convention adj. not effective

or leave it if you cut the inversions

Note to the entire poem: Quotations the sources of which are not detailed in the context are based on the text of Bach's St. Matthew Passion, and are in italics.

[Pound's hand-written scrawl on the back of page 1:

suggest you continue this system of crit th[r]ough the poem]

"Johann Sebastian! (twenty-two children! another coming, may it prosper!)"

According to St. Matthew,
Composed seventeen twenty-nine,
Repeated here at Carnegie, "Come, ye Daughters - "
Your heads turned to the music, nineteen hundred twenty-eight.

also this
constant
Vocative
destroys
impression

That was Thursday, the fifth evening of April,
April, and outside the autos honking, all those
that were parked there.

? why
honking
if
parked

~~At the end of it all,~~
("Hearts turned to thee")
~~One~~ German lady (whimper)
Auch ich war in Arkadien geboren.

reader =
cant see
if con

The lights dim, and the brain when the flesh dims.
Hats picked up from under seats. ~~In the aisle.~~
Galleries darkening.

"No suh!
Not past that exit, Zukofsky!"
"Agh, Satan! Agh - gh!"
Ecdysis: the serpent coming out,
gradual molting,
Blood staining the floor as the foot stepped,
~~Self-brand in shoulder, laughter,~~
Bleeding champfer for shoulder:
"Not past that exit, Zukofsky!"
"Devil! hissing Devil! what
Is it you want?"
"Blood of your desire to graft what you desire,

avoid
2 preps.s
in seq.
when
poss.

constant
staccato
stops one
too often.

Too many
vocatives

III. Draft typescript of “A”-1 & -2 with marked revisions by LZ

This is a full version of the typescript draft sent to Pound. Zukofsky's revisions, clearly take Pound's suggestions into account. Canceled words and phrases, as well as everything in red are Zukofsky's hand-written revisions. Words or phrases within pointed brackets replace the canceled words or phrases immediately preceding and are written above the typed lines in the typescript. ~~x~~ represents an illegible canceled word, and [?] indicates the word immediately preceding is an uncertain reading. A vertical red line | indicates where Zukofsky wants the revised line to begin.

"A"

First
and Movements: "Come, ye Daughters"
Second

A

Thousand <Round of> fiddles playing Bach -

The clear music. <double chorus>

"Come, ye daughters, share my anguish - "

|Length of Bare arms, and black dresses

"See Him! Whom? - "

Bediamond, blue tinsel and jewels

Bediamond the passion of our Lord, ladies,

"See Him! How? - "

His legs, blue tendons of his legs bleeding,

|Blue Tinsel over his ribs

"O Lamb of God most holy - "

Black, black full dress in the audience -

Ø Dead century where is your motley,

Country people in Leipzig,

Easter;

|White Matronly flounces, cloth

Over two breasts - starched, heaving,

Belly freighted - boom!

Cheeks of the patrons of Leipzig -

"Going to church? where's the baby?"

"Ach, dort eilt sich der Kappellmeister - "

Note to the entire poem: Quotations the sources of which are not detailed in the context are based on the text of Bach's St. Matthew Passion, and are in italics.

"Johann Sebastian! (twenty-two
children!)" ~~another coming, may it prosper!~~"

According to St. Matthew,
| Composed seventeen twenty-nine,
| Repeated here at Carnegie, "~~Come, ye Daughters—~~"
Your heads turned to the music, nineteen hundred twenty-eight.

<'twenty-eight,>
That was Thursday, ^ the fifth evening of April,
April, and outside the autos honking, all those
that were parked there.

At the end of it all
("Hearts turned to thee")
One German lady (~~whimper~~)
Auch ich war in Arkadien geboren.

The lights dim, and the brain when the flesh dims.
Hats picked up form under seats. ~~In the aisle.~~
Galleries darkening.

"No suh!
Not past that exit, Zukofsky!"
"Agh, Satan! Agh - gh!"
Ecdysis: the serpent coming out,
gradual molting,
Blood staining the floor as the foot stepped,
~~Self-brand in shoulder, laughter,~~
Bleeding chamfer for shoulder:
"Not past that exit, Zukofsky!"
"Devil! ~~hissing Devil!~~ what!—?"
Is it you want?"
"Blood of your desire to graft what you desire,

~~(Where, never mind,)~~

The stealers of "melange adultere de tout"

The Americanizers of the Classics, ~~(stupid,)~~

~~(not knowing the first thing about)~~ Tradition!

include ✓ ~~((To them word of great contours), And[?]- anyway)~~

✓ And ~~R~~aping women with horses.

And on one side street near an elevated ^

~~(The New Asses, braying apocalypse,)~~

~~(Eating good dinner,)~~ Lamenting contemporaneousness;

"The ~~(poor)~~ Pennsylvania miners: ~~again on the lockout,~~ Foreheads wrinkled

We must send relief to the Penn strikers, ~~wives and children—~~ with injunctions

~~("We![?] but these are good cabbage sprouts.")~~

What's your next editorial about, Carat?

We need propaganda, ~~(the revolution's)~~ the thing's

~~(Right around the corner.")~~ becoming a mass / movement."

And I,

Upon the feast of that Passover,

Harboring perfection:

The blood's tide as the music's

A thousand fiddles as beyond effort

Playing -- playing

Into fields and forgetting to die,

The streets smoothed over as fields,

Not even the friction of wheels,

Feet off ground:

As beyond effort, playing -

Music leaving no traces

Not dying, yet leaving no traces.

Nor any conscious effort,
 Nor boiling to put pen to paper.
 Perhaps a few things to remember
 (Three there stealing in thru the music
 As pioneers moccasined stealing in thru the music).

Atheling- "There are different techniques,
 Men write to be read, or spoken,
 Or declaimed, or rhapsodized,
And quite differently to be sung;"
 Carlos- "I heard him agonizing,
 I saw him inside;"
 Estlang- "Everything which
 We really are and never quite live."
 Far into (about three) in the morning,
 The trainmen the most wide awake
 "Weary, broken bodies," calling
 Station on station, under earth
 A thousand fiddles as beyond --
 "Cold stone above thy head - "
 Trainmen chanting
 And again:
 "He came and found them -
 Sleeping, indeed their eyes were full of sleep"
Good night. . .

So the next day the reverses,
 As if the music were only a taunt,
 As if it had not kept, flower-cell in flower, live^forever
 before the eyes, perfecting, --

Been fishin' all Easter

Nuthin' like nature for hell-fire!"

"Ye lightnings, ye thunders

In clouds are ye vanished?

Open, O fierce flaming pit!"

Breath fast as in love's lying close,
I crouched again, high -- O my God, into the flower!

"Around Thy tomb here sit we weeping"
Just for the fun of it, "O Saviour blest"

And the double chorus singing,
~~The conductor, upright, in black,~~
~~Attempting, failing, to dramatize it,~~
The song out of the voices.

Louis Zukofsky

(To be continued)

Oct 10/1928.
New York

IV. Notes on the texts and textual apparatus

The transcription of "A" 1-7 presented here is a corrected and emended version of the *An "Objectivists" Anthology* text (1932). This anthology was published under the imprint of To, Publishers by George Oppen in France and printed by Imprimerie Dantaniere in Dijon, famous as the printer of the first edition of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, equally famous for its numerous misprints. The *Anthology* too has a fair number of errata, including some missing and misplaced lines, most of which were noted on a typed errata sheet slipped into the volume. There are also early, pre-1942 printings of all the first seven movements, which have been cross-checked.

Abbreviations used:

OA	<i>An "Objectivists" Anthology</i>
TS	typescript
MS	manuscript
HRC	Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin
Yale	Beinecke Library, Yale University
Berg	Berg Collection, New York Public Library
Indiana	Lilly Library, Indiana University

The relevant textual materials in chronological order:

- 1) first two pages of an early TS of "A"-1 & -2 sent to Pound on 12 December 1928, who marked up and made suggestions on these opening pages (Yale)
- 2) a complete TS of the above version of "A"-1 & -2 with marked revisions by LZ (Berg)
- 3) MS fair copy of "A"-7 dated 4-7 August 1930 (HRC).
- 4) rough draft MS of "A" 5-7 undated but sent to René Taupin in letter dated 28 August 1930 (Indiana)
- 5) complete TS of "A" 1-7 as it appears in *An "Objectivists" Anthology* (HRC)
- 6) "A"-7 printed in *Poetry* (February 1931)
- 7) "A"-3 & -4 printed in *New Review* (May-June-July 1931)
- 8) "A"-2 printed in *Poetry* (April 1932)
- 9) "A"-1 printed in *Pagany* (Summer 1932)
- 10) "A" 1-7 printed in *An "Objectivists" Anthology* (To, Publ., Summer 1932)
- 11) "A" 5-7 printed in *Active Anthology*, ed. Ezra Pound (Faber, 1933)
- 12) MS fair copy and TS of "A" 1-7 as revised in summer 1942 (HRC)

1. Certain peculiarities and inconsistencies in the *OA* text have been silently regularized: these include extra spaces before all question and exclamation marks, and all colons and semicolons; some irregular instances of periods or commas outside quotations marks; inconsistent spacing within some abbreviations (e.g. U.S.A., U. S. A.), which persists even into the collected edition of “A”, have been regularized with spaces.

The following corrections, emendations and variants have been recorded in the textual apparatus:

2. The present text incorporates all corrections noted on the errata sheet inserted into copies of *OA*, plus a handful of further corrections indicated in LZ’s personal copy and checked against other early printings. There are a few further emendations in spelling not noted but clearly in error. However, at times LZ adopted nonstandard spellings which have been retained.

3. Line turnovers. Particularly in the early movements of “A”, LZ deploys a range of indentations as well as line lengths, so that determining what is or is not a run on line can be difficult. In fact, ambiguous turnovers are a problem throughout the standard complete text of “A”. The present text has eliminated turnovers in the *OA* text as much as possible on the basis of comparison with other texts. In the case of “A”-1 & -2, the *OA* text has been compared against the draft TS as well as early printings in *Pogany* and *Poetry* – in effect turnovers have been eliminated when indicated in the TS and seconded by the printed texts. In the case of “A”-3 & -4 the *New Review* printing is the only text we have for comparison, and it has not been possible in every case to determine with certainty whether Zukofsky intended a turnover or not. When in doubt, the *OA* text has been followed. For “A”-5 & -6 the *Active Anthology* printing is the alternative text, which helpfully marks turn-overs (¶), so that we can be reasonably confident in identifying Zukofsky’s intention (except in one instance). And in the case of “A”-7 we have a range of MS and published versions (see separate note on “A”-7 below). By collating these versions we can in most, but not all, cases confidently identify where LZ did and did not intend a line break. All emendations of turn-overs in the *OA* text have been recorded in the textual apparatus.

Otherwise the presentation of the present text adheres as closely as possible to the layout in *OA*.

4. All variants in the early printings of these movements listed above have also been recorded in a separate list.

Additional note on "A"-7

We have an unusual number of early materials and versions of this movement: a working draft, a MS fair copy and two early printings (in *Poetry* and *Active Anthology*), in addition to its appearance in *An "Objectivists" Anthology*. LZ made no revisions to this movement in 1942, although the fact that the TS of his revised version includes "A"-7 confirms that he thought of these first seven movements as a coherent unit. Unfortunately, the visual presentation of this movement has been compromised in all its half dozen printings through to and including the complete "A" due to a combination of the sonnets being broken up across page breaks and the often long lines being forced into turnovers. The trajectory of this movement puts the sonnet form under increasing pressure, so that by the last two various irregularities assert themselves: irregular syllable count, break down of the rhyme scheme, words dissolving into pure sonic effects. These developments are complemented by the visual presentation of the sonnets: the first two are presented as complete units, the next three mark the divide between octave and sestet, the sixth is again complete but syntactically and visually is run together with the seventh, which itself is broken, its eighth line set off from the rest and stepped over two lines. It has to be said, however, that whether LZ intended to visually run the last two sonnets together is somewhat ambiguous: this is the way they are printed in *OA* and *Active Anthology* but not in the *Poetry* printing or in any of the book publications beginning with the Origin Press edition of "A" 1-12. I have opted to present "A"-7 here in what seems to me the most sensible manner: two sonnets per page with the seventh on its own, which is how it is copied out in his fair copy. In this case the final page break maintains the ambiguity as to whether there is a line break between the final two sonnets, whether one focuses more on the break-down or the continuing paradigm of the sonnet form. Although this seems to me an obvious solution, it has to be said that none of the half-dozen printings of "A"-7 in LZ's lifetime appear to have seen it in this light and that LZ himself evidently did not insist on this presentation.

Corrections and Emendations

The following lists the instances where the *OA* text has been emended and gives the authority on which they have been based, as follows:

OA errata = the errata list placed in *OA*.

MS correction = handwritten corrections in LZ's personal copy but not in the *OA* errata list.

LZ TS = typescript of the early version of "A"-1 & -2 only.

A few further instances that appear clearly in error are noted as well. Also listed here are turn-overs that have been eliminated based on the evidence mentioned above.

"A"-1

- 3.6 *whom* [LZ TS]
3.27 fifth evening / of April, [LZ TS]
3.32 *double line break following*: ... Arkadien geboren.
5.25 Pennsylvania [LZ TS]
5.27 your next, [MS correction]
5.33 bloods' [LZ TS]
6.4 through the music). ["omit closing parenthesis and period, insert as the next line:
 As pioneers moccasined stealing in through the music)."
 [*OA* errata]
6.16 "Weary, broken bodies," [LZ TS]
6.23 eyes were / full of sleep." [LZ TS]
6.27 live-forever [*OA* errata]
6.40 'Production [*OA* errata]
7.8 forged iron—. [LZ TS]
 [*stanza break after*: "iron—" LZ TS]
7.10 engineer [LZ TS]
7.12 run 'em [LZ TS]
7.16 *vanished*. [*OA* errata]

"A"-2

- 8.19 world- / cornice. [LZ TS]
8.34 of the alleys [LZ TS]
8.35 Cross walls [*OA* errata]
9.9 central / heart, [LZ TS]

“A”-3

- 11.3 Rickey [uncorrected]
- 11.10 brought back. [OA errata]
- 11.12 Leg, crocked [OA errata]
- 13.16 'Here [OA errata]

“A”-4

- [OA runs movements 3 and 4 together with only a line break and no number, OA errata].
- 14.27 Our waywardness. [OA misplaces the following four lines (through “... ears and hearts”, OA errata)]
 - 16.2 postage-stamp [OA errata]
 - 16.22 Still Heir- [uncorrected]

“A”-5

- 19.14 “Let it go at that, they are a light matter.” [*line missing*, OA errata]
- 20.5 locking [OA errata]

“A”-6

- 22.1 Violet’s [OA errata]
- 23.25 around / the center leaf
- 23.34 same for- / mula”
- 25.16 objectively / perfect
- 25.25 by / Go-ethe),
- 25.27 grand that [OA errata]
- 25.36 cheesless [*this spelling carried over into the Active Anthology, but MS is spelled correctly*]
- 26.4 needs it.” [OA errata]
- 26.9 “If goods don’t sell, says Henry [OA errata]
- 26.10 It’s because [OA errata]
- 27.15 flash of photoplay. [OA errata, *no following stanza break*]
- 27.35 soft / minded—
- 28.4 Septugenarian
- 29.2 wearing / lately.
- 29.5 wash [OA errata]
- 29.31 friends [OA errata]
- 29.38 golf / course.
- 30.6 \$25 / shoe leather.
- 30.9 of good / families!”
- 30.27 We-Our-your [MS correction]

- 32.12 a highway [MS correction]
 34.32 white / and water-mark,
 35.28 J.S.B, [uncorrected]
 36.13 in / Harlem:

“A”-7

- 38.17 — / SUN—
 39.3 or orchards [OA errata]
 39.5 don’t you see? [*lacks closing parenthesis*]
 39.15 follow [MS correction]
 40.10 were legs [OA errata]
 40.25 (creaked-wind —) [OA errata]
 40.25 wind—) / —SUN
 41.4 face / as
 41.13 their sto- / machs)

Printed variants

The following lists printed variants from the *OA* text (taking into account the emendations) in subsequent publications in journals and *Active Anthology* prior to the 1942 revisions.

“A”-1

Pagany 3.3 (Summer 1932)

[*extra spacings appear throughout this printing, apparently inadvertent, and are not registered below.*]

- title **“A” / First Movement: “Come Ye Daughters”**
 3.1 **A / Round of fiddles]** *line 2 indented, or more precisely stepped from the opening "A"*
 3.6 **whom?—]** *Whom?—*
 3.32 **Arkadien geboren.]** *no stanza break following*
 4.16 **red / coat of the sunburn,—]** *no turnover*
 5.6 **erected to / arts and letters]** *no turn over*
 5.7 **The cornerstones of waste / paper,** *no turn over*
 5.17 **adultere de tout.”]** *adultere de tout,”*
 5.20 **contours),]** *contours).*
 5.27 **next editorial about Carat?]** *next editorial about, Carat?*
 5.31 **And I,]** *And I.*

- 6.4 **through the music]** thru the music
- 6.5 **through the music]** thru the music
- 6.9 **to be sung:]** *to be sung;*"
- 6.11 **saw him inside:]** saw him *inside;*"
- 6.23 **were full of sleep.]** *were / full of sleep."*
- 7.14 **for hell-fire!]** *line break following*

"A"-2

Poetry 40.1 (April 1932)

- title "A"—SECOND MOVEMENT
- 8.2 **-of-the-sky,]** -of-the-sky.
- 8.4 **such things,]** such things.
- 8.19 **world-cornice,]** world- / cornice,
- 8.23 **seats / sticking thru portholes,]** seats sticking through / portholes,
- 8.34 **of the alleys]** of the / alleys.
- 8.38 **flowering, / opening]** flowering, open- / ing
- 9.9 **central heart,]** central / heart,
- 9.11 **cushions the flower,]** cushions the flower
- 9.12 **everlasting)]** everlasting).
- 9.19 **over forehead,]** over forehead.
- 9.24 **steeps in the / center—]** steeps in the / center—
- 9.31 **would put / you down]** would put you / down
- 9.35 **(blood red as intertwined / Rose of the Passion) / Wrigleys.]** (blood-red as intertwined Rose of / the Passion) / "Wrigley's."
- 9.40 **lying close,]** lying close.
- 10.1 **into the flower!]** *no stanza break following*
- 10.3 **"O Saviour blest"]** *no stanza break following*

"A"-3

New Review 2 (May-June-July 1932): 83-85

- Title: **"Out of the voices"]** "out of the voices"
- 11.21 **Rick,]** Rick',
- 11.22 **not after midnight!"]** not after midnight"
- 11.24 **'S after midnight]** 'S after midnight
- 12.3 **'Stand?!— [...]** **Sapolio!"]** *indented*
- 13.16 **'Here are]** 'Here are

- 13.19 **Not yours—’]** Not yours
 13.20 (**As]** (As [*indented*])

“A”-4

New Review 2 (May-June-July 1932): 85-88

- title [*the two movements are run together without a number, only a line break*]
- 14.15 **is our home,**] is our home, Hebrews, [Hebrews, crossed out by hand in LZ’s copy]
- 14.22 **our children have / evolved a jargon.]** our children have evolved a jargon.
- 14.26 **Your light,**] Your Light,
- 15.1 **Even the Death]** *justified left*
- 15.13 **“Rain blows light upon quiet water...]** *the four stanzas of Yehoash’s poem lack any indentation in the second, fourth and fifth lines of each [LZ notes in the margin of his copy: “arrangement wrong”]*
- 15.15 **Shimaunu-Sān]** Shimaunu-San [*diacritic lacking throughout*]
- 15.23 **To-morrow]** To-Morrow [*hand corrected in LZ’s copy*]
- 15.34 **alive to forgive]** *stanza break following*
- 15.35 **Misuse of his “jargon.” [...]** **allow me of your light”]** *indented*
- 16.1 **By a translation;]** *stanza breaking following*
- 16.3 **‘Even his]** ‘Even his
- 16.4 **his trousers,**] *aligned left with following line*
- 16.5 **left him’—]** *stanza break following*
- 16.16 **June 1927.]** *stanza break following*
- 16.17 **“And to the Sun! ...]** *through “...of your light” double-indented*
- 16.25 **allow me of your light]** *three lines added:*
 A spark against each snake
 which crawls
 Across me in my grave of night.”
 [*LZ has corrected “of” to “at”*]
- 16.28 **“Heavier from day to day [...]** **Never a memory remain”]** *double-indented*
- 16.34 **memory remain”]** memory remain”.
- 17.1 **the fire”]** the fire
- 17.2 **to sand”]** to sand [*no stanza break following, but corrected by LZ*]
- 17.3 **are dead”]** are dead

- 17.4 **we tide from—**] *stanza break following*
 17.5 **Tree of the Bach family**] *through to end indented*
 17.7 ‘ **Veit**] *no elongated space before “Veit”*
dated: July 11, 1929

“A”-5

Active Anthology, ed. Ezra Pound. London: Faber and Faber, 1933

- 18.29 **next lunatic.**] *no stanza break following*
 19.2 **(Ritornelle)**] *no stanza break following*
 19.3 **Ye Daughters:**] *no stanza break following*
 19.10 **Two voices:**] *no stanza break following*

“A”-6.

Active Anthology, ed. Ezra Pound. London: Faber and Faber, 1933

- 22.32 **of necessity, yes,**] *of necessity, yes.*
 23.25 **center leaf**] *centre leaf*
 23.32 **y = play**] *Y = play*
 24.21 **sailors—carousel,**] *no line break following*
 25.11 **the rest are accessory,—**] *the rest are accessory—*
 27.23 **sort or other—**] *no stanza break following*
 28.7 **unmentionable.**] *unmentionable*
 28.27 **softly rest.**] *softly rest*
 28.36 **their darnest**] *their darndest*
 29.26 **“I dreamt that I tickled [...] ’gainst the wall . . . ”**] *these four lines not indented*
 29.31 **his friend's wife / who**] *his friend's / wife who*
 29.33 **their hubbies,—**] *their hubbies—*
 30.3 **eclaires**] *éclairés*
 30.12 **B.V.M.,**] *B.V.M.*
 30.37 **as in Greece,—**] *as in Greece—*
 30.38 **dream,—standing**] *dream—standing*
 33.21 **lasses’**] *Lasses’*
 34.26 **DUNHILL / comfort**] *no stanza break following*
 35.28 **just stands up?”—**] *just stands up?”*
 36.19 **Beginning**] *no stanza break following*

“A”-7

Poetry 37.5 (Feb. 1931)

Active Anthology, ed. Ezra Pound. London: Faber and Faber, 1933

- 38.7 **Blood red**] Blood-red [*Poetry*]
38.8 **together M.**] *stanza break following* [*Poetry*]
38.11 **and, the jiggers**] and the jiggers [*Poetry*]
38.13 **tho’]** tho [*Poetry*]
38.15 **tho’]** tho [*Poetry*]
38.17 — / **SUN—]** [*Poetry*]
39.5 **(was on / A stoop [... don’t you see?])** *no closing parenthesis*
[*Active Anth.*], *no closing parenthesis* [*Poetry*]
39.6 **See him!]** *See Him!* [*Active Anth.*]
39.6 **close,]** close; [*Poetry*]
39.8 **end ’s]** end’s [*Poetry*]
39.15 **We’ll]** we’ll [*Poetry*]
39.25 **tho’]** tho [*Poetry*]
39.27 **Tho’]** Tho [*Poetry*]
40.6 **to-day]** today [*Poetry*]
40.7 **to-day!]** today! [*Poetry*]
40.11 **Blood red]** Blood-red [*Poetry*]
40.17 **blood red]** blood-red [*Poetry*]
40.23 **blossoms red,] blossoms red.** [*Poetry*]
40.25 **—SUN]** —SUN— [*Poetry*]
40.26 **months’]** month’s [*Poetry*]
40.28 **Shimaunu-Sān]** Shimanunu-San [*Poetry*]
40.28 **yours is the]** *stanza break following* [*Poetry*]
41.6 **of the other.]** of the other, [*Poetry*]
41.8 **(Open, O fierce flaming pit!)]** *no stanza breaks before or*
following this line [*Poetry*]
41.11 **two voices . . .]** two voices. . . . [*Poetry*]
41.12 **imagination . . .]** the imagination, . . . [*Poetry*]
41.13 **who will?]** Who will? [*Poetry*]
41.13 **their stomachs)]** their / stomachs) [*Poetry*]
Poetry adds: *Note:* Quotations the sources of which are not detailed in the
context are based on the text of Bach’s *Saint Matthew Passion*, and are in
italics.

Afterword: Background and Commentary

The initiating movements of “A” have naturally received a fair amount of critical attention, first of all on the reasonable assumption that, as the beginning of one of those interminably long complicated modernist poems, they ought to offer clues as to the intentions of the whole. In the case of “A”, the first seven movements pose quite explicitly the question of the long poem and the challenges to which it must respond to be relevant in the present. Secondly, these movements were written immediately prior to the brief period of “Objectivist” activities (1930-1932), and therefore presumably manifest the principles LZ articulated in his well-known critical statements. Finally, critical fashion has dictated that the primary focus of many readers is on LZ’s attempt to forge a conjunction of avant-garde formalism and leftist politics. Despite these genetic and historicizing emphasises, there is an unfortunate tendency to overlook the versions of “A” existent at the time for the more conveniently accessible versions in the complete edition of the poem, which were established with the 1942 revisions of “A” 1-7 and a later 1958 revision of “A”-8. A related case is LZ’s “Objectivist” statements, which he drastically abbreviated and lumped together as “An Objective” when collected in *Prepositions* (1967), yet one will find scholars whose specific focus is on the 1930s referring to these later altered versions and evidencing little awareness that they have been shorn of their historical and polemical particulars. In this latter case, we now have the first published versions of these essays in *Prepositions+* (2000). The revisions of “A” 1-7 certainly are not on the order of those LZ made to the “Objectivist” statements, but they do evidence his evolving thinking about the formal coherence of his long poem.

LZ revised “A” 1-7 during July-August 1942, when he and Celia spent the summer at Diamond Point on Lake George in upstate New York. Why he decided to do so at this time is uncertain, particularly since there was very little prospect of publishing the poem. However, this seems to have been a period when LZ was going through old work and no doubt surveying his career to date, which in many respects seemed to have come to a premature dead-end. Half a year after the U.S. entered World War II, the WPA jobs that had kept him precariously afloat through most of the 1930s had finally come to an end the previous April, as the government phased out these programs with the war economy. It would be another year before he began a series of jobs editing technical electronics manuals that would keep him going through the war. After composing “A”-10 as an immediate response to the fall of France to the Nazis in June 1940, he attempted no major poems until 1948, when he returned to “A” with the second half of “A”-9. Aside from whatever personal complications and difficulties were involved, which no doubt included a degree of political

disenchantment, the times were also far from encouraging. If modernism had won the day, its respectability was gained at the cost of a considerable narrowing and taming of the field of possibilities. After the creative disruptions of the 1920s there was a call to order and the declaration that experiment had gone more than far enough, which the exigences of the war turned into a virtual mandate. Throughout the 1930s LZ managed to publish his major poetic works (“Mantis” and all the early movements of “A” through “A”-10) in reasonably prominent venues; however, by the time of the war he must have wondered whether he really had any readers in the prevailing climate. From this perspective, LZ’s return to and revision of the early movements of “A” can be taken as an affirmation of his early commitments, what his friend Basil Bunting referred to as his Hebraic stubbornness. The revisions do not in any meaningful sense alter the thematic presentation, but they do adhere to a more rigorous and leaner aesthetic, making even fewer concessions to the reader.

The first seven movements were written fairly rapidly between late 1928 and August 1930 (with “A”-7 apparently worked on intermittently throughout that period), at which point LZ paused work on “A” for half a decade until he picked it up again with the quite differently conceived “A”-8 in 1935-1936. He chose to represent himself with “A”-7 in the “Objectivists” issue of *Poetry* (February 1931), the first section of “A” to be published, with the first four movements appearing in various journals over the next year and a half and then the full complement in *An “Objectivists” Anthology* in the summer of 1932. In *An “Objectivists” Anthology*, LZ presented the opening six movements explicitly as pairs, each pair with its own subtitle, and this is also reflected in the publications of “A”-3 & -4 in *New Review* and “A”-5 & -6 in Pound’s *Active Anthology*. Once pointed out, these pairings are fairly obvious: the first two pose the problem of the poem itself, how to create something comparable to Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* adequate to the present age, which necessarily entails a rethinking of how to ground the aesthetic; the next two jump to more subjective or private concerns and experiences that necessarily feed into any poet’s work; and then the final pair moves out into the larger world as the poet takes stock of the social, present-day circumstances out of and for which he must write his poem. This culminates in the twinned questions posed at the end of “A”-6: whether the form of the fugue can be transferred to poetry and how can the contingent materials the poet has been inventorying be adequately incorporated and accounted for. “A”-7, then, is a preliminary answer as to how he might go about achieving this ambition: a dialectical interplay between the fallen mundane present and the traditional sonnet form which dynamically enacts the former and dissolves and reconceptualizes the latter. At this point, when LZ picks up the poem with “A”-8, a different set of pairings takes over as the odd numbered movements 7, 9, and 11 will all be templated onto intricate traditional

poetic forms (a set of sonnets, a canzone, a ballata), whereas their even numbered complements will adopt more sprawling collage forms, as well as more directly addressing contemporary history. After "A"-12 (1951) there will be another lengthy break before LZ returns to the poem in 1960 with a new rethinking of its formal organization and possibilities.

With Pound's early *Cantos* as precedent, since they were published as "drafts," LZ seems to have had some idea that he might want to go back and revise. However, taking the longer view, it became one of LZ's firm aesthetic principles not to revise. A good example is *Catullus*, where LZ began translating in more or less typical modernist (that is, Poundian) fashion, an updated vernacular rendition of a classic, but after a handful of poems the treatment begins to veer into the homophonic manner for which the work is renown or notorious. LZ could easily enough have gone back and brought the earlier poems into line with this later approach, but he characteristically did not. All LZ's late work, the long movements of "A" extending through *80 Flowers*, are composed in sequence, segment by segment, with little or no revision or rearrangement of earlier segments in light of subsequent developments. This is not due to a privileging of the spontaneity of the first draft, the attempt to over-ride the censor of self-reflection, as propounded by the likes of Allen Ginsberg or Robert Duncan. In part it is simply typical of LZ's always strong confidence and self-belief as a poet, so that once he feels a given passage is right, he resists second thoughts. But this is also due to my previous point that LZ resists mythopoetic underpinnings, preferring a more dynamically spatial conception of the poem's wholeness. One consequence, particularly in his longer works, is a refusal to adopt a dominate style or linguistic register.

We can broadly characterize LZ's revisions of "A" 1-6. First, there is simply a general tightening up, the deletion of words and phrases, but this extends to the cancellation of many lines and several substantial passages. He deletes the more overtly personal references, including the explicit mentions of his name in "A"-1, -2 and -6. The most personal movements, "A"-3 and -4 (the elegy to Ricky and the consideration of his Jewish inheritance respectively), are the most substantially reworked. The former is shortened by more than a page, while the latter has a long passage cut out of its middle and there is a certain amount of rearrangement. In tightening up these early movements, there was the elimination of a significant number of the repetitions that were integral to LZ's early conception of adapting fugal form to poetry, which suggests that by the time of the revisions LZ was not as concerned or possibly even dissatisfied with this more overt signaling of the bonding of his poem. He had since added "A"-8, the first half of "A"-9 and "A"-10, which expand the poem considerably both thematically beyond the relatively autobiographical based early movements and formally. These subsequent movements establish their own internal forms and concerns without worrying about

overt connections to other movements, allowing the inevitable cross stitching or recurrences to happen as they will, which also allows for any number of entries and exits. This will characterize LZ's approach throughout the rest of "A". The revisions reflect this later thinking about the formal coherence of the long poem, without altogether erasing his initial conception or bonding elements.

One of the puzzles of "A" is LZ's arbitrary decision from the outset on 24 sections without any overt narrative or mythopoetic framework within which to organize them. The sketchy, quasi-autobiographical narrative of the first six movements, which can be read as a direct extension from "Poem beginning "The,"" comes down to the search for an adequate form for the poem to realize itself, which finally accepts a type of non-answer, that the poem's form is an immanent making and remaking of itself that never allows any pre-determined structure to contain it. For a brief while in the 1960s LZ allowed the poem to be designated, "a poem of a life," although, I think fortunately, he quickly dropped this.¹ However, if we accept the designation for a moment, this does not mean the poem forms an autobiography, except in the sense that these word structures will be read as under his signature and a poet will be projected by their readers. As he liked to say later in life, the poetry says all that needs to be said about the poet, which is to say very little, or everything – the poet is nothing but his words that cannot be said to be "his." LZ rather liked the idea that we know so little about Shakespeare and yet we have so much of him, which each of us "dreams in character" – with the pun on "character" meaning letters in Shakespeare's day (*Bottom* 9). The early movements establish a secular grounding of the poem in the sense of refusing any mythopoetic foundation and largely eschewing the authority of literary references, much less the heavy larding of quotation and foreign languages that characterize the anxiety of cultural form in Eliot, Pound and Joyce – the models that presumably paved the way for LZ's own big poem.

This is not only a matter of LZ's growing confidence in and thinking about the integrity of his poem, but also of his critical digestion of the possibilities of the modernist long poem. At the time he decided to revise these early movements, he had every reason to doubt the formal coherence of his poem, which opposed the mainstream or public critical consensus, based on conservative readings particularly of *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses* (commonly read through the lens of Eliot's review of *Ulysses* proposing the "mythic method"). The revisions to "A" 1-6 manifest his commitment to a formally innovative poetics and a stubborn refusal to compromise those convictions whatever the cost, which at the time was quite high.

1 Specifically this subtitle appears in the Paris Review edition of "A" 1-12 (1967).

Further notes and remarks on the revisions to “A” 1-7 and “A”-8

“A”-1 & -2

The earlier version of “A”-1 & -2 included here is from late 1928 (“A”-2 was finished in October). In a letter to Pound (dated 12 December 1928) accompanying this version, LZ mentions that he had submitted these to Marianne Moore for *The Dial*, which she returned, a revised version was resubmitted but also returned (*EP/LZ* 24). The version forwarded to Pound for feedback, however, is the first version LZ sent to Moore, apparently preferring to stick to his original intention. Pound vigorously marked up the first two pages and advised LZ to continue revising along the same lines. LZ’s markings of the full typescript of the two movements clearly accept most of Pound’s suggestions and then continue with mostly deletions throughout the rest. Pound’s recommendations are interesting in that they very much resemble LZ’s own editorial feedback to fellow poets, judging from cases where we have such evidence, as with Carl Rakosi and Basil Bunting. They boil down to greater concision – not simply deletion of unnecessary wordiness but also of details that are already implied by the image. One curious instance where LZ did not follow Pound is the latter’s query about honking cars parked outside Carnegie Hall, which would be a familiar enough scene immediately after a concert to any New Yorker but evidently not so to the less urban and by now Europeanized Pound. With the revisions LZ made on this typescript, we have the version that appears in the earliest printings of “A”: in *Pagany* (“A”-1), *Poetry* (“A”-2) and *An “Objectivists” Anthology* (“A” 1-7). This typescript is a rare example of draft materials of LZ’s early work, as he usually only retained fair copies until he started using notebooks in the early 1950s, and in the case of “A” 3-6 we do not even have those.²

“A”-3 & -4

As mentioned “A”-3 and -4 are the most significantly revised movements and most directly concern personal subject matter. Arguably the most subjectively lyrical of all the movements of “A”, “A”-3 is virtually unique in

2 There are a couple of significant exceptions worth mentioning. A MS rough first draft of “A”-5 & -6 survives because it was sent to his friend René Taupin (held in the Lilly Library, University of Indiana at Bloomington). This draft is often scrawled with many cross-outs, so is quite difficult to transcribe. An “original ms.” of “A”-10 (Paris) is held in the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library. There is an accompanying letter dated 23 June 1942 and addressed to the League of American Writers indicating that Zukofsky was submitting it for the Oklahoma Book Trials Sale. This refers to a celebrated case in 1940 when the Progressive Bookstore in Oklahoma City was raided, owners and customers arrested, and large quantities of communists books and materials confiscated. Eventually four proprietors and Communist activists were tried, convicted and sentenced to ten years, although their convictions were eventually overturned. See Shirley & Wayne Wiegand, *Books on Trial: Red Scare in the Heartland* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2007).

LZ's body of writing in its sexual emphasis. Anyone wishing to apply a queer reading to LZ's work has to start with Ricky, who shows up throughout LZ's early work, often in conjunction with sailors (explicitly mentioned in "Poem beginning 'The,'" "A"-2, -3, -6, -7 and obliquely in "A"-8). Within "A", "A"-3 expresses the private self with roots in the sexual, that is, what is outside or resists conventional propriety and expectations. Ricky represents one who walks on the wild side (a proto-Beat, as LZ once suggested³), and presumably this is why LZ repeatedly tags him as "Coeur de Lion" – a romantic projection in a post-romantic world, despite Ricky's rather pathetic end. But it is hardly uncommon for youth to romanticize suicide, and LZ is suggesting there is no place in this world for the likes of Ricky. This dimension of experience is naturally of interest and importance to a young poet, but rare in LZ's work, and even here it is expressed indirectly as an observer. In any case, it is hardly surprising that in retrospect, now married and older, he would be inclined to apply a more rigorous editorial eye to this movement. In his revisions, LZ cuts out quite a bit of the more dissolute details of Ricky's night-life without losing the sensual eroticism so intrinsic to the feel of this poem. Although the circumstances leading to Ricky's suicide are made more obscure, there is arguably an improvement in the lyrical sensuousness of the poem itself, which is the tonal register LZ apparently wants this movement to contribute to the larger poem.

If "A"-3 is concerned with the private self distinct and in conflict with social norms, "A"-4 approaches the personal from the opposite direction, that is, identities imposed by the chances of birth and history. "A"-4's concern with Jewish identities is the most substantially revised of all the movements. A 20-line grumbling-satiric passage that intrudes into the Yehoash segment was cut out entirely, which unquestionably is an aesthetic improvement. The passage is aimed simultaneously at his Columbia professor, Mark Van Doren, and *The Menorah Journal*. LZ quotes a remark in an article by Van Doren, "Jewish Students I Have Known," published in the journal (June 1927): "I shall skip a pale and subtle poet who was not in fact lazy, but the meaning of whose painfully inarticulate soul forbids me to use him for any purpose, however, respectful." LZ was understandably irritated by this pretense to tact, which undoubtedly would have been deciphered easily enough by fellow students and professors. Indeed LZ was probably put off by the very concept of this article and the implications of its publication by *The Menorah Journal*: the separating out of a group on ethnic grounds as if that were appropriate grounds for their difference. LZ made it clear in "Poem beginning 'The'" (written but not yet published at the time of Van Doren's article) that he had no interest in being seen or judged as a specifically Jewish poet. "A"-4 is surely a follow-up to the earlier poem, and it is a misreading to assume

3 Letter to Babette Deutsch, 27 March 1961 (Berg Collection).

that in the debate and choice between the Jewish identities, represented by Hebrew on the one hand and Yiddish on the other, LZ identifies with the latter. Obviously if such a choice must be made, he is firmly with the latter in the sense that Yiddish is a “jargon,” a mongol tongue that is open to absorbing and being absorbed by other vernaculars, as opposed to a language (or poetry) conceived as sacred, pure and immutable. In this sense the debate between Hebrew and Yiddish stands in for that between traditional assumptions about the poetic and the new poetry or free verse which would break down any such assumptions and demarcations. The poem is of course also about choices of Jewish identities, choices in tension, but LZ’s position in this poem is surely outside either of these options as such since he does not want to be read as a Jewish poet. Instead his presence/identity is with the opening lyric – a coolly objectivist urban poem without the slightest hint of ethnic markings. This is unmistakably a LZ poem and distinct from Yehoash’s romantic modernism as represented in “A”-4 and “Poem beginning “The.”” Nevertheless, if LZ opts out of the choice of this or that Jewish identity, “A”-4 at the same time affirms that the legacy of these identities remains inextricably a part of his makeup and work. Fortunately, LZ’s friendship with Van Doren would survive this episode, and they remained in intermittent contact over the subsequent decades.

LZ’s pique with *The Menorah Journal* probably had less to do with its publication of this article than with their rejection of his essay on Reznikoff, the original version of the subsequently famous “Sincerity and Objectification.”⁴ The nominal link of all this with the rest of “A”-4 is an anthology that Van Doren had just published, *An Anthology of World Poetry* (A. & C. Boni, 1928), which includes a single poem by Yehoash, translated by Marie Syrkin (not yet married to Reznikoff), tacked onto the end of the Hebrew section. The implication is that LZ felt this “misrepresented” Yehoash, although it is not clear whether the primary problem is the smallness of the representation or the selection or the translation, which is conventionally rhymed. It must be admitted that on its own, the poem, which is a Japanese imitation (LZ apparently assumes it is a translation) but different from LZ’s Shimaunu-Sān translation in “A”-4, makes Yehoash sound like a minor exoticist rather than the subtle modern (but not necessarily modernist) poet LZ takes him to be. One would think it likely that Van Doren knew about LZ’s translations of Yehoash since he was very much involved in the Boar’s Head Society at Columbia, where students shared and critiqued each other’s poetry, and this may be what LZ is implying by the rather enigmatic line: “Surely not for lack of a postage-stamp –.” In any case, LZ is implicitly questioning

4 Stephen Fredman examines this episode in detail in *A Menorah for Athena: Charles Reznikoff and the Jewish Dilemmas of Objectivist Poetry* (University of Chicago Press, 2001), 117-151. See also Z-note commentary on “A”-4.

Van Doren's judgment on and knowledge of Jewish matters and probably his failure to recognize the significance of contemporary Yiddish poetry, which is an over-subtle way of critiquing his conservative understanding of contemporary poetry generally.

"A"-4 is the only instance where LZ not only deleted but does some rearranging of segments within the movement. Overall he neatens up the Hebrew section and shifts around the short pieces of Yehoash translations. Originally the non-Jewish segments – that is, the opening lyric and the anecdote about Bach's grandfather and his mill – framed the debate between Hebrew and Yiddish, and these framing segments were linked by the image of a carousel explicitly made analogous with the grinding millstone. Consistent with his elimination of the more overt bonding tissue of the earlier version of these movements, LZ deletes the mention of the carousel in the opening lyric and rearranges some of the Yehoash quotations so that the anecdote on the low-brow introduction of music into the Bach family is more incorporated into the Yiddish section. The overall result of LZ's deletion of the satirical passage and rearrangement of the Yehoash segment to put the emphasis more firmly on music, both thematically and formally.

"A"-5 & -6

The revisions to these two movements particularly relate to my point about the reduction of fugal repeats. Throughout "A"-5 and the first half dozen or so pages of "A"-6 there are numerous such repeats of words, phrases and lines from the preceding movements, and LZ evidently wished to give the effect of building up by turning over and shifting (milling?) previously introduced material. This culminates in "A"-7, which was not revised and where many of the repeats remain. The obvious repeats are the italicized phrases or lines from the libretto of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* in "A"-1, which reappear at least once in each of the subsequent movements through "A"-7. However, there are a good many further repeats beyond these, especially in "A"-5 and -6, and as mentioned this evidently is a key formal means by which LZ attempted to adapt a fugal conception to organize his poetry. After "A"-7 LZ largely abandons this technique, although there are traces of it in "A"-8 (again some of these were deleted in his 1958 revisions). However, it is worth noting that with "A"-8 he shifts to a more direct form of iteration which will characterize his compositional practice for the rest of his life. This is to say, from "A"-8 on he will gather textual materials and rework directly from them in various ways – quotation, collage, paraphrase, transmutation, homophonic transcription – the repeating becomes simply the self-conscious practice of writing itself as reworking inherited texts, which might be seen as an inherently fugal practice.

In the revisions to "A"-5, the first page and a half is reduced to half a page and the majority of the eliminated lines are repeats. However, he also deleted a ten-line passage at the very beginning giving a meticulous description of the cigarette he is holding. This can be seen as consist with his tendency to reduce the explicit presence of the poet, but also is an example of his realization that the imagistic aesthetic as precise attention (description) can become wearisome if there is not sufficient verbal interest. Such attention, grounded in personal experience is an attempt to recover or communicate a sense of vital being in the world against the dulling routinization of experience (or of conventional poetry). But mere intensity of personal experience attentively and precisely recorded is insufficient in itself if the verbal presentation is not realized on its own terms, and this may be one way to understand what LZ was try to get at in his remarks on "objectification." In any case, this sort of revision, which is almost entirely a matter of deletion, reflects the temporal distance LZ feels with respect to his earlier work and his sense of a more mature and rigorous aesthetic less attached to the original experiences behind the writing. This is to say, the textual demands in shaping the poem as an aesthetic object take precedence over some originating desire to evoke a unique experience.

Another revision worth quickly noting is the conclusion to "A"-6, where the culminating question, "With all this material? / To what distinction" is followed by the bridging, "Horses, she saw? / My -," which then leads directly into the horses of "A"-7. The elimination of this bridge is consistent with the shift of focus from binding the first seven movements together, to allowing the disjunctions between movements and their various segments to freely play off each other – in effect a more spacial conception of how the poem works.

"A"-7

As mentioned, LZ did not revise "A"-7 in 1942. The earliest surviving version is a fairly neat but incomplete MS, to which various changes have been made (Indiana). Clearly this has been copied from earlier drafts, which LZ appears to have worked on over a period of time (1928-1930). Each of the seven sonnets is on a separate piece of paper: the first three on torn halves of graph paper, and the latter four on blank index cards (the fourth is squeezed onto one side of a card, so he then decided to write the octave on one side and the sestet on the other for sonnets 5-7). Some phrases and lines were left blank, either unfinished or unsatisfactory, which he filled in at this stage. Quite a bit of local detailed changes are in ink, possibly done at the time he was copying out the earlier draft, but the more substantive alterations, including filling in the blanks, are in pencil.

“A”-8 (1958)

Aside from the 1942 revisions of “A” 1-7, the only other significant revision LZ made to any of his poetry once published was to “A”-8 when he prepared the book publication of “A” 1-12. Initially, this was to be published by Emanuel Navaretta with Jargon Society, but LZ withdrew it over Navaretta’s procrastination, and the volume was published by Cid Corman’s Origin Press (1959). Most notably LZ’s revisions of “A”-8 tone down or eliminated the more hortatory Communist Party rhetoric, for example he abridged the May Day song (49-49). This has been understood as reflecting the cooling of LZ’s political convictions, although he made no attempt to obscure or meaningfully reduce the movement’s Marxist-Leninist sympathies. The revisions were made in the context of the height of the Cold War when official Marxist discourse no longer had the same resonances and associations, even for many on the Left. The thematics of world revolution that are prominent in “A”-8 were no longer relevant to the political reality in the U.S., although alive elsewhere in the world, such as in China as LZ touches on in “A”-12 (1952). Again, although recently “A”-8 has received a fair bit of academic attention from those interested in the conjunction of modernism with Marxism or Communism, few have bothered to consult the original published version of “A”-8 in *New Directions 1938* (for a listing of the textual variants in this original printing, see Textual Notes on the Z-site).