



## EDWIN ROLFE

### *A Biographical Essay and Guide to the Rolfe Archive at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

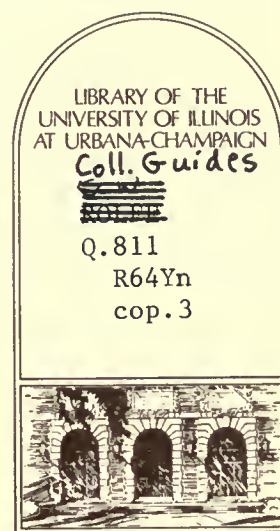
CARY NELSON & JEFFERSON HENDRICKS

Edwin Rolfe was a gifted poet during a crucial period in America—from the Great Depression, during the Spanish Civil War and World War II, and through the long postwar inquisition that culminated in the McCarthy era. These are also the topics he takes up in his poems from the 1930s, when politics and literature seemed inseparable, until the 1950s, when their relations were often suppressed.

In 1990 the University of Illinois acquired Edwin Rolfe's personal papers from his widow, Mary. This guidebook enumerates all the correspondence in the Rolfe archive at the University of Illinois and provides a working bibliography of Rolfe's writings. Selected letters are reproduced here from Rolfe's extensive correspondence with literary and political figures of his day, including James T. Farrell, Michael Gold, Ernest Hemingway, and Albert Maltz.

A moving, extended biographical essay places Rolfe, the unofficial poet laureate of the American volunteers in the Spanish Civil War, at his moment in history. As Nelson writes, "It is now a commonplace of literary histories of the early 1950s to observe that no political poems were written in America in those years. Rolfe's career—comprising nearly three decades of his struggle to shape concise political positions in poetic form and to construct a self with integrity in difficult times—is in itself enough to demolish those claims."

EDWIN ROLFE (1909-54) was a poet, journalist, and veteran of the Spanish Civil War. CARY NELSON, professor of English at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, is the author of *Repression and Recovery: Modern American Poetry and the Politics of Cultural Memory, 1910-1945*. JEFFERSON HENDRICKS is an assistant professor of English at Centenary College of Louisiana.



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at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

CARY NELSON  
&  
JEFFERSON HENDRICKS

The University of Illinois Library

Distributed by the University of Illinois Press

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data  
Nelson, Cary.

Edwin Rolfe : a biographical essay and guide to the Rolfe archive at the University of Illinois at  
Urbana-Champaign / Cary Nelson and Jefferson Hendricks.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-252-01794-3 (cloth) — ISBN 0-252-06179-9 (pbk.)

1. Rolfe, Edwin, 1909-1954. 2. Rolfe, Edwin, 1909-1954—Manuscripts—Catalogs. 3. University of  
Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Library—Catalogs. 4. Manuscripts, American—Illinois—Urbana  
Metropolitan Area—Catalogs. 5. Poets, American—20th century—Biography. I. Rolfe, Edwin, 1909-1954.  
II. Hendricks, Jefferson, 1953- . III. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Library. IV. Title.  
PS3535.0476Z78 1990 811'.52—dc20 90-11182

Coll. Guides  
Q. 8.11  
R60 1/2  
p. 3

# Contents

<i>Preface</i>	v
EDWIN ROLFE: POET ON THE LEFT	■ 3
Introduction	
Rolfe's Early Life	
Rolfe in the Great Depression	
The Spanish Civil War	
After Spain	
In Hollywood	
Poetry and the Inquisition	
SELECTED PHOTOGRAPHS	■ 67
SELECTED LETTERS	■ 79
James T. Farrell, Letter to Edwin Rolfe (October 17, 1934)	
Mike Gold, Letter to Edwin Rolfe (February 6, 1938)	
Ernest Hemingway, Letters to Edwin Rolfe (Spring 1940 and April 13, 1950)	
Albert Maltz, Letters to Edwin Rolfe (August 9, 1938; April 25, 1951; and May 29, 1951)	
THE EDWIN ROLFE ARCHIVE	■ 104
<i>Edwin Rolfe: A Working Bibliography</i>	113

## ILLUSTRATIONS

- Rolfe, *Daily Worker* editorial cartoon (1924), 7
- Advertisement for Red Poets' Night (1928), 9
- Flier for Rolfe lecture (1933), 13
- Publication party announcement (1936), 20
- Night pass from Tarazona (1937), 23
- Pages from Rolfe's Spanish Civil War training diary (1937), 24
- Rolfe, letter to Madrid Medical Commission (1937), 25
- Robert Merriman, note to Rolfe (1937), 26
- Cover to *Volunteer for Liberty* (1937), 27
- Bill Lawrence, note to Rolfe (1937), 30
- Langston Hughes, notes to Rolfe (1937), 30
- Langston Hughes, "To A Poet On His Birthday" (poem, 1937), 32
- Nate Russiano, Ebro campaign note (1938), 36
- Certificate honoring Rolfe's service in Spain (1938), 39
- Advertisement for *Russians at War* (1943), 43
- Jackets for *The Glass Room* (1946-47), 49
- Cover to *California Quarterly* (1954), 65

## PHOTOGRAPHS

- Fishman family photographs, 67- 68
- Edwin and Mary Rolfe, 68
- Rolfe with Ralph Bates, Langston Hughes, Mary Rolfe, and Milt Wolff in Spain (1937-38), 69
- A monument to the American dead at Jarama (1937), 70
- Alvah Bessie in Spain (1938), 71
- El Campesino ("The Peasant") (1937), 71
- A group of Americans in the Lincoln Battalion (1938), 72
- A parade in Barcelona honoring the International Brigades (1938), 73
- The Barcelona Office of the United Socialist Party of Catalonia (1938), 74
- Mobilization of the International Brigades prior to leaving Spain (1938), 75
- Soldiers of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion at a swimming hole (1938), 76
- Rolfe and Ernest Hemingway (1940), 77
- Rolfe working on *The Ziegfeld Follies* (1944), 77
- Edwin Rolfe (c. 1928), 78

## UNPUBLISHED POEMS BY EDWIN ROLFE

- "BLUES", 58
- "Little Ballad for Americans—1954", 64



## *Preface*

THIS BOOK WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE without the trust and friendship of Mary Rolfe. She has cared for Rolfe's papers from his death in 1954 until the University of Illinois acquired them in 1990. She has shared her home and her memories with us, and we dedicate the book to her.

Many other people have also helped us along the way. Bern and Ruth Fishman provided us with Rolfe's letters to them and donated family photographs and other documents to the archive. To them we owe most of the information here about Rolfe's parents. Leo Hurwitz shared his letters from Rolfe with us and talked with us several times about Rolfe and about this whole period in American history. John Gates, Leonard Lamb, Leonard Levenson, John Tisa, George Watt, and Milt Wolff, all veterans of the Spanish Civil War, talked with us about the war and helped identify several of the photographs we reproduce.

John Murra of Cornell University and Norman Rosten provided us with the letters Rolfe wrote to them. Richard and Lia Nickson invited us to their home and provided us with letters and photographs. José Rubia Barcia gave us useful information in an interview. A number of other people and institutions also helped us to obtain copies of Rolfe's letters: Emmett Chisum of the University of Wyoming (Rolfe's letters to Maltz); Nancy Shawcross at the University of Pennsylvania (Rolfe's letters to Farrell); the Beinecke Library at Yale University (Rolfe's letters to Benet); The VALB Archive at Brandeis University (Rolfe's letters to Lamb and to the VALB office); the University of Wisconsin (Rolfe's file at the Experimental College and the Alvah Bessie and Phillip Stevenson Papers); the New York Public Library (Rolfe's letter to Muriel Rukeyser); the Hoover Institute at Stanford University (Rolfe's letters to Joseph Freeman); Columbia University (Rolfe's letters to Random House); Syracuse University (Rolfe's letters to Horace Gregory). Marsha Bryant, Karen Ford, Paula Treichler, Anne Troester, Joanne Wheeler, and Rick Canning offered help and advice at several points along the way.

We would like to thank George Houston Bass and Harold Ober Associates for permission to publish Langston Hughes's poem and letters, Cleo Paturis and Edward Branch (Executor

and Literary Executor of the James T. Farrell Estate) for permission to publish Farrell's letter to Rolfe, Robert Lewis for permission to publish Hemingway's letters to Rolfe, and Esther Maltz for permission to publish Maltz's letters to Rolfe.

The Edwin Rolfe archive was purchased with assistance from the Chancellor's Office, the University of Illinois Library, the Research Board, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the English Department. We would like to thank Robert Berdahl, David Bishop, Norman Brown, Carl Deal, Larry Faulkner, Joan Hood, Nancy Romero, Morton Weir, Richard Wilson, Richard Wheeler, and everyone else who has made this project possible. We would also like to thank the English department at the University of Illinois and the Dean of the College and the English department at Centenary College for providing travel funds.

Our opening essay is not intended to serve as a full critical biography; indeed, we are in the process of expanding the essay into a full biography and in the process as well of editing Rolfe's *Collected Poems*. The opening section will, however, give people the first detailed information about Rolfe's life; it also places representative poems in an appropriate historical context.

This book was designed and produced with the assistance of the University of Illinois Office of Publications.

E D W I N   R O L F E





# EDWIN ROLFE: POET ON THE LEFT

## *Introduction*

IT IS JULY 30, 1938, near Villaba de los Arcos in Spain. The American volunteers of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion have been distinguishing themselves again in their last major campaign of the Spanish Civil War, the crossing of the Ebro river. Three days earlier, Edwin Rolfe's college friend, Arnold Reid, was killed in action. Rolfe now returns to Reid's battlefield grave to write an elegy on the spot where he died. Reid's blood, Rolfe imagines, must now nourish the vineyards and olive groves of the surrounding hills. Yet it will also feed those "fields no enemy's boots / can ever desecrate," not, for Rolfe, heavenly fields, for he is not that sort of believer, but rather fields of historical memory and witness, fields traced by the camaraderie of shared commitment, the mutual recognition of historical understanding and the record of things done. Those are fields no enemy can capture.

It is a characteristic moment for Rolfe in several respects. More than a decade later, in May of 1952, he will turn on the radio and learn that his friend Clifford Odets has just betrayed himself and his friends by testifying before the House UnAmerican Activities Committee. Rolfe turns from the radio, feeling an equivalent sense of loss, and in a few hours drafts a new poem, first calling it "Ballad of the Lost Friend" and later retitling it "Ballad of the Noble Intentions": "What will you do, my brother, my friend, / when they summon you to their inquisition?"

Both poems are written out of personal experience, but personal experience conceived in a particular way: as a record of agency within historical necessity. When Rolfe wrote of his own life and the lives of his friends it was always as people responding to or engaged in public life. History, often American history, was his subject matter, especially as history took up individual lives and ennobled or degraded them. His three books of poems, as we can see from the following three emblematic fragments, each had a specific historical moment at its core— first the Great Depression, then the Spanish Civil War, and finally the long postwar inquisition that is somewhat deceptively known by the name of its most notorious agent, the McCarthy era:

*This is the sixth winter:  
this is the season of death  
when lungs contract and the breath of homeless men  
freezes on restaurant window panes . . .*

*But why are my thoughts in another country?  
Why do I always return to the sunken road through corroded hills,  
with the Moorish castle's shadow casting ruins over my shoulder  
and the black-smocked girl approaching, her hands laden with grapes?*

*Now the fog falls on the land . . .  
Knives masqued like sovereigns decree  
what we shall say, listen to, see.  
The habit of slavery, long discarded,  
becomes our normal comfortable suit.*

Read chronologically, Rolfe's poems are a record of one man's representative engagement with the key events of his time. The poems are taken up in history, riven by it, at times incapacitated by it and at other times strengthened by the need for articulate witness and resistance. Conversely, they recover for us the rhetorical possibilities of poetry conceived as itself a form of historical action, not merely a response to history or a record of one's passage through history but also a rhetorical intervention in history. For they are at once testaments to one man's efforts to fashion a historical self and a gift to others who may discover in themselves similar needs and imperatives. And in that sense they are not Rolfe's poems at all, but ours, part of our heritage of the possibilities of political consciousness in twentieth-century America.

Indeed, I have already falsified the record by invoking a three-part publication record of individual authorship that Rolfe himself partly rejected. For his real first book was the collaborative *We Gather Strength* (1933), an anthology without an editor that gathered the work of four poets. There followed three books by Rolfe himself, the last published posthumously. None of these books passed through the conventional publishing industry. *To My Contemporaries* (1936), buoyed up by contributions from Archibald MacLeish and others, was published by Sol Funaroff's little Dynamo Press in the midst of the Depression; for *First Love and Other Poems* (1951) Rolfe recreated the older American practice of selling books to a list of subscribers; and *Permit Me Refuge* (1955) was published by the *California Quarterly* after its editor Philip Stevenson borrowed \$200 each from Albert Maltz and several of Rolfe's other friends.

Rolfe himself would become the unofficial poet laureate of the American volunteers in Spain. They, and others for whom the Spanish Civil War still matters, remember him and his work most vividly. But his early work was more widely noticed and debated. Horace Gregory, who would shortly provide the jacket commentary for Rolfe's *To My Contemporaries*, selected him as the lead poet of the Social Poets Number he guest edited for *Poetry* (May 1936). A few months later Harriet Monroe in *Poetry* (July 1936) described him as "the best among those inflammatory young men and women." That year the *New York Times Book Review* reviewed Rolfe along with Kenneth Patchen and Stanley Burnshaw under the heading "Three Young Marxist Poets" and declared him "one of the best of these younger poets." *The New Yorker* declared him "If not the most flowery, perhaps the most readable and sincere of the poets of the Left." Morton Dauwen Zabel, in an omnibus review in *The Southern Review*, ranked him the

best among five radical American poets. More detailed commentaries appeared by Joseph Freeman in *New Masses* and by Kenneth Fearing in the *Daily Worker*.

It was responses like these that the poet Thomas McGrath had in mind, nineteen years later, when he wrote the foreword to Rolfe's posthumous *Permit Me Refuge*: "I think it is one of the finest things about Rolfe that after initial popular successes he moved on to explore more difficult country . . . he refused to repeat the easy successes of an earlier time and fought stubbornly for the way to name the new thing that a degenerate age had created." In the meantime Rolfe had been through the watershed experience of Spain, written poems in the midst of that war, and then capped a decade's reflection on Spain with the triumphant lamentations that end *First Love and Other Poems*. As the poet Aaron Kramer writes in his 1952 review in the *National Guardian*, "suddenly we come upon the heart of the book, a five-page work titled *Elegia*. It is Rolfe's masterpiece and one of the noblest American poems produced in a decade. Into this love-song to Madrid, written ten years after his return, Rolfe pours all the emotion he'd been holding back for so long . . . Paraphrasing the 137th Psalm, that unforgettable love-song to Jerusalem chanted once by the rivers of Babylon, Rolfe sings: 'Madrid . . . if I die before I can return to you . . . my sons will love you as their father did.'"

But it was an American Babylon that Rolfe would write of at the end. By the late 1940s, living in Los Angeles with the inquisition well under way in Hollywood, Rolfe would declare that "the poisoned air befouled the whole decade." He would begin searching for new forms to fit the satiric rage that seemed the only viable emotion left. The madness of the witch hunts made reasoned outrage almost superfluous. In close touch with his friends among the Hollywood Ten and firmly committed to refuse to cooperate with the committee, Rolfe himself was subpoenaed to testify in 1952 and determined to make his stand. But Rolfe's heart condition led his physician to contact the committee and warn them Rolfe could well die under questioning. After several postponements, the morning he was scheduled to appear they cancelled his appearance. Meanwhile Rolfe was testifying in his own way, in his poems, including not only "Ballad of the Noble Intentions" but also a number of other very direct and some more allegorical poems on the hearings and the cultural climate they helped to create.

It is now a commonplace of literary histories of the early 1950s to observe that no political poems were written in America in those years. Rolfe's career—comprising nearly three decades of his struggle to shape concise political positions in poetic form and to construct a self with integrity in difficult times—is itself enough to demolish those claims. To recover his work now is to help recover poetry's critical role in twentieth-century American culture.

## *Rolfe's early life*

*They who work here know no other things:  
only heat and smoke and fumes of baking bricks.*

ROLFE WAS BORN ON SEPTEMBER 7, 1909, in Philadelphia, the first of three sons born to Nathan and Bertha Fishman. His parents were Russian immigrants who met through a marriage broker, a custom that remained widespread among immigrants in the early decades of the century, and married in 1908. His brothers Bern and Stanley were born, respectively, in 1912 and 1920.



Both parents would have had a strong sense of their own historical positioning. Bertha was one of about seven children in the Deshevsky family in Dnepropetrovsk, a town in the Ukraine that was then known as Ekaterinoslav. Two of her older brothers were socialists, and while she was attending the equivalent of high school they had her carry socialist literature around the city. When her father found out, he became worried for her safety and sent her to his sister in Philadelphia. In America she would herself become an independent and politically committed woman, becoming active in the women's suffrage movement, the birth control movement, and the women's auxiliary of the labor unions. In 1913, for example, she went to New Jersey to assist with the Patterson Silk strike.

Nathan was one of fourteen children, of whom three brothers and three sisters survived, in the small village of Byelo Tserlov outside Kiev in the Ukraine. He left Russia and emigrated to the United States in 1905, when he was about eighteen years old and during the Russo-Japanese war, in order to avoid being conscripted into the Russian army. For most of his life, he was a skilled worker in a women's shoe factory, though during the First World War he inspected leather goods for the U. S. Army. He was also a committed socialist, a labor organizer, and a local union officer, though he never earned more than a full time worker in one of his shops. Eventually blacklisted in the shoe industry for his union activities, he found work sewing women's leather hats, which he did until he retired.

The family moved to New York in 1915, living first in Brownsville in Brooklyn and then moving to Coney Island in 1918, where they lived in a rented seven-room flat two or three blocks from the beach. They lived there until late 1927, when they moved to a housing complex in the Bronx run by the United Workers Cooperative Association. The Coney Island neighborhood was composed largely of Jewish and Italian immigrants, though Nathan and Bertha had broken with religion and with the Orthodox Judaism of their own parents. During the summers, the family rented out rooms to vacationers. After swimming, bathers would shower off the salt water in the back yard. With the beach and so many places to explore, growing up in Coney Island was often something of an adventure. When Eddie and Bern were young, Bertha would take them to the local library and read to them from picture books kept in the locked cases. From early on, the parents instructed the children that each of us is responsible to help correct the conditions that make life difficult for those who are poor.

Eddie attended grade school on 17th street and then travelled by street car to Brooklyn's New Utrecht High. There he met Leo Hurwitz, who would be his closest friend and a strong influence on him for many years. "I was clay; you molded me," he would write to Leo in a 1927 letter that was both a testament to their friendship and a declaration of independence. During these years, Eddie spent a good deal of time at the Hurwitz family house, both with Leo and with Leo's sisters, who had a strong interest in the arts that complemented the more exclusively political atmosphere of Eddie's home. Hurwitz would end up making parallel contributions in a different domain; he went to Harvard and later, with films like *Scottsboro* (1934) and *Heart of Spain* (1937), pioneered left-wing documentary in America. Rolfe received his first sustained experience as a journalist and writer by publishing poems, reviews, and interviews in the High School literary magazine, *The Comet*, which was edited by Hurwitz and then taken over by Rolfe when Leo went to college.

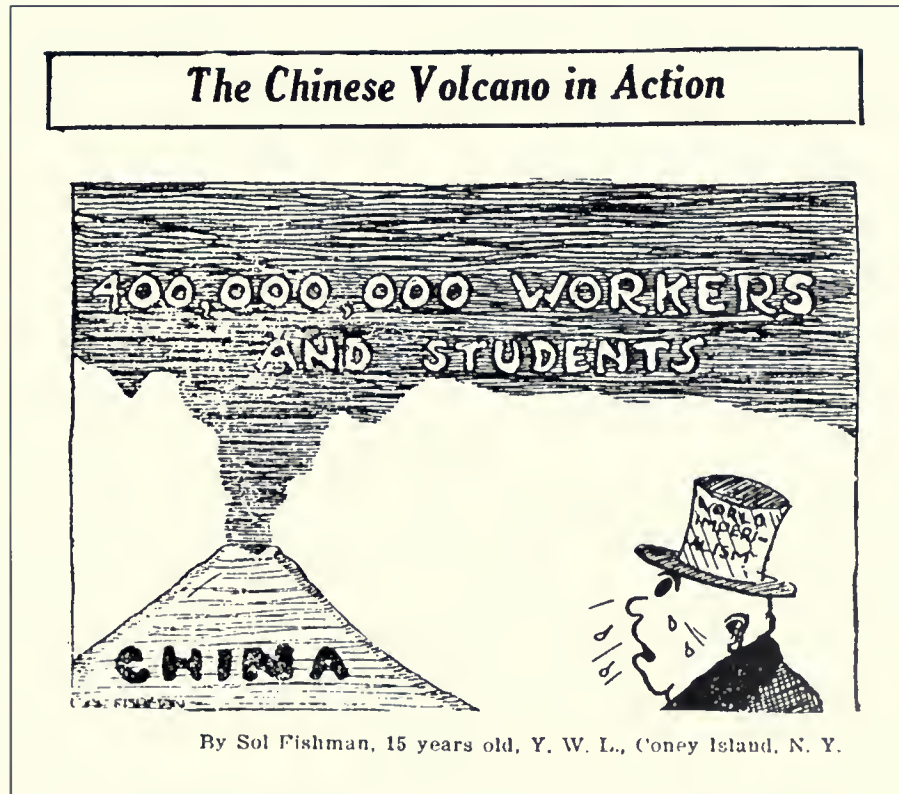
It was in *The Comet* as well that Rolfe first began using pseudonyms, a practice that was important to him for a variety of reasons and that requires some speculative reconstruction now. The name he was given at birth was Solomon Fishman, and his first publications were



three editorial cartoons printed in *The Daily Worker* in 1924 over the name Sol Fishman. He published stories, poems, and reviews under that name in *The Comet* and a series of other high school publications from 1922 to 1926. It was about this time, as he was beginning to think seriously of himself as a writer, that he ran into difficulty in a trigonometry class, and was prohibited from publishing in *The Comet* until his math grades improved. He adopted a series of playful pseudonyms, including W. Tell and R. Hood, as a subterfuge to get into print. This may have given him the sense that choosing a name could signal the coalescing of an identity. His brother Bern suggests that Sol may also have used a pseudonym in his job searches after high school, since many employers were unwilling to hire Jews.

Of course the Communist Party, whose Young Communist League Rolfe most likely joined in 1925, expected some members to adopt less ethnically charged names; in this respect, the Party was behaving much as Hollywood did in urging actors and actresses to adopt shorter, more Anglo-Saxon "all-American" names. But that policy only applied to people who were doing organizing and recruiting, where prejudices against immigrants and ethnic names might limit success; it was not until 1932 that Rolfe had that kind of role, when he directed the National Counter-Olympic Committee's Press Service, and by then he was committed on his own to using the Rolfe name.

As both Leo Hurwitz and Mary Rolfe recall, the name "Edwin Rolfe" was borrowed from that of an editor of one of Rolfe's high school literary anthologies. The first time Rolfe used it in print, we believe, was in July of 1927, when he used it to sign a review published in *The Daily*



One of Rolfe's editorial cartoons, published in *The Daily Worker* in 1924.

*Worker*. Six months earlier, in November of 1926, he had joined Mike Gold's Youth's Literary Workshop. A somewhat histrionic figure, Gold was by then one of the more visible figures on the American left. Gold, who was born Itshok Isaac Granich and who thus had also taken a new name, became something of a father figure to Rolfe. Along with Dave Gordon and other young people in the group, Rolfe sometimes went out for a drink with Gold after the evening workshop was concluded. But although Gold was in many ways inspiring, he was not altogether approachable; a still closer friend and mentor was Joseph Freeman. Some years later, in "Room With Revolutionists," a poem that constructs a dialogue between Freeman and the Mexican painter Siqueiros, Rolfe would describe Freeman as "brother, Communist, friend / counsellor of my youth and manhood."

Such contacts helped Rolfe land a part-time job teaching English at the Worker's School, where he also served as Dramatic and Assistant Editor of their magazine. When work there came to an end, which it did shortly, Rolfe took a series of jobs that gave him more basic working-class experience: as a dish washer in a restaurant, a helper in a fruit store and a delicatessen, and a punch press operator. He quit the punch press job when another worker lost several fingers. A brief job helping to dig a subway line produced the 1927 poem "The Ballad of the Subway Digger," and a series of other poems about worker's lives followed in 1928 and 1929. The most notable may be "Asbestos," which was first published as "The 100 Percenter" in *The Daily Worker* in 1928. Only just turned nineteen, Rolfe produced a stunning conceit to describe a worker's body as his death bed:

*John's deathbed is a curious affair:  
the posts are made of bone, the spring of nerves,  
the mattress bleeding flesh. Infinite air,  
compressed from dizzy altitudes, now serves*

*his skullface as a pillow. Overhead  
a vulture leers in solemn mockery,  
knowing what John had never known: that dead  
workers are dead before they cease to be.*

When working conditions were not dangerous or lethal, Rolfe found, they were often degrading. As he reports in a letter to Leo, an October 1927 job at *The Saturday Review* ended abruptly the following month: "I lost my job at the Saturday Review this morning. It was because I did not comply when the business manager's (and incidentally the owner's) private secretary commanded, actually commanded me to wear my collar tightly around my neck. I told her to mind her own business . . . I told him [the business manager] he had hired my work and not me. Naturally, I was fired. And I was receiving \$22.50 a week, and it was a magazine I was working for, the kind of job I had searched for since my graduation. And so to the library where I wrote a review of James Branch Cabell's *Something About Eve*." He also wrote "Anachronistic Literature," a satiric article about *The Saturday Review*, which *The Daily Worker* published the following month. By that time he was able to earn some money through his writing: "The Daily Worker now pays me \$5.00 for each story, \$2.50 for each review, and \$1. per poem. Also the English section of the Forward pays me about \$3 per week. Altogether I earn about \$10 per week by my writing." But that wasn't enough to get by on, so the job search, which would in various new incarnations be a continuing theme for the rest of his life, continued. It too offered blunt social and political lessons, as he reports to Leo in January of 1928:

**Who are the Poets that will read at Red Poets' Night?**

Here are a few:

Michael Gold,  
Joseph Freeman,  
Robert Wolf,  
James Rorty,  
Henry Reich, Jr.,  
Langston Hughes,  
famous Negro Poet,  
A. B. Magil,  
Herman Spector,  
William Weinberg,  
Adolf Wolff,  
Martin Russak,  
Edwin Rolfe,  
David Gordon,  
Lola Ridge,  
Arturo Giovannitti,  
Mouche Nadir,  
H. Leivick,  
H. T. Tsiang,  
and many others.

Which means that the best revolutionary poets of various nationalities will appear December 28 and read from their own work.

TICKETS ARE NOW ON SALE AT THE BUSINESS OFFICE OF THE DAILY WORKER, 26-28 UNION SQUARE, N. Y.

Daily Worker advertisement for the third annual Red Poets' Night and Dance in December 1928.

I care not what the nature of my employment be; therefore I search in places the mere sight or odor of which nauseates me . . . I apply for jobs also at offices and firms where the interviewers are quite literate and intelligent. But there are so many others waiting in line (usually not in line, but in a crushed stinking mass) that I never have a chance to be interviewed . . . the employment situation in New York City is the worst since 1913 . . . Only last week, while waiting outside of a building on Madison Avenue surrounded by at least 150 other young aspirants for one solitary \$18 per week position, three policemen charged in with their clubs held bayonet-like before them (very evidently on the request of the owner or manager of the building) and dispersed us. A few were hurt. One young chap, quite seriously. He received so powerful a jab in the groin from the policeman's club that he fell to the street and had to be taken to the hospital and undergo an operation . . . The incident went almost entirely unnoticed. Only a five line note in the evening World mentioned it.

It was at this time that Rolfe decided he needed some relief from his New York experience. He was already beginning to become known in radical New York circles as a poet and journalist. He was one of the featured poets at the annual Red Poets' night sponsored by *The Daily Worker*. The publisher Henry Harrison approached him with an offer to do a book of his poems, an offer Rolfe refused because he disapproved of Harrison, and his *Daily Worker* contributions were frequent enough for them to consider him a staff member. There were lectures and performances to attend, from lectures by V. F. Calverton, Floyd Dell, and Joseph Freeman, to plays like John Howard Lawson's *Loud Speaker* and Mike Gold's *Fiesta*. He was also receiving the most basic political education the period had to offer; in 1927, for example, he spent all night at a vigil in Union Square, waiting for Sacco and Vanzetti to be executed. But none of this was really earning him a living wage, which meant that he continued to have to



live at home. He enrolled in night classes at the City College of New York, a plan that required hours of travel back and forth from the Bronx to Manhattan after work, but that too was unsatisfying. In his YCL discussion group he was reading Marx, Feuerbach, and Hegel, and in that context a CCNY economics course seemed naive. Similarly, a college composition class was too elementary for someone who was already a part-time journalist and writer. New York began to seem suffocating: "the same skyline every day, the same talk, Communism"; it was "O.K. in its way, but a bit like bathing every day in a bathtub from which the water of the previous day has not been drained."

Rolfe decided that he would apply to Alexander Meiklejohn's Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin, an institution noted for its liberal traditions, and a program of concentrated study that would not burden him with traditional requirements. His father was agreeable, but the family could provide no support. As it happened, a grant from the financier and opera patron Otto Kahn enabled him to get started at Wisconsin. Shortly after he arrived, he found out that he would receive a \$1,125.00 Zona Gale Scholarship; recommendations from Floyd Dell and Gorham Munson had gotten him on the waiting list, and, when the first recipient (a grandson of William Jennings Bryan) declined, Rolfe was the beneficiary. Not knowing this as he prepared to leave, however, he wasn't certain how his finances would work out. Meanwhile, he began to cut himself off from many of his New York connections. "When you leave," he wrote to Leo in March of 1929, "it's hell to go back to good communists but nincompooish and completely unsatisfying companions. It is only the beginning of a problem. When it becomes acute, I'll have to drop one of the two, either you, my 'bourgeois' friend, and the life of intellectual stability and sanity, or the Communist movement, which is part of me but whose lunatic fringe and charlatanish membership disgusts me. Without boasting, I might say that the Communist Party does not know how good a member it stands on the brink of losing." That summer he resigned from the YCL and resigned his *Daily Worker* position, and in the fall he hitchhiked to Madison, Wisconsin.

It took three days and six hours, he reported, to get to Madison. He arrived on September 12; equally important, he arrived as Sol Fishman. No doubt his high school records made it unrealistic to apply in any other name, but it is still significant that he decided to be known as Sol in Madison. For he had for a time given up the struggle to be Edwin Rolfe, a name associated for him with an identity as a working writer and with a strong sense of personal and political agency within history. Madison was an interlude away from history, or at least away from participation in it.

The reports filed by his advisers at Wisconsin, six of which still survive in the archives of the Experimental College there, are worth quoting in part:

In conversation he disclosed the fact that he has been a member of the Communist Party and has been identified with the cause for a number of years. He has written for the *Daily Worker* and other party organs. He resigned from the Communist organization because it demanded too blind and rigid a loyalty. Strong sympathies with the working classes but up in the air now about programs since he rejected Communism. He is more mature intellectually than the usual student.

This is a very gifted and well-trained man. He has had a good deal of experience and contact with forceful minds, has had to fight his own way and form his own tastes. Fortunately he has a very clear sense of being only at the beginning of his development.

In addition to Meiklejohn himself, Rolfe particularly admired William Ellery Leonard, an English professor and radical poet at Madison. During his second semester, Rolfe became book

review editor of the *Sunday Cardinal* and one of two book review editors of the *Hillel Review*. He was himself an active reviewer, writing detailed reviews of such books as Mike Gold's *Jews Without Money*, E. E. Cummings's *The Enormous Room*, Malcolm Cowley's *Blue Juniata*, Joseph Wood Krutch's *Edgar Allen Poe*, and Conrad Aiken's *John Deth and Other Poems*. He also published a number of poems in campus magazines, and had a story, "Post-Mortem," accepted at the New York based *New World Monthly*, the latter being the only occasion in the first half of 1930 when he signed himself as Edwin Rolfe. For the first year, he was a seriously committed student, writing substantial papers on the official first year topic of study at the Experimental College, Periclean Athens. He read widely in the Greek playwrights and historians and sampled the secondary literature on Greece, while also reading widely in modern literature. But he also took time to play poker, fall in and out of love, play halfback on the Adams Hall football team, and drink with his friends. His political activities were rather limited, though once, when Paul Robeson was in town for a concert but had nowhere to stay, Rolfe found him a place with a black family. More than anything else, however, he had the time and financial security to read and write. As he wrote to Floyd Dell,

This environment—here on the shore of Lake Mendota—is exactly what I missed in New York. My mode of life is simple, calm, restful, and I find myself in a position to write more consistently and, I think, better. It would not do, I think, for me to remain here indefinitely, but for the present it is the best place for me to live in. The summer vacations will undoubtedly supply the stimulus each year for another nine months of academic life.

When he returned to New York in the summer of 1930, however, he was able to see more clearly what he was missing. Work, amidst the onset of the Depression, was no easier to find, but it was no longer a personal matter. "Unemployment," he wrote to Leo that summer, "is so common a problem that it ceases almost to be a problem and becomes an integral part of our status quo." He did find work (as a \$22 per week waiter with free room and board) at Camp Nitgadeiget in Beacon, New York, one of several famous proletarian camps that operated at the time, but the job did not last for long:

The people here are no longer mostly needle-trades workers (whom I understand and like in a way) but fat matrons and their spouses who have spent their summers hitherto in the Jewish summer 'resorts' of Sullivan County, etc., and young students who quote the *American Mercury* at you continually. Or else they are incipient adolescents who appease their unsatisfied sex hunger by reading and discussing Schopenhauer continually.

My work is quite bearable; the most fatiguing feature of it is the enormous amount of self-control I must exercise to keep said self from growing violent and doing someone to death on many momentary spots. Only yesterday, the chicken dinner having been consumed by the first 1,000 morons here, I began to serve vegetable dinners to the remaining campers. One fellow at my table, fat and bloated as a drowned corpse, exclaimed angrily that I 'get the hell away from here. I don't want no vegetables!' I asked him to pass the plate up to the end of the table. He took the plate and with a sudden vehemence, threw it at me.

By the end of the month, Rolfe was out of work again. Planning to return to Wisconsin, his finances were now nearly unworkable. Kahn refused to renew his grant, and the Zona Gale scholarship had only been for a year. His success the first year did, however, win him a Legislative Scholarship, which waived tuition payments. His mother gave him \$5.00 and he borrowed another \$5.00 in travelling money from the owner of the candy store across the street from his family's apartment. He then hitchhiked back to Madison, arriving with \$4.00 in his pocket and much in need of a job. He found work at the refectory, working two hours at each

meal three times a day; that got him free meals and 35 cents an hour in wages, but there was still not enough money to get by. In the end, he took what he regarded as a foolish risk, but one that worked, playing dice to make enough money (\$88 in five games) to get through the end of the semester.

But the time to read and think the previous year, along with the return to New York, left him unsatisfied with Wisconsin. With the Depression under way, the combination of the ever present fraternity atmosphere and the detachment of academic intellectual life became intolerable. "Most persons involved in an academic routine," he wrote to Leo, "are not completely alive." At the same time, the complaints about communism, never voiced in print, disappear from his letters. His first good friend the previous year had been Arnold Reisky, himself soon to be Arnold Reid. He found him "sensitive, sympathetic, pleasant," but also noted that "his contact with official communism has had a slight vulgarizing effect on him, but I hope it will soon disappear. My attitude toward communists and the party has already influenced him a bit." But that was not entirely the case, for in May of 1930 he would report that "Reisky has found me guilty of being a renegade from the Holy Cause." In any case, by the fall of 1930 Rolfe himself was beginning to be drawn again to his political commitments and to strengthen his commitment to becoming a professional writer. He asks his family to send him his box of manuscripts and begins working on those rather than on his assigned papers; as a result, he has two poems taken by *The New York Times*. Notably, he begins as well for the first time to sign some of his campus publications "Edwin Rolfe." He returns to Wisconsin after Christmas in January of 1931, but only to arrange to leave.

## *Rolfe in the Great Depression*

*The forest falls, the stream runs dry,  
the tree rots visibly to the ground.*

BACK IN NEW YORK, Rolfe gets by on marginal jobs, earning, for example, 5-7 dollars per week painting signs, but continues writing both poetry and fiction. Poems are published in *The New York Times*, *Front*, and *The Left*. He also takes up journalism again, becoming assistant editor of *Sport and Play* (later to become *The New Sport and Play*), the official organ of the Labor Sports Union of America, a section of Red Sports International. Although it is not a requirement for working on Party publications, early that fall he decides to apply for readmission to the Young Communist League.

By the middle of 1932, Rolfe has several poems published or forthcoming in *Pagany*, and he is helping edit *New Masses* and assisting Mike Gold in putting together a possible proletarian literature issue of *Contempo*. In May he writes Joe Freeman asking for "an article from you on revolutionary poetry: a sort of review of the entire field, including the Soviet Union and the rest of Europe, with something about the beginnings of revolutionary poetry in America today." He shares an apartment with Leo, but their finances are very difficult. One day, in fact, Rolfe runs into his father at a demonstration, and Nathan insists on buying him new shoes and a new coat.

Rolfe meanwhile continues as assistant editor of *The New Sport and Play*, simultaneously issuing press releases for the National Counter-Olympic Committee. The committee urges support for a Counter-Olympic Meet and a boycott of the Los Angeles Olympics themselves, protesting the decision to spend large sums on the games while so many are out of work and

hungry and protesting as well the lack of support for ordinary working people to try out and train for competition. We will not see there, he writes, "the great masses of young athletes who work in the mills, the mines, on the farms, in the shops and offices." Moreover, "not one colonial land, not a single national dominated by a stronger imperialist power, will be represented at these games." Late that summer Rolfe takes yet another role as a journalist in the union movement, becoming editor of *Furniture Worker*, the official organ of the Furniture Workers Industrial Union, which is affiliated with the Trade Union Unity League. The first issue of *Furniture Worker* appears in August of 1932.

Soon Rolfe is back at the center of left journalism, as he takes a job again at *The Daily Worker*. Unfortunately, he is laid off in December as part of an economy measure. "Seven (including me) were dropped from the business office," he writes to Bern, "and five from the editorial staff." He anticipates being rehired, at least for a few months work, since they will need a publicity man again, but the intervening time is difficult. He gives the details in a January 1933 letter to his brother Bern:

For slightly over a month, since my job at the D.W. ran out, I've been more or less in the dumps. For a couple of weeks I didn't do a thing, but about two weeks ago a friend told me that Putnam (the publishers) wanted a novel that used the Young Communist League of America as a background or theme. And so I got to work on the novel, and it's shaping

LECTURE  
 WED - Nov 1, 1933  
 ROLE OF THE  
 PRESS

What part does the press  
 play in our everyday life? ←  
 Which paper does most to  
 support the interest of the work  
 ing people ← and how does it  
 accomplish its goal ← BY  
 EDWIN ROLFE - A NEWSPAPER MAN  
 AT THE  
 SOCIAL YOUTH  
 CULTURE CLUB  
 117 South 8th Street  
 NEAR Bedford Ave.  
 8:30 A.M. ALL WELCOME

A mimeographed flier advertising a lecture Rolfe gave in 1933.



up pretty well so far. During these two weeks I had a regular routine: in the morning, after getting up, I'd eat a breakfast, or miss it. Breakfast meant that there was bread in the house, which I would eat with jam (of which I still have a 2-lb jar) and a couple of cups of tea. Then I'd get to work at the typewriter and keep going at it until about three-thirty or four p.m. when, 'breakfast' or not, I'd begin to feel pretty tired and listless and worn-out. And so I'd lie down on the bed to rest, and invariably fall asleep. This kept up for two weeks (with occasionally a meal in a restaurant when more affluent friends dropped in at nightfall). On Saturday, however, I got hold of a quarter (strange as it may seem) and quickly went to the Bronx, where in Mother's absence I feasted on eggs, cheese, bread, butter and milk. And when Mother came home, I had the first real meal of the fortnight.

However, this won't continue for long. In a week, or two at most, I'm going back to the *Daily* to do publicity again. This time, however, I'll work half-days instead of full days, which will mean I'll have time to work on the novel during the afternoons. (By the way, don't mention the theme of this to anyone—I want to keep it under-cover until it's completely finished, in its first draft). Also, on Saturday I received word from Chicago that the magazine *Poetry* was going to publish a two-page poem of mine in the forthcoming February issue, to appear the first week of the month. That ought to get me about 10-15 dollars too. So—my meal-less days will soon be over . . . .

Two days later, on January 25th, Rolfe writes again when hunger makes his earlier optimism impossible:

Father is right. I have been and still am terrifically 'busted.' I have kept a strict budget of everything I received during the month of January, and now, looking over it, I see that I lived from January 1st on \$10, five of which came from selling my 1st autographed edition of Hemingway's *Farewell to Arms*. They cheated me, the bastards, but that couldn't be helped. And since I have no cash on hand, it seems that I must have spent the \$10. Right now I am as broke as I was when I wrote you my last letter. This morning (it's now noon) I had pumpernickel and jam and tea—& that will probably have to last me until nightfall, when a friend will possibly drop in and take me out.

As for letting you know if I need anything—a five-spot would be pretty welcome just now . . . .

Early in February Rolfe gets the *Daily Worker* publicity job—four hours a day at \$10 per week. Assuming he can find a substantially less expensive apartment—he and Leo are unable to meet the \$50 per month rent they are now supposed to pay—it will be enough to get by. Getting by was, indeed, the only purpose for being paid, for many people doing cultural or political work in the 1930s did not expect a conventional salary. If money was available at all, it was a question of negotiating how much you needed to survive so you could continue doing the work you believed in. In any case, with this arrangement Rolfe could now read and write again; among other things, he finishes reading Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*. At the same time, "Lanes of Death and Birth" appears in *Poetry*. In a few months he takes a far more ambitious (and more time consuming) job at the *Daily*, as editor of its daily features page. The group collection of proletarian poetry *We Gather Strength* is issued, including seven of Rolfe's poems.

This is now the heady time of exciting collaborative cultural and political work on the Left. It is also the moment when he meets Mary Wolfe at a fund raising party at Margaret Larkin's (later Margaret Larkin Maltz) apartment. Mary and Eddie begin seeing each other regularly, move in together in 1934, and are married in 1936. Mary was born on the Lower East Side and, like Eddie, was basically born into Left politics. At the time they meet, Margaret Larkin is executive secretary at the Theatre Union, and Mary is her assistant. Through Mary, Rolfe meets Albert Maltz and the other Theatre Union members whose plays are produced at the Civic



Repertory Theater on 14th street. They also socialize with Clifford Odets and others at the Group Theater. Mary and Eddie occasionally attend John Reed Club meetings together, as well as Left social events, like *Daily Worker* cruises in the New York area.

The job as features editor is demanding, but exhilarating. As he writes to James Farrell after returning from an August vacation at Camp Unity, a worker's camp near Wingdale, New York,

I've been so busy that I haven't had a moment in which to do anything except the writing of news items demanded by my job. From 10 o'clock in the morning, when I arrive at the office, until 8 or 9 or 10 or 11 at night, I'm busy with my page and with a hundred other routine things. I have to reject the manuscripts of hundreds of talentless poets and essayists and writers of short stories, sketches, and Socratic dialogues. And it's so hard to reject them coldly—they're so damned earnest and hopeful—that I generally write letters of explanation and criticism, hinting, but never stating what I really think: that they ought to return to their trades or professions and not to attempt to write poetry. And several times a day Bill Randorf (our managing editor) comes to me with stories written by other members of the staff or clippings from other papers, asking me to rewrite them with a 'fine Italian touch.' Which is his way of saying he wants a bit of imagination and life infused into an otherwise-half-dead item.

Strangely enough, I'm so enthused about the new *Daily Worker*, and its possibilities, that I don't mind the long hours and the fact that I'm doing no writing of my own, which is verra bad. Just the other day I caught myself thinking a very dangerous thing: I felt that putting out the newspaper was something like writing a poem. But I stopped myself in time, with a sort of mental sock of my own jaw, realizing that thoughts such as these might be the beginning of a substitution which eventually leads to complete sterilization as a poet or writer. And now I'm keeping my enthusiasm for newspaper-journalism well in hand, thinking up schemes of cutting down on my hours of work, getting things running so smoothly that I'll have time enough to grapple with the muse in 'that world which comes to each of us alone.'

I haven't yet decided whether or not to use the fragment of your book. If I could have cut out the reference to the foreigners (the authenticity of which I recognize, but which could never appear in a Communist newspaper) I would have used it the day it arrived. As it stands, however, I don't think it could be published in the Daily. I'll send it back to you in a few days, unless you authorize a few changes that might make it less objectionable to our readers, many of whom, you know, are foreigners . . . .

Assembling the daily features page was a considerable job. When Freeman took over the "What A World" column from Mike Gold at one point, Rolfe wrote to Mary to express some relief: "Joe's a godsend. I don't have to worry about the political line of the column any more." Rolfe's job thus meant not only reviewing and editing manuscripts but also soliciting them, taking care that political opinions expressed would not inhibit the cultural work the Party hoped the *Worker* might do, and finally selecting the mix of poems, letters, essays, news stories, and features to be published each day. One of the writers Rolfe published for the first time during this period was the poet Martha Millet, whom he corresponded with occasionally over the next two decades. If editing the features page was exhausting work, it also was, as Rolfe's letter to Farrell makes clear, immensely rewarding and creative work. All that changed on January 22, 1934, however, because Sender Garlin succeeded Rolfe as feature editor and Rolfe was reassigned to cover municipal affairs. As he wrote to Farrell the following day, it "has depressed me so greatly that I haven't had the desire or energy to work for three days." That August he would write to Joe Freeman, "Tell me, how long a period of time did you ever spend on one job?" Later that month he would add: "The job irritates me so completely that I have little energy or desire left to do other writing. But you're right when you advise me to consider the next landing. I'll have to cast about for something else before I quit."

In reality, the more manageable responsibilities at the *Daily Worker* did free Rolfe up for his own writing and for other literary activities. He had only been able to publish four poems in 1933, but he published twelve in 1934. He also became involved with a number of other publications on the left, including his friend Sol Funaroff's *Dynamo: A Journal Of Revolutionary Poetry* and *Partisan Review*. Although he was in touch with the people forming *Partisan Review* late in 1933, it was not until the following year that Rolfe became closely involved with its editing. As he wrote to James Farrell in January of 1934, "Evelyn Shrifte sent me chapter 3 of your novel, and since we were rushed for time, I submitted it to the bd of editors of *Partisan Review*. I think they're going to print it." A few days later, he reported the results: "Chapter three of 'The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan' will appear in the first issue of *Partisan Review*. Until the last minute it was planned to run it uncut; but space limitations necessitated a cut after it got to the printer. I don't know what's been cut, but I've been assured that it has been cut carefully and discreetly." When the first (Feb.—March) issue appears, it includes as well a poem by Rolfe, and Rolfe's name is listed on the editorial board. Later that year, in October, Farrell writes to Rolfe to offer him another story for *Partisan Review*, and the following month Rolfe writes to Freeman to invite a contribution and report on changes at the magazine:

I've been asked to write to you to find out whether you would be willing to debate with Seward Collins, of *The American Review*, on Humanism (or Fascism) vs. Communism in Literature. Such a debate would have unusual interest, would surpass in power of attraction, I think, the debate on Communism and Fascism in which Hathaway and Lawrence Dennis took part. We (the editorial Board of *Partisan Review*) plan to run this debate during the third week of December or the second week of January. If you agree, we'll get in touch with Seward Collins immediately. Will you let me know whether you can do it as soon as possible?

We thought of this debate at a meeting of the new editorial board of *Partisan Review* last night. The new board is composed of Phelps, Rahv, Kenneth Fearing, Al Hayes, Leon Dennen, Jim Farrell and myself. We need money badly, because we're going to enlarge the magazine from 64 to 96 pages with the next issue (out January 1). We'll also enlarge the format to the size of *Harpers* or *Story* or *The American Mercury*. The magazine has been selling out in the old format consistently, and we think that a larger magazine will sell as well.

Also, since we shall have more space at our disposal, we'd like to publish larger and better articles, short stories, poems. I should very much like to have a chapter from your work in progress to print in the first enlarged issue. If that is impossible, then a long poem or series of poems, or a story, if you have any available. But the chapter from the book is preferred, if you can send it.

Will you let me know soon about these things?

Mary remembers Eddie going over to the *Partisan Review* offices in the evening, after finishing up at *The Daily Worker*, to attend board meetings and work on correspondence and editing. Given the documentary evidence, it is notable that Rolfe is hardly visible in the histories of the magazine. More than anything else, that is because the histories have been written from the perspective of the surviving editors, whose selective memories reflect their own desire to rewrite 1930s cultural history with unqualifiably heroic roles for themselves. If it were merely a question of various writers' egos, the issue might not be as important as it is. What is at stake is the history of how and where different understandings of the politics of culture came into existence. According to the story that Philip Rahv and others tell, *Partisan Review* broke away from the Communist Party in the late 1930s in order to form an alternative to the Party's violently sectarian demands for a simplified revolutionary literature. Some scholars have made a strong effort to demonstrate that the *Partisan Review's* first break with the

Party in fact aimed to articulate an alternative Marxism identified with Trotsky, before becoming committed to anti-communism during the cold war. In any case, most scholars accept the story that it is with these "independent" writers, not with Party intellectuals, that a more tolerant but politically engaged notion of cultural work begins. People who stayed with the Party, like Rolfe, are assumed to be hard-line Stalinists, with no tolerance for anything other than socialist realism. It is that view of history that makes it possible for Irving Howe and Lewis Cosner, in their 1957 *The American Communist Party*, to dismiss "the agit-prop verse of Edwin Rolfe" in a phrase; their confidence in that judgment presumably makes it unnecessary for them actually to read much of Rolfe's poetry. In fact, if anyone takes the trouble to read, say, Rahv's rabidly anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeois September 1932 essay "An Open Letter to Young Writers," it would be apparent that Rolfe, not Rahv, would have been the person to look to for moderation in the early days of *Partisan Review*.

Rolfe's own views on the relations between literature and politics proved remarkably consistent and consistently tolerant from the time when he rejoined the Party in 1931. In October of 1933, Joe Freeman wrote to him to say: "I read your review of Gregory's poems, and liked it very much. Those of us who for the past ten years have been fighting against decrepit bourgeois notions of art on the one hand, and on the other against vulgar and mechanical 'Marxist' notions, cannot help rejoicing at the sight of a new generation of poets and writers who have outgrown the former and have managed to leap over the latter. Congratulations." In June of the following summer, on his annual two-week vacation from *The Daily Worker*, Rolfe took the time to write to Farrell to lay out some these issues in relation to Farrell's own work:

I don't recall now what you said about Dos Passos and the general tendency among left-wing fledgling writers to write according to pattern, according to what they think *should* happen in life instead of what actually does happen in life. You panned this considerably, if I recall, and I agree with you. If you remember my hastily written review of the *Young Manhood*, you will remember that I felt justified in highly praising it in the pages of the *Daily Worker*, which happens to be the central organ of the Communist party. And if my praise had depended on the actions of your young gang of characters (as is the case with so many left-wing critics), I should have left myself open to the charge (which, by the way, *was* made by several people here) that I was a bum revolutionary critic. To these 'critics', the gauge of a novel's acceptability is the final scene: if all the characters join the C.P. or in some way exhibit a new awakening to class-consciousness, then the book deserves (hypocritical word!) 'encouragement'; if not, to hell with it and the author. Imagine Studs Lonigan and his gang as members of the Y.C.L.! I can't, at least not as a culmination of what occurred in *Young Lonigan* and the *Young Manhood*, the settings of which are, after all, their only real settings. To me the kernel of what might be 'revolutionary awakening' was to be seen in the occasional bits about Danny O'Neill—and the ratio of intellectually alive to mentally inert and distorted people, in the figures of Danny and the others, seemed accurate.

Of course Rolfe himself was in the midst of writing a novel precisely about people joining the YCL. But he didn't presume that was the only kind of politically useful narrative. Heated debates over these issues took place first in the Party's own publications, including *The Daily Worker*, and in publications closely allied with the Party, like *New Masses*, not in independent or anticommunist publications. Rolfe's whole life is a testament to the effort to take up such positions within the Party. Rolfe's stands were not always welcomed, but he maintained them nonetheless, while remaining loyal to the Party throughout his adult life.

His loyalty was tested more than once; that year, for example, Rolfe lost his job at the *Daily Worker*. As he writes to Joe Freeman on November 20, 1934: "I am no longer on the *Daily*



Worker. Hathaway, on the basis of Gannes's (I suspect) lies about me, fired me. I had shortly before this happened, called Gannes incompetent, dishonest and valueless to the paper. So I'm on my own now." Clarence Hathaway was the editor of the paper and Harry Gannes a Party functionary who would play a visible role for years to come. Rolfe turned to poetry again to work out his feelings about the incident and to make something out of it that others could learn from as well. The result was one of his most well-known early poems, "Definition," in which he acknowledges that some who are underhanded and some who are fools will choose to be called comrade, but argues that the ideals underlying the word cannot be compromised that way. Hailed as a comrade by one deficient in these values, he will nevertheless "answer the salutation proudly," thereby honoring the ideal.

In many areas, Rolfe found the Party did answer the ideal. An early letter to Mary gives some sense of the excitement in collective political experience that was possible in the 1930s. Hathaway had assigned Rolfe "the double job of representing the Daily at the farewell banquet to Tom Mann and Barbusse (given by the Org. Dept. of the Central Committee) which meant that I was to convey thru Mann and Barbusse the greetings of the DW to the workers of Britain and France . . . and to report the business for the paper." He decides instead to ask Joe Freeman to give the speech and assign the story to another reporter, allowing himself to enjoy the evening:

The banquet was the most inspiring single event I've ever experienced. For the first time in my life I understood and sensed the greatness and the beauty of the movement. I felt, more intensely and completely than ever before, the sense of historical continuity that had been until then merely an intellectualized awareness. Tom Mann, in the course of his talk, mentioned Sen Katayama, and went on to describe his first meeting with Katayama—in London, 1891. Both of them were young men then, he said, adding that 'it will be a long time before they turn up my toes' and Katayama accompanied him to the hall where he was to deliver a speech. K. was at that time attending college in England. When he was through with the university, Katayama bade Mann farewell and told him that he was returning to his native Japan to 'work for socialism.'

'Sure enough,' said Mann, 'less than three months went by when in popped the postman with the first issue of the revolutionary newspaper that Sen was editing.'

There was a bowl of roses in front of James Ford, who acted as chairman. After speeches by Krumbein, Olgin, Freeman, and Barbusse (which Joe translated), Ford took the roses from the bowl, held them dripping from the stems on to the tablecloth (which was white paper) and, tearing the reddest one from the bouquet, turned to Barbusse next to him and said: 'Here, as a symbol of our love for you and the workers of France, this single red rose.' Which was something I'd never seen before—never, at any rate, at a meeting arranged by the Organizational Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the United States. Everyone rose to his feet, applauding, and Mann called for a cheer and got it. As Barbusse left, shortly afterward, to speak at another meeting, Tom Mann called out, interrupting his own speech, 'Au revoir, Barbusse! Au revoir!' and threw him a kiss across the room. He placed his right hand over his heart and then swept it outward in an arc toward Barbusse; then he placed both hands at his lips and held them toward B. We rose again and sang the Internationale, and everybody looked and felt happy. I've never seen a roomful of functionaries look so unfunctionarylike . . .

It would not, perhaps, be until Spain that Rolfe would again have so intense an experience at once of international solidarity and of a certain loss of self in collective agency. In the meantime, it was with poems like "These Men Are Revolution" and "Homage to Karl Marx" that Rolfe would frame his own political commitments. As Rolfe accumulated more recent poems, he began to want to collect them into a book. The process brought him to reassess his own work, always with considerable self-scrutiny. At Wisconsin, after "Post-Mortem" was

accepted at *New World Monthly*, he worried that he shouldn't have submitted it. "It flowed out of me one night because it was choking me," he wrote to Leo, "and I should never have sent it to a magazine." In August of 1934 he writes to Freeman with a more general self-critique: "I'm convinced that I ought to quit playing around with literature—that is, writing fugitive articles, reviews, poems here and there—and buckle down to some real work. My 25th birthday is approaching and I haven't really done anything. I've never been out of the United States, and I haven't seen terribly much of this country. I've written about 500 poems, of which I'd care to preserve only 25." Freeman writes back urging him to put together a book of poems and offers to write a preface for it.

A few months later, still writing poems, he tells Farrell that he has in mind a book of forty or fifty poems and a tentative title, *Also to Bear Arms*. Unable to rework the title poem to his satisfaction, he retitles the book *To My Contemporaries* and submits it, with forty-four poems, to Random House. They reject the book, after which Rolfe sends the manuscript to Horace Gregory to get his advice. Gregory recommends cutting ten poems and simplifying the book's structure. In March of 1935 Farrar and Rinehart turns down the book as well. Meanwhile, Rolfe has worked at *New Masses* for several months, landing there after being fired by *The Daily Worker*, and in March accepts a job as managing editor of the new magazine *Action: Magazine for Jewish Masses*. The first issue—with Nathan Asch, H. I. Costrell, Edward Dahlberg, Kenneth Burke, Mike Gold, William Gropper, V. J. Jerome, Moissaye Olgin, and Simon Rady listed with varying titles on the board of editors—is due out in April, but it is delayed into the summer. Unfortunately, Rolfe's salary is consistently delayed as well.

That spring the famous American Writers' Congress convenes in New York, with papers analyzing vital revolutionary work in all the arts. Rolfe attends, participates in the discussions, and from time to time people gather at Ed and Mary's apartment to socialize and continue talking. In May of 1935 Sol Funaroff's new Dynamo Press issues Kenneth Fearing's *Poems*, and a publication party is held on May 17. Freeman is unable to attend, so Eddie describes the evening to him in a letter:

More than 200 people had been invited at one dollar a piece (each receiving a copy of Fearing's book); Kunitz was chairman: he told a few humorous anecdotes about poetry in Russia: one about the man who made a living in the Ukraine by posing as a famous poet until the real famous poet, a Muscovite, announced that he hadn't left Moscow for a year; another about an edition of 12,000 of a book of poems that was sold out by mid-afternoon: then he introduced Farrell, who spoke briefly, and then MacLeish, who made one of the most beautiful addresses I've ever heard, saying the publication of this book and the entire book-project was 'the outstanding development in American poetry since—well, that I know or have ever heard of.' Then Al Hayes read 'A Canto for Kenneth,' written that very day in Fearing's manner; I followed Hayes and Funaroff followed me, prefacing his poem with a little speech in which he said he preferred to be considered an 'amateur publisher'; then Fearing brought the house down.

Freeman responds by remarking that "we have now succeeded in developing the most vital literary school in the USA—and the only real movement in arts and letters since the 1912 'renaissance.' This is symptomized not only by the increasing number of our publications and writers—by the growing quantity and quality of the books produced by people who more or less share our viewpoint—but by the fraternal attitude of our writers toward one another. What a leap from the days of sectarianism, heresy-hunting, and deviation-finding!" Rolfe has a conversation with Alexander Trachtenberg at International Publishers about the possibility of doing his book, but it becomes clear that Dynamo is the appropriate home for *To My*

Nathon Adler Michael Blankfort Malcolm Cowley Edward Dahlberg James T. Farrell Kenneth Fearing Robert Forsythe Joseph Freeman S. Funaroff Michael Gold Horace Gregory Alfred Hayes Herbert Kline Archibald MacLeish Muriel Rukeyser Isidor Schneider David Wolff	<p><i>Invite You to An Evening In Honor of</i></p> <p><b>EDWIN ROLFE</b></p> <p>On the publication of his book of poems</p> <p><b>Friday Evening, Jan. 17th      Readings and 9 P.M., at 146 W. 12th Street      Refreshments</b></p> <p><b>Each guest will receive a copy of Edwin Rolfe's new book of poems</b></p> <p><b>Subscription \$1.00</b></p>
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*A printed invitation to the party celebrating the publication of To My Contemporaries in 1936.*

*Contemporaries*. He pares the book to what he feels are its twenty-two strongest poems, and late that year the book goes to press. Horace Gregory provides comments for the back jacket. In addition, as promised, Freeman writes a preface, but it arrives too late for publication:

EDWIN ROLFE's poetry combines, with unusual integration, the major forces in the contemporary literature of the west. It stems from the romantic tradition which is our common heritage, and which, in its greatest protagonists, Shelley, Byron, Heine, is intransigent and revolutionary. It has unmistakable American roots in the rebellious and positive verse of Walt Whitman, with its emphasis on liberty, individual feeling and the native milieu. From the renaissance of 1912, which gave us Sandburg and Lindsay, it derives a democratic preoccupation with the daily life of the American people. But Rolfe's strongest and most immediate heritage is the poetry which developed around the American revolutionary movement, from the prewar rhetoric of Arturo Giovannitti to those contemporaries to whom this book is addressed. Out of these elements, Rolfe has fashioned a poetry of his own which is as original as it is melodious, as lyrical as it is revolutionary. Despite his youth, the poet has been active for years in the labor movement; his background has been revolutionary from childhood; his proletarian verse antedates more recent and better advertised efforts in that field. Its revolutionary quality comes not from any intellectual tour de force but from experience and the emotions which that experience generates. His verse is therefore at once beautiful, strong, lucid, and spontaneously alive with the ideals of the most progressive sections of contemporary society.

Rolfe's publication party is held in January 1936. Books arrive only at the last minute. As Rolfe reports to Freeman: "About 150 people were there. Dahlberg, who came earliest, was lassoed by Sol as chairman; other speakers were Mike Gold, Albert Bein, Jimmie Farrell. Gregory came, but was too nervous and uneasy to speak." But the party is a success, and the book is launched.

*To My Contemporaries* collects the best of Rolfe's late 1920s poems about the lives of working people, adding to them the poems he has written since about the Depression. But in the atmosphere of the 1930s all these poems gain new meaning as they cohere in a vision of



"America today: its fields plowed under . . . its wide / avenues blistered by sun and poison gas." "They who have reaped your harvest," he warns, "offer you the stalks." "This is the season when rents go up: / men die, and their dying is casual . . . you see the dead face peering from your shoes; / the eggs at Thompson's are the dead man's eyes." In the dialectical structure of the book he proposes an explicitly Marxist commitment as an answer to these material conditions; with that, perhaps, "the withered land will grow—purged." "Let us admit into our lands the winds / blowing from the east"; then we will see "the way / men act when men are roused from lethargy." The depth of this commitment can only be understood if we place ourselves back in those paradoxically desperate and collaborative times; then perhaps we can understand Rolfe's yearning, in what may be the most unfamiliar metaphor in the book, to "live within the heart's vast kremlin."

*To My Contemporaries* is complicated in yet one more way by the poems that frame the book. The opening poem, "Credo," announces that "to welcome multitudes . . . the mind / must first renounce the fiction of the self." The final poem, "To My Contemporaries," admits it is difficult "to surrender / the fugitive fragments of an earlier self" and calls on his fellow poets on the Left—mentioning Sol Funaroff and Alfred Hayes by name—to join with him in a collective project of witness and transformation. In the end, it is in that way that *To My Contemporaries* must be read, as Rolfe's contribution to a dialogic chorus of voices. Though Rolfe's poems tend to be finished and coherent in the way many readers have come to expect poems to be, a full reading of them in context would qualify their independent existence as aesthetic and political objects. None of the poems of that time stands alone. They are voices answering one another amidst a passion for change.

With his first major book of poems now out, it was time for Rolfe to reassess his plans. First, it was necessary to attend again to finances. In October of 1935 he took a temporary job writing publicity notices for the New York firm of Pendleton Dudley & Associates. Now he finds more suitable work:

The new job is doing publicity for theatres and dramas, and I'm working for Helen Deutsch, the best theatre press agent in the business. The four plays I'm publicizing at present are (1) 'Victoria Regina' with Helen Hayes, (2) 'Libel' with Colin Clive, (3) 'Winterset' by Maxwell Anderson with Burgess Meredith and (4) the Group Theatre's 'Paradise Lost' by Clifford Odets. The plays will change as the season changes, but there'll be new plays. Last night I interviewed Colin Clive for the Herald-Tribune, and he's a nicer guy than he seems to be on the screen; he gave me whiskey and soda, and talked freely, within his intellectual limitations, of course. (Don't mention this to anyone, not about my new job except that it's theatre publicity, or about the people I see. If it got out that Colin Clive's press agent thinks Colin Clive is intellectually limited there would be hell to pay. You understand. Then too I have interviewed Helen Hayes and B. Meredith.

The work at Helen Deutsch continues through the Spring. Then Mary is asked by Clarence Hathaway to take a position at the *Daily Worker's* Washington office, which she does for the summer. Eddie joins her after a few weeks, and takes up writing full time for a few months. Despite the long delay, he decides to finish his novel on the YCL. Word comes that the publisher Covici-Freidi is interested. And that is the last mention of the novel in Rolfe's correspondence; no traces of the manuscript survive in his papers. Again, some speculation is necessary. This was a watershed moment in the history and politics of the 1930s. With the rise of fascism in Europe, the Communist Party shifted to a popular front policy that abandoned the rhetoric of revolution and instead promoted a broad coalition politics. Under these conditions, a novel about young people joining the Party may have been not only politically unwelcome but also impossible to publish. In any case, as summer moved into fall Rolfe became involved in other

activities. Part of the fall was taken up in writing publicity for the campaign of Earl Browder and James Ford, Communist Party candidates for U.S. President and Vice President. More importantly, however, Rolfe began to be concerned about a specific crisis and a singular cause in Europe. It was to change forever his life and his work. He began to think of Spain.

## *The Spanish Civil War*

*Day after day, night on bombarded night,  
We walk down Alcalá under the enemy moon.*

"I FEEL HAPPIER TODAY THAN I'VE FELT FOR A LONG TIME," Rolfe wrote to his friend the poet Muriel Rukeyser on April 22, 1937, "I've just received word that I'll be on my way to the place where I most want to be in two weeks or so." He was by then working at *New Masses*, and he rushed home thinking this might give him impetus to start work "on that epic on Spain that I've been thinking of for a long time—nine months, that is, since the war began." He was never to write that epic—though he would think of it again and sketch plans for it over the next decade, but *First Love* and *Other Poems* in the end would serve admirably in its stead—and it would require going to Spain to begin writing about the war. To his brother Bern, who was working in a government job, he had to communicate more circumspectly, since Americans were not authorized to fight in Spain. "I've been accepted for special work elsewhere," he wrote, "and the end of May will probably see me on the sea-sick list." His departure was delayed slightly, and until then he continued working at *New Masses*, at one point reporting to Rukeyser that he'd just had the pleasure of rejecting a poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay.

There was no cause in the 1930s that had quite the power and purity of the international effort to come to the defense of the Spanish Republic. From the outset, when a group of right-wing army officers revolted against the elected popular front coalition government of Spain in July of 1936, it was clear that Spain was to be at once the real and symbolic site of the growing struggle between democracy and fascism. Mussolini's Italy may have begun to work on behalf of the army officers even before the revolt began, and Franco secured the cooperation of Hitler's Germany within a week. The allies, unfortunately, assumed a noninterventionist policy, partly on the deluded hope that such a stance would discourage German and Italian participation. The loyalist troops as a result were often under supplied and poorly armed. But their cause drew the support of the broadest possible international coalition. "Spain," Rolfe would proclaim in a poem written during the war, "is yesterday's Russia, tomorrow's China, / yes and the thirteen seaboard states."

At first there was no organized effort to solicit foreign volunteers. But people recognizing the great danger of fascism and people with any sort of sympathy with the Left soon began crossing the border into Spain to offer what help they could; most entered from France, but they had come from all across Europe. This remarkable phenomenon—a mixture of selfless idealism and historical insight—helped galvanize the international Left. By the end of September, the Comintern decided to form an international brigade. The following month the Spanish government established a depot at Albacete to handle foreign volunteers. Soon a formal training base was set up at Tarazona, a small town twenty miles northwest of Albacete. By that time some volunteers had already seen action, but the first battle in which the International Brigades themselves made a decisive contribution was the historic struggle for Madrid that November.



Rolfe himself had to obtain Party permission to join the American volunteers. He received his approval in April and began his journey by ship (the *Lancastria*) from New York harbor on June 5, 1937. After a stop in Boston, the ship docked briefly at Plymouth, England on June 14. From there it went on to Dover, where Rolfe boarded the trans-channel ship to Ostend, Belgium. In Ostend he caught the train for Brussels and Paris, arriving in the French capital late on the night of June 15. He was only in Paris a few days, though he had occasion to meet Josip Broz Tito, later Marshall Tito, who at the time was recruiting Yugoslavs for the International Brigades. On June 19 Rolfe began his journey across the Pyrenees mountains into Spain. As he wrote to Mary on June 20: "Last night and this morning forty of us made the long, long hike into Spain. We walked, with only a few stops, for 13 hours, and now our feet (mine included) are swollen, blistered, dog-tired. Many times we were ready to drop of exhaustion but something kept us all going—all but one. And when we reached the peak from which we could see Spain stretched out low before us, we saluted and marched down the slopes, singing the Internationale."

The training schedule at Tarazona was a rigorous one. "The days," he reported to Bern, "were a round of early rising (5:30 a.m.), breakfast (6 a.m.), drill (6:30) and maneuvers (7 to 11:30); then lunch (12 n) siesta (till 2:30) and maneuvers again (till 6 p.m.); then dinner (7), and free time to write or read or chew the rag, and, at 10:30 p.m., lights out." On July second he wrote to Mary to say "right now I'm on guard duty for 24 hours, which means that I have two hours on post & four hours off for a 24-hr. period." Some people there he had known for years; many others he met for the first time, including visitors from abroad. Anna Louise Strong spent several days there, for example, and she and Rolfe talked early in July. "The level of political consciousness," he noted, "is amazingly high—and willingness—eagerness—for the most difficult work is the rule." To Leo, he would observe that "the revolution is real when everyone you meet, everyone you have to do with, in any way, greets you with the clenched-fist salute and the words, 'Salud, camarade.'" Rolfe was appointed political leader of his section and

<u>BATALLON DE INSTRUCCION NO. 2</u>	
Tarazona de la Mancha	
	<u>July 5, 1937.</u>
PASE: PASS:	
Al Camarada To Comrade	<u>ROLFE, EDWIN</u>
Para ir a To	<u>Night Pass - Tarazona to Midnight</u>
Y vuelta a and return to	_____
	valido hasta valid until _____
Este pase tiene que ser devuelto al Cuartel General. (This pass must be returned to Battalion Headquarters.)	(Firma) (Signed) <u>Sidney Shostuck</u> Clark

A night pass from Tarazona, signed by Sidney Shostuck.

corporal of his group. He also began taking notes for a possible history of the Americans in Spain and spent some time writing copy for brigade pamphlets. But most of his time was taken up in basic training and in building friendships with the other men who would soon be in the field. On July 15 the Battalion went on a long manoeuvre: "We began by marching with full pack and equipment for about 6 or 7 kilometres. Night came on, and we advanced through large wheat fields. My feet were blistering, my pack straps cut into my shoulders and arm-pits. So did everyone else's. But we knew this was the last lap of the 'toughening-up' process." At ten they stop for the night, and Rolfe clears rocks from a furrow as a bed. "We were awakened before 3 A.M. and told we had to move on. We marched for 2 1/2 hours, down a winding road leading from the large plateau on which we had slept to one of the most beautiful valleys I have seen since I entered this country." After digging protective holes and breakfasting, with full packs they make "a long charge up a large, rocky hillside."

After a month of this kind of training, Rolfe feels ready for the military life he is anticipating. But the leadership is beginning to think of using him in a different role. In the second week of July he is given a choice: "I was asked, quite simply, by our political commissar, whether I wanted to remain with the battalion or go to one of the press & propaganda or newspaper services. My decision was to remain with the Battalion." But the commissariat decides it needs him in Madrid. Ralph Bates, the British novelist, has been editing the English language magazine of the International Brigades. It is at once the main source of war news for the English-speaking (American, Australian, Canadian, English, and Irish) troops in Spain and an important device for rallying support at home. Bates is expected to leave on a speaking tour before long, and Rolfe's experience as feature editor for *The Daily Worker* makes him precisely suited to take over the *Volunteer for Liberty*. On July 20, the editing job becomes not a choice but an assignment.

Rolfe is and will remain uneasy about leaving the troops behind. He writes of "the pride I had in working side by side with so many fellow-workers, each one imbued with the same passion, the long-extended, well-thought-out action which followed the original impulse to

②  
HIGH GROUND  
 important to find and maintain  
 Plummer must also be a scout & know where all groups are at all times p.1

---

March - Manoeuvre  
 July 5 - A.M.  
 Remarks by Merfina  
 Scouts come in contact with enemy Scouts - necessary only to cover high spots in terrain  
 Scouts maintain contact "SPEED & CONTACT"

---

Protective Unit (Co. II)  
 Single File - 4 Paces per hour  
 Function to attract fire to selves & away from main body of Battalion  
 Scouts send out from Protective unit

Trench-digging  
 Trenches must be made into fortresses.  
 Must be dug along planned line.  
 NEVER ON STRAIGHT LINE  
 Digging must always be protected by rifle fire.

Foxhole wider & deeper  
 1 metre - firing hole  
 2 metres  
 more mant  
 Firing hole  
 5 steps  
 then parapet on rear

fox holes

deeper - pile dirt (parapet toward enemy)  
 first thing to be done all holes - THEN deepening deeper at deeper spots  
 first thing to dig later


2. Communication lines

cover  
 2 metres deep  
 stand dirt, clear in direction of movement

Consecutive pages from the training diary Rolfe kept at Tarazona.

come here. There is no better thing than to be with people you can trust and rely upon as much as, often even more, than one can rely upon one's self." Perhaps in part because of these doubts he works at an incredible pace in Madrid. "Since I am not on the firing line," he writes to Mary, "my most fervent desire is to do my work so well that it will really count, really be of help." Rolfe is also assigned a wider role than he expects. In July and August he is asked to serve temporarily as the American political commissar for Madrid; since the assignment is temporary, his title is informal and he doesn't always have the authority he needs to get things done without unnecessary difficulty. In mid-September Dave Mates arrives as the official American political commissar, and Rolfe concentrates again on being a journalist. Later, on November 6 he notes in his diary: "With Mates gone, my own work will be increased slightly, since I'll have to act as Polit Commissar for Madrid again, as in July & Aug. This time I hope Bender gets me some rank and official standing aside from Prensa. It will be almost indispensable."

For part of the time, then, Rolfe takes up the duties of commissar in addition to editing the *Volunteer*. On occasion the duties mesh easily. Editing the paper involves regular trips to Tarazona and to the front to gather news, and at such times being a political commissar requires that he give talks to the troops. In October he talks about the latest developments internationally and in Spain to a Veterans Group meeting in Tarazona. A young machine gunner comes up to tell him the boys liked his talk: "'No bullshit, no gravy,' he said, 'Straight stuff!'" Back



REPUBLICA ESPAÑOLA  
HOGAR DE VOLUNTARIOS  
DE LAS  
BRIGADAS INTERNACIONALES  
VELAZQUEZ, 63

August 17, 1937

Medical Commission  
Madrid

Dear Comrades:

*Queridos Camaradas,*

Would it be possible for you to send  
*Os ruego si es posible enviarme*  
me a report on the diagnosis of the bearer, Comrade  
*un certificado del diagnóstico del enfermo* Comrade  
Louis Menendez? This report should contain a statement  
*Este certificado debe contener un estado*  
on the condition. ~~of his heart~~ *de su corazón el cual según* of his heart which, I  
*sobre el estado* believe, was examined late in June.  
*creo fue examinado en junio último*

Will you kindly try to submit this  
*Os ruego me transmita el certificado*  
report to me as soon as it is possible.  
*tan pronto como posible*

Comradely yours,  
*Meo Comarada*  
**Edwin Rolfe**  
Political Commissar  
for Americans - Madrid  
63 Velazques

A typical letter written by Rolfe in his capacity as general commissar for the Americans in Madrid.

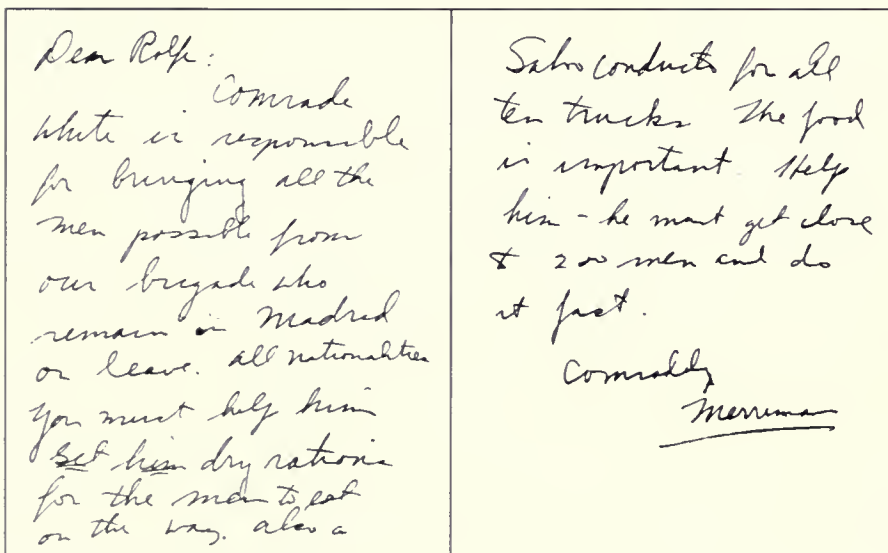


in Madrid, as commissar his duties include arranging safe conduct passes for people travelling on brigade business and dealing with the problems that wounded Americans sometimes face in hospitals in the area. Occasionally, the assignments are more dramatic. On August 17, Major Robert Merriman sent David McKelvy White to Madrid with a note for Rolfe, ordering him to round up 200 men on leave and send them back to the village of Albares, where the brigade was about to depart to go into battle again.

Rolfe's major responsibility, however, remains editing and publishing the weekly *Volunteer for Liberty*. Under wartime conditions and in a foreign country the task is a substantial one. Once articles—written by Rolfe and others—are assembled and photos and graphics gathered, the text is taken to the Spanish typesetters. Since they do not know English, they set the text letter by letter. Corrections to proof must be printed carefully for the same reason. Then Rolfe works out the layout for the weekly issue and pastes up the dummy for the printer. Finding paper, which is often in short supply, can be a struggle, but eventually the issue appears and is trucked to the front and mailed back to England and the United States. There it is frequently used as a source for news stories.

The size of the *Volunteer* remains the same throughout the war, about nine by thirteen inches. Most issues are eight or twelve pages long, but paper shortages occasionally force cutbacks to six pages; in the spring of 1938 it is briefly issued as a dramatic two-page broadside. A few issues have powerful color covers. The text typically includes editorials, news stories, essays, letters, and poems. Visiting writers like Langston Hughes and Dorothy Parker contribute pieces. Early in 1938 Major Allan Johnson, who is running the training base at Tarazona, writes a five-part series of detailed and scholarly articles on principles of warfare. The September 6, 1937, issue opens with a long illustrated essay by Leland Stowe, foreign correspondent for the *New York Herald Tribune*, titled "Madrid— After Three Years." Langston Hughes's poem "Roar China" follows, along with news articles and brief notices. The last page is devoted largely to a section called "Letters from Home" that includes portions of letters by Leo and Mary.

Rolfe's work on the *Volunteer* is also interwoven with the experience of being in wartime



A note to Rolfe from Robert Merriman.

Vol. I. - N.º 18 \* SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY NUMBER \* Madrid, October 11, 1937



# The VOLUNTEER FOR LIBERTY

*Organ of the international brigades* ★

OCTOBER 14, 1936-1937 ★ ONE YEAR of the INTERNATIONAL BRIGADES



A cover to Volunteer for Liberty, edited by Edwin Rolfe.

Madrid. With the front only two kilometres away, Madrid is very much a city under siege. Food supplies are limited and several times a week the rebel guns on Mount Garabitas shell the city. In the downtown section hundreds of civilians are regularly killed or wounded. As is consistent with the paradoxical intensity of a city at war, the experience is alternately theatrical and terrifying. The first aspect Rolfe describes in an August 25 letter to Mary:

Last night Madrid was shelled again. The bombardment started at about five minutes before midnight and continued until almost 1 a.m. It was the first sustained shelling since Tuesday, August 3, which continued for two and a half hours. But this one was far heavier and, although I have no way of checking on the loss of life and destruction of buildings, more severe. The boom of the guns was not spread over short periods, seconds or minutes; it was continuous, almost without stop. Our artillery and anti-air guns answered after a short time, and must have got them, at some point or other, because they did cease their bombardment in less than an hour. Through it all, a group of us, English and American comrades, were up on the roof watching the flare of the guns and speculating as to their range and calibre and number. This is an old custom among Madrilenos.

What Rolfe does not write to Mary about, not wanting to increase the anxiety she will already be feeling from reading news reports, is the surreal violence and appalling human tragedy he lives with in Madrid. He has, however, been writing about the bombings more directly in his poems. It will take some time before he can complete his long poem "City of Anguish," but on August 3 he begins working on it, writing four pages about the bombings the previous night:

*The headless body  
stands strangely, totters for a second, falls.  
The girl speeds screaming through wreckage; her  
hair is  
wilder than torture.*

*The solitary foot,  
deep-arched, is perfect on the cobbles, naked,  
strong, ridged with strong veins, upright, complete . . . .*

*The city weeps. The city shudders, weeping.*

In the meantime he must deal with another kind of death, not so visible as the bodies he sees in the streets, but because of that distance perhaps still more painful—the deaths of his comrades in the battalion. Sometimes he simply sits down to record the names of the dead and wounded in his diary. A September 13 entry opens with the following lines:

Steve Nelson OK.  
Sidney Shostuck dead—shot between eyes by sniper's bullet while bringing a tank in.  
Danny Hutner also dead.  
Bill here today and told me.

The same day he writes about Shostuck's death to Mary:

There are a few good friends and comrades that I'll never see and talk to again. The news, which I received the other day, sort of hit me in the solar plexus, and deeper and higher, for a few days. Particularly of one comrade, a swell kid. Just three weeks ago he walked into my room—the first time since we were together in training—and we talked for about an hour and took cold showers in a real bathroom and kidded each other about the scarcity of water in the training days; and then he timidly asked whether I could lend him a few pesetas to buy some camera equipment. So, since I haven't been spending any money to



speak of, and my pay had been accumulating for a while, I gave it to him, and he bought the camera and was as happy as a child . . . Then he left; and a few days later I had occasion to go out to the brigade and I saw him again . . . I didn't hear from him or of him again until two days ago, when I received the news that he'd got it. Details are not clear, but the story is that he went out to bring in a captured tank, and while doing it a sniper picked him off.

A week later, on September 20, he writes "Elegy for Our Dead," which he will eventually publish in the *Volunteer*. It is the first finished poem about Spain that fully satisfies him. And it is his effort to make an enduring historical statement about what is different about these comrades he has lost in Spain. As he notes in his diary, the "poem was not meant to be, but turned out to be," at least in part, "an answer to Rupert Brooke's 'corner—that is forever England':

*Honor for them in this lies: that theirs is no special  
strange plot of alien earth. Men of all lands here  
lie side by side, at peace now after the crucial  
torture of combat . . .*

That September in Madrid he also drafts several of the other poems that will later be used in the opening section of *First Love and Other Poems*, including "Entry," a poem about the journey through the French countryside at night and across the Pyrenees into Spain, and "Death by Water," a poem about a steamship carrying volunteers that is torpedoed off the coast of Malgrat.

At the same time he takes on another responsibility for the brigades, organizing shortwave radio broadcasts. His first appearance is on August 21, just after midnight in Spain, when he announces "This is station EAR, operating on a short-wave length of 31.65 meters—the Voice of Spain" and introduces a talk by Dr. Busch, chief surgeon of the American hospitals in Spain. Three days later he conducts an interview with H.V. Kaltenborn of the National Broadcasting Company, and on August 27th he arranges a broadcast, "To the Negro People of America," and introduces speeches by Louise Thompson, Walter Garland (a twenty-three-year-old black machine gun company commander in the Washington Battalion), Langston Hughes, and Harry Haywood, a black volunteer from the United States who spent a brief time in the International Brigades. Hughes and Thompson are ready with their speeches; Garland requires Rolfe's help in getting a talk together, but Rolfe enjoys it. Haywood, however, proves more of a challenge; he has been drinking and Rolfe ends up having to write the speech for him before taking it to the censor for approval. On August 29 Rolfe is assigned a regular time slot, Tuesday and Friday at 12:30 a.m. Now he will often be delivering his own talks—the first of which he gives on September 7—and so must spend a good deal of time each week writing them. Between the *Volunteer* and the broadcasts, there is considerable writing to do each week; by October he acknowledges some frustration in having to do so much writing that the broadcasts at least are not up to his standards. "Of all the radio pieces I've done," he notes in his diary, "Only two—the interview with the fellows who escaped from the Fascist line at Brunete, and the one of Campesino—satisfy me."

What is satisfying, however, are the relationships he is developing, not only with other brigades members but also with the visitors to Madrid he meets in his capacities as *Volunteer* editor, political commissar, and radio programmer. He gets to know Ralph Bates well in the time they have together while Bates trains him to take over the *Volunteer*. Two other friendships

Dear Ed:-

The leaves Comrade Langston Hughes will remain in Spain for some-time to write especially about the work of some Negro Comrades.

Will you please help him to:

- 1- get to 15<sup>th</sup> Brigade to see Nelson to get information on Oliver Law and M. Wickman
- 2- To see some Negro Comrades in Battalion
- 3- To see the Negro and other nurses in Vila-Real. Cover

4- To see Walter Gurland.

5- to help him in whatever way possible to get necessary information.

How are things. Kid.

Salud

Bill Lawrence

Dear Eddie—

Please send Volunteers to these addresses..... When is your birthday?.... Come around to the Alianza Thursday at 4:30-5 to go to Theatre.

Marinello has a letter for you from Jack Reed, requesting that you arrange a broadcast to Cuba for him and Guillen this week. Please call them up.

Greetings,  
Langston

Ed Rolfe

1 P.M.

Dear Ed — For some reason or other the guard refuses to let me up. He says La Prensa is closed. Did you get your magazines back? All the fellows liked the anniversary issue of the Volunteer very much. Several up Quinto way send you regards.  
Langston

Two notes from Langston Hughes written in Spain in the fall of 1937.



of particular note are those Rolfe develops with Langston Hughes and Ernest Hemingway, both of whom he gets to know in Madrid that fall. He will remain a close friend of Hemingway's for the rest of his life.

Early in August, while Rolfe was serving as American political commissar in Madrid, he received a letter from Bill Lawrence, a Communist Party district organizer from New York who served as chief American commissar in Spain until John Gates took over from him later that fall. Headquartered at Albacete, Lawrence was responsible for keeping track of all the Americans in Spain. He wrote to Rolfe to inform him that "the bearer Comrade Langston Hughes will remain in Spain for some time to write especially about the work of some Negro Comrades." Rolfe is directed to facilitate Hughes's travel to the fifteenth Brigade and in whatever other ways he can. The note itself is significant because it adds a specific political dimension to Hughes's passionate work on behalf of the Spanish Republic that hasn't been acknowledged in Hughes scholarship to date. Hughes was receiving Party cooperation in Spain and thus at the very least the Party considered him to be working on common interests.

When Rolfe returned from a trip to the field on August 11, he found a note from Hughes and that night arranged to have dinner with him and set up a time for a longer talk the following day. At that time they discussed Hughes's travel needs and scheduled Hughes for an August radio broadcast. Rolfe and Hughes met frequently in August, as Rolfe's diary entries testify. At times Hughes simply accompanied Rolfe on his duties, as when Rolfe interviewed two Spanish comrades who had been captured by Franco's forces but later escaped. On other occasions they talked together at length. "Long talk with Langston Hughes," Rolfe notes in his diary for August 29, "both in afternoon and in evening. Stayed here for dinner. L. particularly keen about establishing a real Negro theater, but very pessimistic about it. Criticized his later poetry, telling him that the early lyricism & folk quality had receded as the revolutionary strain—politically—had deepened. He agrees . . . Langston will do one broadcast a week, day not specified." A few days later Rolfe records that "in the afternoon Langston over with a new poem—'Roar China'—which he thinks is his best yet. I don't, but it isn't bad. It'll appear in the next issue of the *Volunteer*. Albertini took pictures of us singly & together." On another occasion Rolfe is working on the *Volunteer* when Hughes stops by; they walk over to Rafael Alberti's apartment where Alberti describes his early experiences during the war, while Hughes interprets for Rolfe. On another day they go together to meet Juan Marinello, Nicholas Guillen, and the other members of the Cuban delegation and later that week Rolfe takes Hughes to the Monumental Cinema to hear a series of talks honoring the International Brigades. There are also social events with the sort of international camaraderie that only Spain can provide. Here is Rolfe's description of the end of the day on Friday, September 3:

Evening: with Langston & Wagner to dinner at Calle de Cisne. Then, we discovered that it was Antonio La Sierra's 20th birthday, & we had a swell, spontaneous party, till midnight. Cognac & coffee—speeches in Italian, German, Spanish, French, & English by Langston Hughes. Then songs and toasts, flamenco by Spaniards, French revolutionary songs by Fort—Arab song & dance on table by a French-Arabian-Flemish, German-American songs led by me. They asked Langston for a Negro spiritual, but he can't sing, so I sang 'Ezekiel Saw the Wheel.' Also played spoons while victrola played 'Yes sir, that's my baby.' And all the while Antonio sat there, his crutches at his side, his legs still painful, but happy as a kid, which he is.

Drove home at 12:30. Found Albertini poking around in his dark room—the proofs read but the dummy untouched. I had to stay awake until 4:30, dummyming, and Albertini went to sleep, sulking. At 4:30 I read a bit of Don Quixote, then fell asleep.

TO A POET ON HIS BIRTHDAY: Edwin Rolfe  
 Madrid, September 7, 1937

Poet  
 On the battle front of the world,  
 What does your heart hear,  
 What poems unfurl  
 Their flags made of blood  
 To flame in our sky—  
 Bright banners  
 Made of words  
 With red wings to fly  
 Over the trenches,  
 And over frontiers,  
 And over all barriers of time  
 Through the years  
 To sing this story  
 Of Spain  
 On the ramparts of the world—  
 What does your heart hear,  
 Poet,  
 What songs unfurl?

Listen, world:  
 Heart's blood's the color  
 Of the songs that unfurl  
 And heart's blood's the color  
 Of our banners so red  
 And heart's blood's the color  
 Of the dawn that we know  
 Will rise from the darkness  
 Where yesterdays go  
 And heart's blood's the color  
 Of the red winds that blow  
 Carrying our songs like birds  
 Through the skies  
 Urging the wretched of the earth  
 To arise—  
 For the red red flames  
 Of new banners unfurled  
 Are the songs the poet hears  
 On Spain's  
 Front of the world!  
 The red red songs  
 Of new banners unfurling,  
 Leading the workers  
 At the front of the world!

*Langston Hughes*

On the afternoon of September 7 Rolfe meets Hughes while he is out walking: “wandered up Puerta de Sol, into Alcalá, many other streets, looking at stores windows, buying muscatel raisins again, till I reached the Alianza. There I found Langston had been given my poems for *Mono Azul* to translate. Langston asked when my birthday was, & I told him ‘Today.’ Whereupon he fell upon my neck and embraced me, & told me he had written a poem, but not revised it. Promised to give it me when completed.” The poem, titled “To a Poet on His Birthday: Edwin Rolfe, Madrid, September 7, 1937,” is published here for the first time.

Although Hughes and Rolfe had some contact when they returned to the United States, a relationship that proved deeper was the one Rolfe developed with Ernest Hemingway. At first, Rolfe didn’t want to meet Hemingway, because he had heard that Hemingway was anti-Semitic; thus, when Hemingway and Martha Gellhorn are at the next table at dinner on September 30, Rolfe makes no effort to introduce himself. But on November 8 Joe North brings Hemingway to Rolfe’s room and they get along well: “They stayed an hour, talking, reading, chewing the rag. Hemingway is a sort of overgrown boy, very likeable. I gave him a copy of *Death in the Afternoon*, which he wants. I suspect to give to Martha Gellhorn. I’ll have to borrow it back again, as well as *To Have and Have Not*. I loaded both of them with ‘propaganda’ before they left.” A week later, on November 16, Rolfe and Frank Ryan spend an hour drinking and talking in Hemingway’s room with Gellhorn and Herb Matthews, the *New York Times* correspondent. In the end, Hemingway and Rolfe grow genuinely fond of one another and will stay in regular contact for the rest of Rolfe’s life.

It is at this point, however, that Rolfe’s work in Spain comes to an end for a while. Overworked, undernourished, and subjected to the cycle of loss and exhilaration that shapes each brigade member’s experience in Madrid, Rolfe falls seriously ill. On November 28 Rolfe writes to Mary to report that he has been in the hospital with “la grippe.” Later, he acknowledges this first diagnosis was complicated by jaundice. In fact, he is much sicker than he will admit either to Mary or himself, since malaria is then added to the list of ailments. He spends a month shuttling between various hospitals in the area, finally ending up in a Madrid rest home where he shares a room and becomes friends with Leonard Levenson, an American volunteer who is in the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion. He comes out in December to resume his work on the *Volunteer* and counts himself well, though so long as he is in Spain working long hours and receiving limited rations he will continue to appear frail to anyone who meets him.

In January of 1938 all the brigade newspapers are moved to Barcelona. Rolfe edits the *Volunteer* briefly by phone, when possible, and otherwise by mail and then arranges to move to Barcelona in mid-February. It is to be another city under siege, this time with aerial bombardment. A March 10, 1938, letter to Mary gives some details:

Less than a week ago there were nine air bombardments over the city in a period of 25 or 26 hours. They come at night these days, when it’s hard to sight them. In the evening mostly—and the first thing you hear is the muffled sound of an explosion, maybe two or three—the first bombs. Then the much sharper crack of anti-air guns is heard, and the worst sound of all, the warning signal begins to screech. If you go downstairs to the entrance of the house, which most of us do, you see the flares in the sky, and the momentary splotches of light; and the sky is criss-crossed with light beams trying to locate the bombers. And then the central power control shuts off all the light in the city, and we’re in complete darkness . . . It’s not strange to hear sounds of explosions—I had six and more months of it in Madrid, where all of us lived perhaps 2 1/2 kilometers from the front, and the sound of artillery and trench mortars and machine gun and rifle fire was almost always in the air. But aerial bombardment is a little more terrifying; we used to

know where the artillery batteries of the enemy were, and most of the time we didn't interrupt our work at all; and those who were in the area under fire, on the Gran Via, etc, could always be sure that the hotels gave them rooms on the side away from where the shells were likely to land. Also, we got used to artillery aiming above us, overhead—our own, as well as the enemy's. But air bombardment is a bit different. You never know where they are and in which direction they're going. And even the tougher-minded remember what a building looks like after a 400-pound bomb has struck. You have to be calm about it; and you remember that there are 1,600,000 people in this refugee-swollen city, and that it will take more bombs than the fascists have to even make a dent in a city as large as this and on a population as big. But young women and old women can't take it calmly; they cry in a soft, low, terribly-scared sort of whimper. Sometimes the kids cry too, but not so often; they generally play around with each other as if there's nothing going on, and if their mothers let them, they go out to watch the searchlights in the sky.

A week later Rolfe writes (without mailing) a long letter to Leo about another series of raids. Given the risk of being in a collapsing building, the people where Rolfe is living dig a makeshift trench in the yard, some seven feet deep at points. It would be of no use in a direct hit, but it gives some sense of security. When the air raid sirens sound, they go downstairs and lie in the trench looking up at the sky:

The moon was full again, and enabled us to see the planes, thousands of feet high, on one of the raids. Another time they descended so low that we could hear their motors. They hit a church, about a block and a half away from us, and we went over and saw them remove a dead body and two women, one with her foot amputated, the other with her thigh ending in a stump of blood at the knee . . . This morning's papers says 400 dead and 600 wounded, and that's only a preliminary count . . . The sound of an explosion close by, or the sight of a man lying on the street covered with a blanket, blood slowly oozing away from him, or the whistle of a bomb descending, is horrible.

Throughout this time, Rolfe continues, between raids, to get out the *Volunteer*. At the same time, he begins to feel increasingly restless doing this work. In part it is because he has long since mastered the job, so the challenges seem more routine. He had also trained John Tisa as his assistant and by March feels Tisa could take over the editing. Thus it is no longer essential for Rolfe to remain behind the lines. March 23 marks another transition point, since he finishes editing and rewriting *The Book of the XV Brigade*, which will soon be issued by the International Brigades from Madrid. A rough draft had been assembled by others, but it was not in publishable form. So on October 17 of the previous year Frank Ryan delivered a letter from Dave Doran, a former YCL organizer who was now assistant brigade commissar, instructing Rolfe to do what was necessary to see the project through. Rolfe also occasionally writes feature stories for the *Daily Worker* back home, but the *Volunteer* is now his main job. As he writes to Mary, "The Volunteer is a full time job only in that it occupies all of my time when I want it to be well done, which is always. It is not a full-time job in another sense; it does not satisfy the feeling I have that I am not doing enough; and it no longer compensates, as it did at first, for the many things I miss."

Periodically, Rolfe's distress at being taken out of the infantry is much stronger. On November 10 he writes the following entry in his diary: "Joe Kaplan, Jesse Wallack, Earl Steward, John Field & others here—talked much with them—but it is hard to be on equal footing. Only 3 1/2 months have passed since I saw them last—but they have been through war & filth and death—while I've been here, comparatively safe. Jesse told me Paul Sigel was dead—and it made me ashamed to be still alive." Of course most of the time Rolfe is simply too busy to dwell on these feelings, but by March of 1938 he is ready either to return home or



change his status some other way. His opportunity comes in April. A call comes for all able-bodied men behind the lines to join the Lincolns for front-line duty. The directive is not supposed to apply to Rolfe, since he is editing the *Volunteer*, but he decides to read it that way. On April 10 he sends Mary all of his poetry manuscripts, not knowing whether they'll be safe in Barcelona. A week later he writes circumspectly to say he is "spending some time with the Lincoln Battalion."

Early in the morning of April 15 the Americans dig fox holes in the sandy hills above the Ebro river. The river marks the dividing line between the loyalist and rebel forces. Rolfe writes to Mary a few days later, placing himself in "a pine-branch-covered dugout—with a 15-mile expanse of valley and mountain before me." He suggests she get more explicit information from Hemingway if she sees him in New York. Meanwhile, at the end of April the remaining Lincolns are withdrawn to Darnos to have some four hundred young Spanish recruits integrated into their ranks. Rolfe becomes involved in arranging necessary education sessions, the plans for which are written in one of several pocket spiral notebooks he maintains in the field. He is also in charge of the program for their May Day celebration: "rifle contest, infiltration race, grenade throwing, and 100-metre dash—as well as speeches, citations for the last action, and awarding of prizes." Training progresses, though Rolfe sometimes experiences a sense of isolation from the action, despite several stays on the front lines. The diet of beans, chick-peas, and meat is varied by foraging for vegetables among the olive groves. Late that month he is back in Barcelona briefly before returning to the battalion to draw up outlines for educational and political work and to continue to gather material for the *Volunteer*. On June 18-20 he again spends a few days in the city, bringing copy for the *Volunteer* with him. When Tisa visits the battalion at the end of the month, Rolfe has assembled yet another packet of stories, poems, and letters for use in the magazine.

As the battalion is gradually prepared for renewed action, Rolfe learns he will be given the role of running communiques back and forth from the front lines to headquarters. The universal opinion, shared by everyone but Rolfe himself, is that he is not well enough to be fighting in the field. In the meantime, he continues to write documents the battalion or brigade will be using and occasionally serves as company commissar when the official commissar is away. A large July 4th fiesta is held in Marsa, but Rolfe is not feeling well enough to attend. He is temporarily reassigned to Brigade Headquarters but rejoins the troops as the Ebro offensive is about to begin.

Rolfe is now serving as an aide and runner in Leonard Lamb's company, Lamb having been his closest friend since joining the battalion. Just after midnight on July 25 Rolfe climbs into "All Right," the first boat to cross the Ebro river. A piece of shrapnel lands nearby, but all make it across unharmed. Judging that Rolfe is not really well, Alvah Bessie offers to carry his rifle, but Eddie declines. As it happens, the Lincolns encounter only limited resistance and they capture the town of Fatarella that night. The town had been a supply depot so Rolfe and the other Lincolns acquire a supply of cigarettes and are able to feast on such items as clams and octopus in tins.

The following day the battalion takes 240 prisoners. Thereafter the fighting will be more difficult, as Franco rushes in troops to counter the offensive. On July 27 the battalion takes a hill on the road to Gandesa but suffers heavy casualties. The following day the Lincolns set out across a wooded valley where heavy machine gun fire and trench mortars decimate their ranks. "Now," Rolfe will soon write in his diary, "with almost 300 losses—wounded and dead—and



the threat of death hanging over the rest," the "layer of affection spread by each comrade over the other 6-700" is "concentrated on 300." It "becomes doubly intense, almost love, for those who remain. And each is precious . . . one fears for their safety as one does for the safety of a child." He reflects on the behavior of the men, how Milt Wolff, unknown in America, becomes a leader of men under fire. Or "how Gordon and Bigelman, exposed at M. G. [machine gun] nest, warned and cursed me down and away when I came up with message from Wolff to observation post."

The breaking point for the offensive will come on August 1st and 2nd. Spanish troops pass through the Lincoln's ranks to enter what will become known as the "Valley of Death." Artillery and aircraft hammer the valley all day. Attack and counterattack succeed one another. Rolfe and the other Lincolns are flattened against the rock wall of a terrace. Shells stream overhead killing the wounded being evacuated and the men grouped around the water hole in the valley behind. As night falls, red tracer bullets track across the sky while the cries of the wounded and the stench of death rise through the air. Rolfe will describe it in his diary as the "longest day I've ever spent," a comment he later ascribes to the first-aid man John Rody.

29-7-38

20 Batt. 58  
 2nd Co. 1.

We have no picks & shovels with which to dig in in new positions. Also, if we take positions below road we have no means of communication.

Is it possible to have fortifications work on this position tonight?

Co. 2 has still not removed from this position. The resultant confusion makes organization impossible.

Nate Russiano

Rolfe may have carried this note from the front to headquarters. It is dated July 29, 1938, and was written during the Ebro campaign. It reads:

"We have no picks and shovels with which to dig in our new positions. Also, if we take positions below road we have no means of communication.

Is it possible to have fortifications work on this position tonight?

Co. 2 has still not removed from this position. The resultant confusion makes organization impossible.

Nate Russiano"

The Lincolns are pulled out of the line at 6 a.m., though the following day is quiet, for both sides are exhausted. Rolfe and the Lincolns rest for a day, then march to successively new positions, finally occupying a ridge along the Corbera-Gandesa road. Warned of effective enemy fire they move again, passing through the same valley where Merriman and Doran were lost during the last retreat. They settle in on August fourth. The following day Rolfe, Wolff, Watt, Brandt, and Begelman play poker with captured fascist money. On August sixth a message comes through for Rolfe from Gates, ordering him to report back to help reestablish the commissariat, but Wolff asks Rolfe to give them a chance to win back the money Eddie had won the previous day. "We played," Rolfe notes in his diary, "I kept winning and meanwhile enemy trench mortars opened up on us, falling closer to the house than previously—and I thought (and Wolff said) would be ironic if my staying on for poker game would mean the end of us all." That night Rolfe hikes through Corbera with Doran. The notes in his diary describe it as a city "ruined, wrecked after almost 2 weeks of intense artillery and air bombardment. City stinks with the bodies of dead, unburied, in the ruins of houses, and horses and mules in the streets."

A few days later Rolfe walks ten kilometres gathering articles for the *Volunteer*. He is now appointed its front line correspondent. On August 11 he catches a ride in a small sedan along with Joseph North, Peter Kerrigan of the London *Daily Worker*, Captain Wild of the British Battalion, the President's nephew Daniel Roosevelt, and the exiled German poet Ernst Toller. Rolfe arrives in Barcelona at 4 a.m., having returned to put out a special large issue of the *Volunteer*. Earlier, as Tisa reports in his 1985 book *Recalling the Good Fight*, he had remarked a change in Rolfe: "When he left to join the Lincoln Brigade, he looked weak, frail, and tired." When Rolfe first came back to Barcelona, however, Tisa found he now had "the presence of a seasoned soldier of a People's army." Rolfe had been under fire with the Lincoln battalion; he had been with his friends as they fought and died in the valleys near the Ebro and on the bare hills overlooking Gandesa. Nothing in his life would ever be quite the same again. Years later, Leo would suggest that, after Spain, things about his personal life that Rolfe would once have talked about openly he now seemed to save for his poetry.

During August and September he will continue to return to the front, but his role soon changes another time. Joe North and Rolfe had talked earlier about whether Eddie should take over as correspondent for *The Daily Worker* and *New Masses* when Joe left Spain. On August 28 Rolfe was in a room at the Hotel Majestic as a newspaper correspondent reporting on the Spanish civil war for these two U.S. publications; only the day before he had laid out a center spread of photographs for the *Volunteer*. On September 1st he describes his new routine to Mary:

At the present time the work demands almost solitary confinement. Reading the press requires at least two solid hours, writing the dispatches another hour or so, translating and retyping in four duplicate copies, in that special language known as cabalese, takes an additional two or three hours. In the past four days, just ended, I've sent two cables and one mailed feature to the Daily, and one long cable to the NM. To do this last long piece I stayed up until 3 a.m. this morning, writing in longhand, since my hotel neighbors object to the clicking of the typewriter. Then I arose at seven, and went to work translating to cabalese—cable language—and felt like kicking myself in the pants when, at the end of my first tightly-packed single-spaced page, I found I'd put my carbons in backward.

Rolfe continues sending cables home throughout September, travelling back and forth to the front whenever transportation can be found. The battalion, meanwhile, is pounded mercilessly on the Sierra Pandols, the unprotected rocky hills south of Gandesa. Severely

depleted, they descend on August 27, only to be sent back into the lines on September 6. Two weeks later, on September 21, the Spanish Prime Minister Juan Negrin announces the immediate withdrawal of the International Brigades. Yet Americans continue to be killed until they are relieved on September 23. Rolfe is with them in the field again in these final, difficult days, having hitched a ride on an army truck on September 22. On September 23 Rolfe is at the brigade post at the end of a small valley just half a kilometer from the front line. Enemy planes are bombing the valley, so Rolfe takes refuge in a dugout with David Gordon while bombs are falling ten yards away. On September 24 the surviving Americans cross the Ebro river again for the last time; at the same time Rolfe returns to Barcelona.

Now that the battalion is permanently removed from combat, Eddie and Mary begin to talk seriously about the possibility of her joining him in Spain. After some negotiation, she sails from New York and joins him in October. Eddie arranges to meet her at the French border at Le Pertrusse, which she will walk across after taking a taxi from Perpignan. The border there is marked only by a chain across the road at a small outpost, so once she steps across it she will be in Spain. When she arrives about noon on October 26, Eddie is not yet there, though a driver hauling a truck full of hazelnuts gives her a bag in honor of her arrival. After an hour or so a call comes from the checkpoint, a mile up the road and out of sight, that an American is coming through. Eddie arrives, delayed by flooded roads, in a large ambulance, the only vehicle he was able to commandeer. They embrace to the applause of the young soldiers stationed at the outpost. On the way back they stop at a small village, which is the home of Eddie's Spanish driver. There they are treated to a feast of rabbit stew, coarse fresh bread, and wine, before heading on to Barcelona.

Shortly after their arrival, on the afternoon of October 29, a large parade is held in Barcelona to honor the departing International Brigades. As a reporter, Rolfe sits in the reviewing stand with other members of the press. Government planes fly overhead and hundreds of thousands of people line the streets. Honorary broadsides, poems, and flags are printed up for distribution. "As the Internationals went by," Rolfe will write later, "hundreds of girls in native costumes rushed forward, kissing them, pressing huge bouquets of flowers into their arms."

At the same time, at the Hotel Majestic, Mary is taken up in that world only possible when international correspondents gather for a major story. Herb Matthews of the *New York Times* is there, along with Jimmy and Dinah Sheean, Hemingway, the Soviet correspondent Bola, the photographer Robert Capa, and many others. The hotel, she writes to Leo, was "a conservative place much like a Grammercy Park hotel" before the war; now it is trying to stay genteel, so there is much bowing and scraping. Hemingway she describes as a "huge, towering giant of a man who talks just like his books, oddly boyish and eager other times." If the atmosphere in the hotel is somewhat unreal, the war nonetheless impinges. Barcelona is still being subjected to aerial bombardment, as raids in early November and particularly heavy raids on November 23 demonstrate. Mary is caught outside in one of the raids and relates the experience in a long letter to Leo.

Mary begins doing volunteer work for the Republic, while Rolfe meanwhile continues writing dispatches from the hotel or the Ministry, making trips to the front when possible. Together they travel north to Ripoll, about fifteen miles from the French border, to spend November 12 and 13 and another day the following week with the Lincolns who are quartered there. It is a beautiful town deep in the mountains, but the Americans are now anxious to go



home. On November 20 they visit a relief ship that is unloading wheat in Barcelona harbor. In November as well Mary is offered a job that would last a few months, but she is convinced Eddie needs to go home. He writes to Clarence Hathaway at *The Daily Worker* asking to be relieved of his responsibilities. Finally, the work on repatriating the Americans has some success, and Mary and Eddie return to Ripoll to work most of the night helping to arrange their departure. On December 2nd the first group of Americans leaves by train. Mary stays on in Ripoll, but Eddie travels with them to Puicgerda. The train is two hours ahead of schedule, which turns out to save the lives of those aboard. Rolfe watches it leave the station to travel on across the border. Two hours later, as Rolfe is waiting for a return ride to Ripoll, at the moment when the train had been scheduled to arrive, two full squadrons of fascist planes fly over and bomb the railroad tracks outside the station. Since the brigades are on their way out of Spain, it is a purely wanton and vengeful act on Franco's part. A week later, the second large group of Americans departs without major incident.

Now it is truly time for Rolfe to return home. On December 15 he makes a trip to the front with Matthews for a last story before leaving. At 8 a.m. the following morning Mary and Eddie leave Barcelona for Paris. They arrive on the 17th and Rolfe spends part of the day with Capa. With about two weeks to spend in France, they socialize with several friends from Spain.



A large parchment certificate honoring Rolfe's service in the International Brigades.



Rolfe also takes the time to begin writing poetry about the war again. A few months earlier, Rolfe had written to Mary to warn her that Europe as a whole might soon be at war. "The whole continent," he wrote, may "be an inferno." Now he speaks more broadly to the sleeping country he is about to rejoin, placing its future in the context of the lesson it would not learn from Spain. "When the bombs / invade your softest midnight dream," he writes to a world on the verge of war, then, "yes, you will remember . . . Madrid."

On December 31, 1938, Mary and Eddie set sail from Le Havre on the S.S. Washington. A stormy winter crossing awaits them, but, theoretically at least, they are leaving the Spanish Civil War behind. Like many of the Americans who were there, however, Spain is not an experience they can so easily abandon. "My heart," Rolfe will write later, "is forever captive of that other war / that taught me first the meaning of peace and of comradeship." It also taught him the meaning of loyalty and the real cost of betrayal. And it taught him that there can be no compromise in the struggle against fascism. "To say *We were right* is not boastful," he will write in New York nearly a year later. "We saw, when all others were blind," he adds, "We acted, while others ignored or uselessly wept." Indeed, "We died, while others in cowardice lived on." In the wake of Spain, in the wake of the fall of the Spanish Republic, his poetry will take on a new poignancy and a new rhetorical complexity. For he will live for a decade and more out of a commitment much of the rest of America was either unable to make or quite ready to forget.

## *After Spain*

*Now, after two years spent in absolute truth.*

WHEN HE RETURNED TO NEW YORK in January of 1939, Rolfe soon set about making final arrangements with Random House to publish a book on the Spanish Civil War. He had a fairly personal book in mind, perhaps a novel based on his experiences in Spain; indeed, he wrote to the Guggenheim Foundation in one of his many unsuccessful fellowship applications to say his long-term plans included a novel whose characters would be men in the International Brigades. But Random House wanted a factual history about the Americans who fought in the Lincoln Battalion, so Rolfe agreed and took up the project he had already made extensive notes for—from the first weeks in Albacete through the months in Madrid and Barcelona until the Ebro campaign. He had available as well a complete set of *Volunteer for Liberty*, including the many unsigned articles he had published there, his dispatches and feature articles for *The Daily Worker* and *New Masses*, and the diaries he kept in Spain: the training diary from Albacete, the larger leather-bound diary from Madrid, and three small field notebooks from before and during the Ebro campaign. In addition he had over one hundred and sixty of the letters he had written home to Mary and an extensive set of photographs and brigade correspondence. But he wanted further personal reminiscences from the men he knew there, so he asked a number of the veterans in the New York area to come by his apartment to be interviewed.

A small advance from his publisher allowed him to work full-time on the project for some months. The money was not enough to support him until the book was done, but he persisted nonetheless. In July, when the advance was exhausted, Rolfe took Bennett Cerf a draft of the manuscript, in the hope Cerf would live up to his informal promise to supply more funds if necessary. But Cerf decided to stick to the formal terms of the contract. That meant the Rolfes had to live on Mary's salary of \$23 per week unless Eddie could sell a few things to magazines. The following month Rolfe reported to Cerf that he "took ten days off after I last saw you,

ghosted two articles and did a rapid publicity job just in time to keep two jumps ahead of the landlord and grocer." In any case, by late August *The Lincoln Battalion: The Story of the Americans Who Fought in Spain in the International Brigades* was done, and Random House brought it out before the end of the year. Milt Wolff, Ernest Hemingway, John Gates, and Ralph Bates provided comments for the jacket.

Cited and often quoted extensively in all subsequent books about the Americans who fought in Spain, Rolfe's book remains perhaps the best contemporary account of the Lincoln battalion. Rolfe decided throughout to leave himself in the background, except when his presence lends credibility to the narrative. But he draws simultaneously on his own experience and that of his comrades in constructing reflective passages that remain one of the book's real strengths even now:

Just what it was that sent each single one of these Americans across the Atlantic to fight for the independence of Spain will never be completely known. The bridge between the impulse and the act is a highly personal process, one that men rarely divulge to others, even when they themselves are conscious enough to trace its intricate path. There is a no-man's land between conviction and action into which the great majority of humankind never venture. Today, the final determining factor which set each single one of the Americans in motion on this democratic crusade has died with 1,000 of them. The others, who have returned, will probably guard some small part of the secret all their lives (p. 15).

*The Lincoln Battalion* was widely and generally positively received, with reviews appearing in *Newsweek*, *Time*, *The New Republic*, *The New York Herald Tribune*, *The Washington Post*, and other newspapers between November of 1939 and January of 1940. Although it has since been reprinted twice, it did not sell well at the time. Random House wrote to Rolfe on November 27 to report that the total sale in the first month had not reached the five hundred mark. "General bookstores," they added, "tell us that there is absolutely no interest today in books about Spain." In September of the following year the leftover printed sheets were transferred to a remainder company.

Several forces were already working against all the Veterans who wanted to keep the cause of Spanish democracy in the news. First, the widening Second World War was overshadowing Spain. Germany invaded Poland in September of 1939, and in return Britain and France immediately declared war on Germany. Germany also signed a nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union, a move that alienated many former communists and helped shatter the broad popular front coalition that had supported the Spanish Republic. The international defense of Spain had never been exclusively a Communist Party project, but it had strong Party support and involvement, and as anticommunism gathered strength in the United States the Loyalist cause was stigmatized here as well. The stigmatizing of support for Spain had been significantly reinforced the previous year, when Martin Dies, a Democrat from Texas, became chair of the newly formed House UnAmerican Activities Committee (HUAC).

HUAC was by no means the first federal government effort to rid American society of people who held political and intellectual views unacceptable to the establishment. The most notable earlier effort was no doubt U.S. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer's infamous "Red Raids" of 1919-1921, when Palmer and his assistant J. Edgar Hoover separated hundreds of Russian immigrants from their American families and forcibly deported them. To grow up on the Left in the 1920s, as Rolfe did, was to recall that period and its anticommunist hysteria as a defining moment for American culture.

There were other efforts in the 1920s and 1930s to purge socialists and communists from various cultural domains as well, but the Dies committee would set the major precedents to be taken up far more broadly after the Second World War. It was in 1938, then, that some

Americans began to realize that committee hearings investigating a limited number of people could effectively terrorize a much larger segment of the population. Dies concluded that communists never joined organizations; they “infiltrated” them; he proceeded to investigate communist “infiltration” in labor and education, issuing citations for “contempt of Congress” when people refused to answer questions or name names of other members. What we often think of as a unique feature of 1950s culture was thus in many ways woven through much of twentieth century history.

Early in 1940 the Justice Department would contribute to the atmosphere by raiding ten Detroit homes and arresting their occupants for having recruited volunteers for Spain. Long before then, however, the government’s attitude toward the Spanish Republic had been made clear. Thus when Rolfe wrote from Spain to his brother Bern, who held a government job, he never wrote directly, but always arranged for Bern to pick up his letters elsewhere. Of course Bern was Bern Fishman, while Eddie was by then Edwin Rolfe, so only their friends tended to know they were brothers. Rolfe was cautious to restrict that knowledge for fear that Bern would lose his job if his family connection to Rolfe’s politics became widely known.

Having established that constitutional guarantees did not apply to Americans with unacceptable beliefs, the Dies committee continued its hearings through 1940 and into 1941, at one point summoning Hollywood figures under suspicion of contributing funds to support the Lincoln Battalion or the Spanish Republic. When Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June of 1941, however, the Soviet Union and the United States suddenly became allies. The news media had to begin printing stories about Soviet heroism almost immediately, and the Dies committee suspended its hearings. For a time, the country experienced a respite from anticommunist crusades.

Rolfe, meanwhile, was active in the new organization, Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, and was simultaneously looking for a job once again. The defining issue, as always, was to find work that left him some time to write. Several years earlier, in 1936, he had written to Horace Gregory to describe the problem that would still obtain in 1940: “I’m spending my lunch hour these days trying to sell my services to magazines which need writers or editors and people who need publicity of any kind. I offer them \$100 worth of work each for \$50, but they don’t seem anxious to accept. One magazine has offered me \$25 a week. The best thing would be a half-day job, which would leave me free to write most of the day, but there aren’t any such jobs in sight.”

There were no such jobs in sight in 1940 either, though he spent several months looking. In March, therefore, he accepted the only alternative available: a position at the New York office of Tass, the Soviet news agency. The starting salary was \$45 a week, and Rolfe was assigned to write stories that would later be translated into Russian, a language, he noted with irony in a letter to Leonard Lamb, that he could not read. He worked a full schedule there and eventually became head of the Latin American desk, where he used the Spanish he had picked up in Spain. Other than the long hours, the only other difficulties with Tass were the requirements in place to insure that its employees were uncontroversial. Thus Tass employees were compelled to give up all Communist Party activities; moreover, they were prohibited from publishing while they were working at Tass. For all practical purposes Rolfe had to abandon his public career as a writer as long as he held the job. Given the uneasy nature of America’s wartime alliance with the Soviet Union, Rolfe no doubt understood the reason for the regulation. Indeed, the poems he was inclined to write were precisely poems taking positions on recent history. But the restriction was painful nonetheless. Three years after



leaving Tass he still felt it necessary to explain to William Rose Benét that he had for some time had “a job one of the conditions of which was that I forego writing for publication anywhere.”

Rolfe did, however, get to see one writing project completed while working for Tass. Helen Van Dongen, the Dutch documentary editor who had previously edited *New Earth* (1934) and *The Spanish Earth* (1937) for Joris Ivens and *The Land* (1941) for Robert Flaherty, approached Rolfe in 1942 to ask for his help with a documentary on the Soviet struggle against the Nazi invasion. Once Van Dongen had edited the footage supplied by Soviet cameramen, Rolfe was to write the English commentary that would provide the narrative portion of the sound track. It was Rolfe’s first film work, and he needed advice on how to match images with narration. Van Dongen was an innovative sound and image editor, but text was not her area of expertise, so Eddie met with Leo, who looked over his script and advised him on the general principles at stake. Rolfe completed a thirty-six page script in January of 1943, which was recorded as the narrative, and *Russians at War* opened at the Stanley Theatre in New York early that spring. Since he could not publish anything under his own name, he had to decide how to credit the

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between 42  
& 41 STREETS

*A newspaper advertisement for the 1943 documentary *Russians at War*, for which Rolfe wrote the commentary.*



script. In a touching gesture that would honor all the American dead in Spain as well as the cause that still provided Rolfe with his model of selfless political commitment, he would give the credit to Arnold Reid, the college friend who was killed in the Ebro campaign. The New York Post review says simply “English commentary by Arnold Reid.”

By the time work on the film was under way, Rolfe knew that his life was about to change again. On November 13, 1942, he wrote to Milt Wolff to say he had just received orders to report to the New York City Hospital Dispensary for a physical examination: “the first step in my transformation from a 3A civilian to a 1A candidate for the army has been taken.” Not long after that he received a notice that he was to be inducted on February 4, 1943. As Rolfe reported to Wolff, Tass intervened and tried to get the order cancelled: “My office tried to get a deferment for me on the ground that it would take at least a year to replace me adequately (which is true; because you can’t pick up my job overnight, but only by working at the news, which is quite specialized, day after day for a year, which I’ve done) but the board answered graciously deferring me for a month, until March. Which is OK with me; matter of fact, I’ll be glad when I’m in, in spite of what’s happened to Johnny and Irv and Jerry etc, etc.” What had happened was that Army intelligence officers were often suspicious of Spanish Civil War veterans, who were frequently assigned to menial jobs and kept behind the lines when their military expertise would have been quite valuable. Rolfe himself was met by FBI agents when he arrived at Camp Wolters in Texas.

In any case, Rolfe reported for induction on March 12, proceeded to Camp Upton, known as Replacement Center, and from there went to Texas for basic training. Rolfe applied for Army Specialist Training, but was turned down because of his age. He was assigned, within the infantry, to a 37-mm anti-tank gun battalion, where he received basic training along with anti-tank firing practice. At one point, among his fifty-eight man platoon he scored the highest (260 out of a possible score of 300) at firing the 37-mm gun. As he reported to Bern, he found basic training “tough as hell on a 33-yr-old,” especially when compared to the eighteen- to twenty-one-year-olds who made up the great majority of the battalion: “Marching up hills, marching with full field equipment for seven miles, running through & over obstacle courses, I sometimes feel I can’t remain upright for another step. But since I am what I am, I force myself to keep plugging, and I’ve always made it, even though scores of 20-year-olds have had to drop out.” In late spring he added to his jobs the editing of his battalion newspaper, *The 37-MM Chatter*.

When Bern was facing possible induction, Rolfe advised him that “you will also probably experience a pretty profound loneliness, due mostly to the fact that your fellow soldiers will be youngsters whose memories do not go back as far as yours and whose capacity for adult conversation and friendship, on your own level, will accordingly be very limited.” In May he wrote as well that “I miss Mary, much more than I did in 1937 & 1938. We’re both that much older now—our ninth anniversary (actual) will be on May 31st—and separation for some reason is more keenly felt.”

Rolfe’s army career was shortly to come to an end, for in June he collapsed on maneuvers and was hospitalized with amoebic dysentery. The doctor suggested an amoebic cyst had probably been in his system since Spain. After about a month in the camp hospital it was decided that he should be discharged from the army. He wrote to Bern on August 4th to report that the discharge was definite.

But Rolfe did not leave the army before historicizing his situation in a more profound and problematic way. For a series of recognitions were converging on him in Texas. It was partly

the sharp realization of his generational difference and partly as well the very different social and political commitments, the very different camaraderie, he witnessed among the young men and officers around him. Training to fight now, he could not help but recall that he had fought five years earlier with very different passions and out of an articulate sense of history and history's entanglements that had little equivalent among the draftees he met here. If the cultural environment he was part of was improbable and the immediate audience for his writing at best surreal, he nonetheless did begin to write again. It may be that the alternating heat and rain in Texas were not altogether unlike the seasonal extremes on the plains at Tarazona. When he returned to New York he would begin theorizing the differences between these two wars in prose. But for now it was in poetry that these issues coalesced and found expression.

"In Time of Hesitation," an unpublished poem that survives among his papers, is the appropriate first realization of his double consciousness:

*What's in the wind? There is no wind.  
 What's in the air? Dust.  
 The dust hangs yellow in the stagnant air,  
 oppressive on the treeless drill-worn fields  
 where eager boys with ancient eyes  
 master their manual-of-arms, till soon  
 instead of group, they call themselves platoon.*

*Here, under smouldering Texas sun,  
 summer beginning and training ending,  
 daily we read the morning headlines,  
 nightly we turn the dial, listening  
 for the words that do not come, the deeds  
 that hang, suspended like dust in air . . .*

*And I, one among many, remember  
 other clouds upon other horizons,  
 the urgencies of other years and other deeds  
 . . . but somewhere, always,  
 hearts quicken when the word Madrid is spoken  
 and minds recall its lonely betrayed splendor,  
 the lost war but the undefeated men . . .  
 imprisoned in the ruins of their immortal city . . .*

*Here, on these Texas plains, we simulate  
 all the innumerable movements of invasion:  
 down ropes into a hypothetical barge,  
 from barge to sandy beach, then uphill past  
 barbed tanglements we cut to let the others by;  
 then on to the attack. Only combat missing:  
 actual shell, flesh-mangling bomb, bullet with million eyes.  
 . . . And even the Texas plain  
 will be fertile or scorched, as the war is lost or won.*

There is the dust of these plains, then, the dust in the ruins of Spain, and the dust that individual memory faces if it is unrecorded. Rolfe concludes with a reflection on the necessity of turning these children rapidly into “men or corpses.” For “the world cannot wait.” Some, to be sure, await the invasion of Europe; others await the opening of that second front that will deflect some of the pressure of the German attack on the Soviet Union; it is a difference temporarily to be set aside. But Rolfe is not yet satisfied with his rendering of the commitment to Spain remembered now, on the possible eve of a return in arms to Europe. Under the pressure to give witness to that renewed memory, something changes in the rhetoric available to him. His poetry undergoes a shift in compression and metaphoric complexity. And in the heat of Texas he writes “First Love,” a haunting and lyrical tribute to Spain’s hold on him. “Why,” he asks, “are my thoughts in another country?”:

*Again I am summoned to the eternal field  
green with the blood still fresh at the roots of flowers,  
green through the dust-rimmed memory of faces  
that moved among the trees there for the last time  
before the final shock, the glazed eye, the hasty mound.*

Here, in America, in the heat of our southern plains, still he finds “the Moorish castle’s shadow casting ruins over my shoulder.” And there is a reason, beyond the accidents of circumstance and the politics of commitment that brought him to Madrid and to the hills above the Ebro river. For at the core of the Spanish commitment were a set of values and a vision of human perfectability within history that are quite different from the need, however real, to put an end to Hitler and Mussolini. “Always,” he concludes “First Love,” recalling an experience Vincent Sheean had as the Internationals were leaving Spain, “I think of my friend who amid the apparition of bombs / saw on the lyric lake the single perfect swan.”

## *In Hollywood*

*The eyes . . . gaze down  
from billboards on a thousand streets.*

THE NEXT FIVE YEARS were to be a period of radical change both for Rolfe and for the country. Eddie and Mary were to move to Los Angeles, where he would spend the rest of his life. He would begin working in the film industry, though any real chance of success there would come to an end with HUAC’s investigations of Hollywood and with the eventual nationwide purge from all public and much private employment not only of Communist Party members but also of anyone with any history of support for the Left. A vast confederation of repressive forces—from national, state, and local government to the media to business leaders and political organizations—would eventually collect around economic and political interests that had much to gain from instituting and maintaining the cold war. Quiet during the Second World War, HUAC began holding hearings again once it became clear that the Soviet Union was the only major counterforce to American military and economic power. Business interests found communist conspiracy theories the best way to win consent to continue the profitable war economy and the best way as well to break those unions who remained strong and uncooperative during and after the war. Opportunist politicians with little national following found

theatrically staged anticommunist hearings an easy way to build reputations. And a group of reactionary political organizations who actually believed the well-publicized stories of communist subversion—from the American Legion to the Daughters of the American Revolution—offered enthusiastic support. For Rolfe, after a few good years, this would become a period of juggling marginal employment with political action and continued poetry writing.

In 1943, while Eddie was in the army, Mary had been offered a job in Los Angeles, which she agreed to take. When he called to tell her he had been ill and was going to be medically discharged, she volunteered to cancel her California plans. Instead, he suggested they both move there. Albert Maltz and Alvah Bessie were now in Hollywood writing screenplays; John Howard Lawson had been out there for some years. Although Rolfe's credentials as a poet and journalist did not make him as marketable as his friends, who had written plays and novels, it still seemed possible he might find work in the industry. He arrived in New York just before Mary was scheduled to leave. After resting, he drove out with Leo and joined Mary in Los Angeles in August of 1943. They stayed with Margaret and Albert Maltz until finding a place of their own. Once there, he continued to rest, undergoing some repeated bouts of dysentery, but gradually recovering.

Rolfe also became interested in putting together a new book of poems. Drawing on his reflections in Texas, he gave it the working title of *Two Wars*. A statement prepared some years later offers the most succinct explanation of the comparison implicit in the title:

The recurrent theme in many of the poems is war, and the emotion of war: the clouded and guilt-muddied emotions of World War II, during which we in the west felt (in the words of an English poet) that we had to 'defend the bad against the worse'; as contrasted with the emotional exaltation of a previous war—the war in Spain (1936-1939) when justice and truth were so overwhelmingly on the side of the Republic that even its tragic defeat has never quite killed the passion and the purity of its living legend.

In a longer preface to *Two Wars*, drafted in 1944 or 1945, when the events addressed by the poems were more immediate and the emotions more raw, Rolfe pointed out that the world was presently paying for its failure to stop fascism earlier, when it would have been less difficult. At one point he thought of calling the book "Munich Poems." In effect, the young men at war were paying for the cowardice, selfishness, or myopia of their fathers. "Whatever poetry there is in this volume," he added, "is not only in the pity, but perhaps also in the wrath. English poetry has had too little of anger." Work on revising, rearranging, and adding to the poems would continue over the next months, interrupted by efforts to find work. A major crisis would come early in 1944, however, when he had his first heart attack. A second and more violent heart attack would follow on September 15, his second day of work at P.R.C. Studios.

In June of 1944 the Rolfes moved from 434 S. Rodeo Drive to 6131 Orange Street in Hollywood, where they rented a one-room apartment with a kitchenette and a murphy bed that folded down out of a closet. Later that year they moved to a somewhat larger apartment at 519 North Elm drive in Beverly Hills. They would move several more times over the next decade, trying to match limited finances with their needs for living and working space.

At this point Rolfe was making his first forays into the film industry. Lou and Florence Bunin took him on at MGM in June of 1944 to help with a puppet sequence they were designing for *The Ziegfeld Follies*. Planned as a ten minute sequence, it was cut to four when the film was released, but it provided a couple months work—for which he earned \$645—and direct experience in the industry. In the studio commissary at various times were Lana Turner, Clark Gable, June Allison, Jimmie Durante, and Mickey Rooney. Rolfe was taken with all of them in



one way or another, except for Rooney, whom he considered detestable. But MGM as a whole he found less enticing; it “is not a place for poetry,” he wrote to Richard Nickson, “the very name grates against the muse, or any muse, for that matter.”

That same month he sent the manuscript of *Two Wars* to Random House. They rejected it with a positive letter, but it was a rejection nonetheless. That fall it would be rejected by Harcourt Brace as well. As he continued to revise the book and send it out over the next several years, he met the same results with Houghton Mifflin, Knopf, Rinehart, Boni and Gaer, Farrar, New Directions, and, finally, Little, Brown & Company. John Farrar’s letter to Maxim Lieber, Rolfe’s agent, says simply: “Edwin Rolfe’s poems have quality but I doubt that we could make them stand up and find a public in this bitter world.” The letter from the last of these publishers reports that “we publish very little poetry . . . so that despite the favorable reports on your manuscript, we have had to decide not to publish it.” “You may be interested,” they added, “in the overall opinion of the readers: your verse is moving, because of its content and integrity. You come closer, as one reader put it, than any other social poet of recent years, to combining skill at imagery with content.” That judgment, perfectly accurate, identifies part of what makes his poetry effective over forty years later.

As Rolfe reported to Lennie Lamb in a letter of November 10, 1944, he also wrote a fair amount of fiction during this period: “I’ve been working on a book of short stories, most of them based on the Spanish war. So far I have six written and three others in various stages of completion. I think the time will come soon when publishers will be less wary of taking writings on Spain—but even if they weren’t, I would still want to get these stories off my chest. Also have my old Spanish novel in the fire, and a new novel—a short one—which I had completed fifty pages of before I got sick.” The time would come when publishers would be more than willing to publish books on Spain, but it would not be soon. More than two decades would have to pass and a cluster of new social movements arise before an appropriate cultural space for Spain could be opened again.

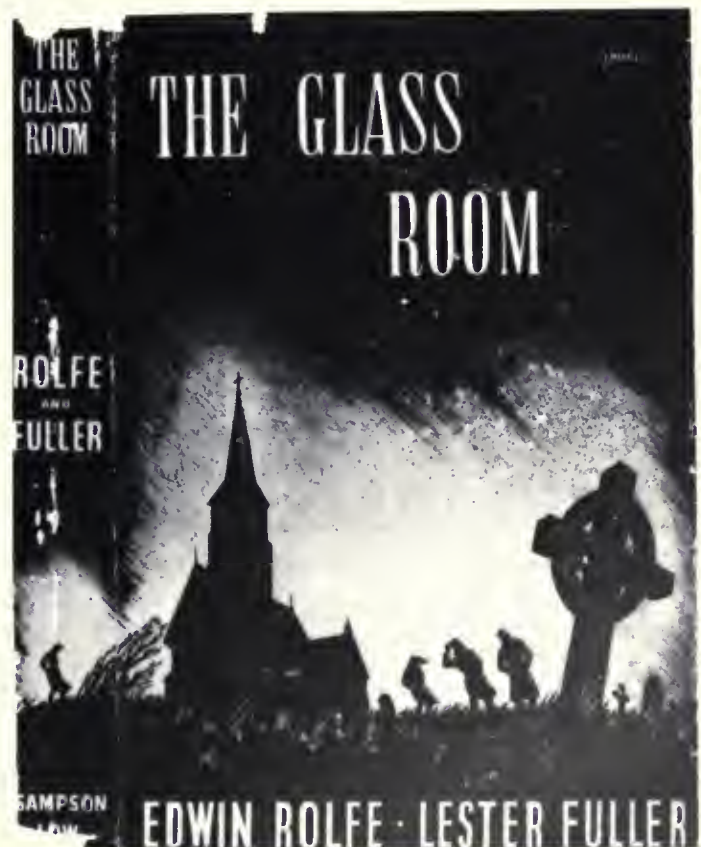
The difficulties of getting his poetry and fiction published were interspersed, as always, with the difficulties of finding work. In June of 1945 he began writing the mystery novel, *The Glass Room* (called *The Dark Highway* in an early draft), that would lead to his first real financial success. Meanwhile, he survived on scattered jobs, loans from friends, and a mixture of Serviceman’s Readjustment Allowance and unemployment insurance growing out of his film work in 1944. A September 1945 letter to Bern summarizes the year:

As for the Rolfe family, we manage to manage. Mostly on odd jobs. For example, a couple of months ago I received \$100 for two ‘inspirational’ ‘poems’ written for the Charlotte Greenwood radio program. And last week I received \$200 for a fifteen-minute radio speech on V-J Day and what it means, which has been recorded and twice delivered over Station KFWB (the Warners Bros station in L.A.) and later read in a seven-minute version, over a national network by a punk commentator named Carveth Wells. Since the whole speech took two hours to write, I was paid at the rate of \$100 per hour. Not bad, although such chores come too rarely. But we manage to keep going because (a) our expenses are slight; (b) the Browns have not collected rent for us since March (although I consider it an honor-bound debt, and will repay it when I can); and (c) because of a loan from Albert Maltz, who offered it at the beginning of the year, when we were at our lowest ebb, financially.

The following month Rolfe finished *The Glass Room*, which he had collaborated on with Lester Fuller. Fuller had spent two years at the Yale School of Drama and had then been head of the New York office of Paramount Pictures’s Talent Office for six years before moving to

California, where he met Rolfe in the Left community. The manuscript of *The Glass Room* went to the typist on October 20 and soon thereafter was officially in the hands of Rolfe's literary agent and unofficially in the hands of the story editor at Columbia Pictures and a producer at Warner Brothers. As it happened, the film rights were purchased first. Rolfe and Fuller were at John and June Brown's house on December 31, 1945, when a call came for Fuller. As Rolfe wrote to Bern the next day,

When he rejoined us his face was red. We asked 'What's up?' And after a few moments he said: 'Warner Brothers. They want to buy the book and hire us to do the screenplay. They have an open wire to Palm Springs, where Jack Warner is toasting his derriere in the sun, and they say the deal must be closed today.' (Note for you innocents: by adding the cost of purchasing our book to their 1945 expenditures—and this was Dec. 31, 1945—Warners takes so much more off its capital-something-or-other-tax . . . ). Well, to make a long story short, they railroaded it through within three hours. It was a long way from what we had wanted, and asked—which was fifty grand—but it was good enough to jump at, since Lester and I are (or were) in the same boat financially.



The American (left) and British (right) jackets for *The Glass Room*.

The price agreed on for the film rights was \$20,000, which Rolfe and Fuller would split after agent's fees and taxes. In January of 1946 Warner Brothers announced that Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall would star in the film, which would be produced by Alex Gottlieb. On January 7th Rolfe and Fuller went to work at Warners writing the screenplay. The check for the film rights arrived on January 12; suddenly, the Rolfes were financially secure for a time. They could pay their debts and put the rest in a bank while living on the weekly income from writing the screenplay. Though Rolfe was not altogether happy with *The Glass Room*—he thought it competently done but not a serious work—the financial relief was more than welcome. There was also some real pleasure in mastering two new forms, the mystery novel and the screenplay.

The success with *The Glass Room* continued. Rinehart & Company offered a contract to publish the novel; contracts for British and French editions and for a Portuguese translation in Brazil followed later. The revised manuscript of the novel was completed in April and the screenplay finished in early May. Published on November 7th, 1946, *The Glass Room* received a number of newspaper and magazine reviews—twenty-three survive in Rolfe's papers—and sold several thousand copies in the United States and Canada within a year of publication. Early in 1949 Bantam Books would issue a 25-cent paper edition. Though some reviewers did not care for the element of social commentary in the book, most reviews were positive. As the *New York Times* review noted, "the story is so fast and so tough that one is not surprised to learn that Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall are to star in the film version of it." Everything looked very good indeed, and for a time it was.

This was the brief honeymoon period for the Left in Hollywood. It was all to collapse soon, but for a time Los Angeles was a unique and invigorating place to live and work. Not only had a number of people from the New York Left resettled there after the war but there was also a notable group of European expatriates. As the Rolfes began to move in those circles, for a time it seemed the heady internationalism of the 1930s had returned. Within a year, HUAC would become active again and in time the whole country would be taken up in reactionary hysteria. One small casualty would be the film of *The Glass Room*. On March 30, 1947, Rolfe wrote to his friend and Civil War veteran John Murra to say that the film was tentatively set for release in March of 1949. But Rolfe and Fuller were both Communist Party members, and plans for the film died in the early days of the inquisition. In fact, Jack Warner, who had purchased the film rights to the novel, was the first Hollywood producer to break ranks with an initial anti-HUAC front among his peers and demand an "All Out Fight on Commies" in the April 21st issue of the *Hollywood Reporter*. The following month Warner testified in what was widely regarded as rather craven fashion at HUAC's closed hearings in L.A., naming names and naming as communists all the writers he had under contract who were active in the Screen Writers Guild. What might have happened to Rolfe's new film career had *The Glass Room* appeared starring Bogart and Bacall we will never know.

For a year, however, things went well. The Rolfes met Salka Viertel, a former actress in Europe who became a screen writer and coauthored screen plays for five of Greta Garbo's films from 1933 to 1941, including *Queen Christina* and *Anna Karenina*. They became regulars at the salon that Viertel presided over in Santa Monica. There they would meet such expatriate writers as Thomas Mann and Berthold Brecht and Hollywood figures like Montgomery Clift and Greta Garbo. One afternoon Rolfe went shopping with Garbo at Sears, where she bought herself a pair of blue pajamas and insisted on getting him a pair too. In the fall of 1946 Rolfe and Viertel would collaborate on a treatment, which they were unable to sell, for a film on the



life of German poet Heinrich Heine. It was in many ways the kind of elaborate period biography Hollywood might have done in the 1930s, but it was not a film for the Hollywood that had been making films about World War II and would soon produce *The Iron Curtain* and *The Red Menace*.

Soon the Rolfes met Charlie and Oona Chaplin and socialized with them regularly. The first half of New Year's eve in 1946 was spent at Viertel's house with the Chaplins, Clifford and Betty Odets, and others. On another occasion the Chaplins had dinner at the Rolfes' apartment, and the Rolfes returned there for various events. Mary remembers that invitations came as phone calls from Chaplin's butler, who always insisted on more formal attire than Chaplin himself would have wished. A January 11 diary entry reads: "Chaplins and Eislers to dinner. Afterward came Florence Bunin, Rosenfelds, John & June. John delighted with Charlie, as were all of us. They traded Joe Frisco stories like two old showmen. Charlie brilliant in doing Japanese theatre imitations, violent in his reenactments of 'Duel in the Sun,' and Hanns and Charlie did brilliant anti-religious take-offs." Later that month they have dinner at Vladimir and Edna Pozners' house with Chaplin and Odets. Rolfe's diary entry for January 31 reads: "Fine evening with Charlie talking about old-fashioned 'estheticism,' Cliff saying modern writers and artists have nothing to defend, only to oppose—ergo, no integrated art. I said in certain periods a writer must be like a man in a burning house—can only shriek 'Fire!' 'Help!'"

Throughout this time there was not yet a clear need to shriek "Fire," as there had been repeatedly in the past, but Rolfe nonetheless kept up his political work. He was attending the monthly meetings of the Los Angeles Post of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, as well as regular Communist Party meetings in L.A. In 1946, however, one of the famous literary controversies of the period would place Rolfe, as he had been occasionally in the past, opposite the official Party position. The trigger was an Albert Maltz essay in the February 12, 1946, issue of *New Masses*, in which Maltz drew yet again the recurring distinction between art and politics. Maltz argued against the demand that art must always be immediately politically useful and criticized utilitarian criteria for judging art. He reasserted that art inevitably reflects and engages with social issues, but that was not enough in the Party atmosphere of the late 1940s, so Maltz was widely attacked in *The Daily Worker* and elsewhere. Rolfe wrote to Richard Nickson on March 9th to say that he thought "90 per cent of what Albert said was great; and the whole intention of his article was fine. Maybe he made one reference to Studs Lonigan which was unfortunate, but certainly it didn't call for the lousy smear levelled at Maltz by (in the order of their appearance) Mike Gold, Sam Sillen, Thompson, Howard Fast and Joe North."

As it happened Maltz reversed himself the following month in *New Masses*. Maltz, ironically, had been the Party's emissary to Rolfe in 1939, when Rolfe continued to see Ralph Bates and Vincent Sheean after they broke publicly with the Party, Bates in a *New Republic* essay criticizing the Soviet invasion of Finland. The Party wanted Rolfe to end his friendship with the two men and sent Maltz to deliver the message. Rolfe simply refused to follow orders. But he kept his disagreement private rather than make a public statement, choosing instead to work from within the Party for an alternative viewpoint. Particularly after Spain, that was Rolfe's model of loyalty. It is part of why he so thoroughly rejected those of his friends who later chose to cooperate with HUAC. In Spain, betrayal often meant death. Loyalty to his friends and to the Party meant a great deal to Rolfe, and he would not violate either.

That did not, however, mean that he supported every Party position. It has been axiomatic for some years to assume that anyone who remained in the Party through the 1940s had to adopt



all its stands. Rolfe simply did not; that may have contributed to the partial alienation he would feel in the late 1940s and early 1950s, when Party publications sometimes rejected his poetry and fiction. He also might not have been able to refuse Party orders if he had been more central in the organization. But the fact remains that he not only remained a Party member but also, especially on literary matters, held opinions that were sometimes heretical. An unpublished piece prepared for a *Mainstream* conference lays out a position on literature and politics similar to positions taken by Farrell and, before his recantation, by Maltz.

Rolfe begins by asking why they should have a *Mainstream* Conference at all. If it's to advertise the magazine, he argues, publishing a single outstanding poem or story would do a better job. Though *New Masses* published poems by Hughes, Rosten, Rukeyser, and others in the past, *Mainstream* now does not. "Is a Mainstream Conference," he asks, "for the purpose of cementing the ideological ties among writers who happen to live and work in Southern California?" If so, he replies, we're already "sufficiently cemented in this respect, so much that the cement not only holds us together but keeps us [so] rigidly in place that movement is almost impossible." Indeed, he argues, except for translations there hasn't been "a single outstanding story or poem published in *Mainstream* or *New Masses* during the past year." "We will begin to get good writing," he argues heretically,

when our editors and critics—Marxist editors and critics—begin to learn and acknowledge the fact that good writing cannot be measured against the rigid yardsticks of good intentions or basic Marxist clarity alone . . . . A novelist or a poet writes out of compulsion far more than out of desire. He writes out of a morass, a jungle of memories, experience, feelings, and impressions which are more often unconscious than conscious . . . . That is why we value and claim as our own the poems of Garcia Lorca, who was certainly not a Marxist, as we do the poems of Pablo Neruda, who undoubtedly is.

This is not to say, therefore, that Rolfe does not value politically forceful and effective writing, since the historical and political importance of Lorca's writing could not be greater. Moreover, these arguments are coming from a poet whose work for twenty years has aimed at defining social struggles and intervening in political consciousness. But Rolfe does not believe the political effectiveness of a poem comes from programmatic political correctness or that it is simply a product of political intentions. Indeed, if Rolfe were to have been consistently taking up the Party's topics of highest priority, he would not have continued writing about Spain through the late 1940s.

Some of the work he wrote out of his own historical awareness he was able to publish, from six poems about Spain in the January 18, 1944, issue of *New Masses* to twelve poems on a variety of topics in *Poetry* and *The Saturday Review of Literature* in 1945 and 1946. Thereafter, when HUAC and the other anticommunist committees became active again, it became increasingly difficult to publish political poetry. In the spring of 1947, however, it was possible to imagine that a Left and liberal alliance could stand against the gathering forces of the Right. Rolfe worried about Bern's government job (which he would indeed later lose) when Truman in 1947 instituted Loyalty Boards to investigate federal employees, but the film industry could be counted on, it seemed, to resist efforts to interfere in its operations.

Late in 1946 the Progressive Citizens of America was founded in the hope of combining within one organization a range of Left activities—grass-roots organizing, fund raising, and scheduling high-visibility public events; in the spring of 1947 its Hollywood branch decided that a large conference should be held to discuss growing efforts at what clearly amounted to

nationwide “thought control.” Rolfe’s 1947 diary includes an entry noting his attendance at a May 24th meeting at activist writer Dan James’s house to discuss plans for the conference. Along with the entire California Left, Eddie and Mary attended the conference at the Beverly Hills Hotel in July. Sessions on thought control in every cultural domain were the scene of energetic debate, and the conference as a whole voted to urge that HUAC be abolished. For a moment, it felt as though the atmosphere of the Writers Congress of 1935 had returned, and indeed, when subpoenas were issued in September ordering nineteen Hollywood figures to appear before HUAC in Washington the following month, PCA offered its support. What no one yet realized was the strength and depth of the alliances forming between conservative business interests, government at all levels, and right-wing political organizations.

Many of Rolfe’s friends, both people he had known for years and others he had met since coming to Los Angeles, were among those called to testify. After a series of informers gave testimony, John Howard Lawson, Dalton Trumbo, Albert Maltz, Samuel Ornitz, Herbert Biberman, Edward Dymtryk, Adrian Scott, Ring Lardner, Jr., Lester Cole, and Bertolt Brecht were called to the stand. Except for Brecht, who would soon return to Germany, the others refused to answer questions about their political affiliations on the grounds that such questions abridged their First Amendment rights. Issued contempt citations and vilified in the press, they would become the famous Hollywood Ten. Almost immediately, Hollywood liberals began to retreat; in short order the Ten were isolated with only their family, friends, and a few weakened and harried Left organizations behind them. In November, in what would prove a watershed decision, the major Hollywood producers met and agreed to fire the ten screen writers and directors and bar their future employment. The producers allowed themselves the illusion that it would all end there; in reality the blacklist had begun.

At a meeting of the Screen Writers Guild that Rolfe attended on January 13, 1948, a final effort was made to force that organization to fight for the reinstatement of the three working writers and to support their suits against the studios. As Rolfe reported to Bern a few days later, the petition was dismissed and the resolution defeated: “Witch hunt here is really something. What hurts most is that the screen writers are letting their own members be thrown to the dogs. We lost resolution for all out support for them (petition I signed) at last meeting by vote of 340 to 240, and the fact that most of the opposition votes were proxies didn’t soften the blow.”

Rolfe himself was also having difficulty finding work. The job possibilities, he acknowledged to Bern in January, “are small because of the witch-hunt atmosphere here. Ten weeks work would set me up for nearly a year. Problem is: how to get it, when guys like Maltz, Lardner, Trumbo, etc., can’t. Almost got a job two weeks ago doing screenplay for dog of a novel called ‘Mrs. Mike,’ but producer finally gave the job to Emmet Lavery, the jesuitical former president of Screenwriters guild. Maybe fact that I signed petition to SWG for all-out support to blacklisted screenwriters was partly responsible.” “All of 47 and 48 I stewed in my own juices,” he would write to Leo in May of 1950, “was jobless, aimless, unhappy.” Involvement with anti-HUAC activities took up some of his time, as did occasional other political efforts. In March of 1947 he noted in his diary that he spent a morning “tacking up campaign posters for Russell McKnight.” In January of 1948 he collected signatures to put Henry Wallace and the Progressive Party on the California ballot. But none of those activities solved the problem of the Rolfes’ dwindling savings.

In order to get by, Rolfe began translating and dubbing foreign films in January of 1948. He would be provided with a rough, literal translation and would work up the finished product

from that. The money he could earn that way, however, was not enough to live on and certainly not enough to free up much time to write. Nevertheless, he found some opportunity for poetry. As he later wrote to Leo about this period, "one thing that pleased me throughout all of [the] above was that I got another good productive spurt in poetry (which I write best when I feel worst)."

Barely employed at all, marginalized on the communist Left that was under increasing assault, it was in poetry that Rolfe would find grounds for successful if almost unwitnessed resistance. There can be little question about what poem stands at once as the triumph of this period and as a turning point in Rolfe's career: "Elegia." In February of 1948, ten years after he left Madrid to go to Barcelona, he turned again toward the city under siege that had been the heart of the world. He would write about Madrid now explicitly "in these days of our planet's anguish." He had travelled to France and crossed the Pyrenees to join the struggle against fascism then; now fascism was overtaking his home, and there were even fewer men and women willing to stand against it. Thus Spain in 1948 would be a figure not only for what might have been but also for a common cause, a successful alliance politics, that only weeks before had come unravelled in America precisely when it was most needed. And it would be a figure as well for an idealism and solidarity not so much imperiled as virtually extinct:

*Madrid Madrid Madrid Madrid*  
*I call your name endlessly, savor it like a lover.*  
*Ten irretrievable years have exploded like bombs*  
*since last I saw you, since last I slept*  
*in your arms of tenderness and wounded granite.*  
*Ten years since I touched your face in the sun,*  
*ten years since the homeless Guadarrama winds*  
*moaned like shivering orphans through your veins*  
*and I moaned with them.*

*When I think of you, Madrid,*  
*locked in the bordello of the Universal Pimp,*  
*the blood that rushes to my heart and head*  
*blinds me, and I could strangle your blood-bespattered jailors,*  
*choke them with these two hands which once embraced you.*  
*When I think of your breathing body of vibrancy and sun,*  
*silently I weep, in my own native land*  
*which I love no less because I love you more.*  
*Yet I know, in the heart of my heart, that until your liberation*  
*rings through the world of free men near and far*  
*I must wander like an alien everywhere.*

"There was never enough food," he recalls several stanzas later, "but always poetry." Now, of course, in America there is no poetry, for "the ghosts of old Kings and Inquisitors" are alive again, "agitating the balconies with their idiot stares." Madrid, he writes, remains "the conscience of our lives." After five pages, he concludes with a promise:

*And if I die before I can return to you,*  
*or you, in fullest freedom, are restored to us,*  
*my sons will love you as their father did*  
*Madrid Madrid Madrid*



Since the Rolfes had no children, the last stanza cannot be read literally, though a time would come soon when many on the Left could do little more than pass their values on to their children. Here it is the poems themselves, potential future poets with similar commitments, and finally we his readers who must serve in their stead. But for a time readers would be difficult to find. I "have written new poems," he writes to Richard Nickson in September of 1948, "but hardly ever send them out because the poetry volume, unpublished, hangs like an iron weight on me." Rolfe was beginning to realize that there was no point in imagining that a commercial house would publish a volume devoted to Spain. He would publish it himself, with the help of a bookstore in L.A. In the meantime, "Elegia" and the completion of *First Love and Other Poems* would free him for the next phase of his poetic career. He would now take on the inquisition more directly.

## *Poetry and the Inquisition*

*Shrieking I am the State / Ghoul unleashed his terror.*

IN THE TIME BETWEEN THE INDICTMENT of the Hollywood Ten in December of 1947 and HUAC's return to California in May of 1951, it gradually became increasingly difficult for people on the Left to find employment at competitive salaries in Hollywood. With the collapse of plans to film *The Glass Room*, Rolfe's position became doubly tenuous, since he was thereby denied the screen credit that would have made his work more marketable. Nevertheless, he was able to find occasional work on the margins of the industry. After 1951, however, blacklisting became much more pervasive, for at that point Hollywood producers began clearing all potential employees through businesses created to identify Communists and leftists, like American Business Consultants, or through the American Legion, which maintained its own list of people it deemed subversive. The number thus eventually barred from employment was much larger than those on the semi-official blacklist, which was theoretically limited to people subpoenaed by HUAC who refused to appear or failed to cooperate when they did. In those years independent producers were sometimes willing to hire writers on the Left at vastly reduced wages—generally requiring writers to produce under a pseudonym or to operate through a third party who would claim to have authored the script—but no such disguise was possible for actors or directors. Hundreds found all possibility of employment in Hollywood denied to them. They joined the many thousands of Americans in all areas of life who were losing their jobs.

Cooperation with HUAC soon became highly ritualized: apologies for earlier radical activities, disavowal of all Left positions now, compliments to the Committee on the importance of its work, and, finally and most important, the naming of names. People who were either in the Party or fellow travellers were expected to name people they believed to be Communists or sympathetic to Communist causes. In actuality, the Los Angeles police had agents attending Party meetings for years; in addition, the FBI was sharing its files with HUAC. Thus HUAC had the names of far more people than it could realistically call for testimony. But the naming of names provided dramatic public theater and excellent headlines, and it was the key form of betrayal and self-abasement expected of friendly witnesses. When someone wanted to cooperate but could not remember appropriate names, HUAC would supply them. Those so named could expect to be called. Testimony from unfriendly witnesses was balanced with testimony from informers, a number of whom were salaried and some of whom simply



invented elaborate stories about peoples' Party activities. To take issue with an informer's testimony was to risk being indicted for perjury. It was informers' testimony, moreover, that sustained the fictional melodrama of a communist conspiracy to take over the country by violence, since no hard evidence to support the story existed.

Rolfe was named at least twice in the hearings that began again in 1951; he may have been named additional times in secret testimony. But Rolfe's politics were no secret in any case. He had published repeatedly in *The Daily Worker* and *New Masses*, had written a book about his Spanish Civil War experiences, had worked for Tass, and Tass had asked his draft board to cancel his induction. When Rolfe was inducted into the army, the FBI already had a complete dossier on him. His efforts on behalf of the Hollywood Ten meanwhile made his position visible within the industry. But there were a few years when the inquisition's efforts were focused elsewhere; the major studios would not employ him, but independent producers occasionally did. His last job came in the summer of 1951, when Irving Lerner, who had been involved in the Film and Photo League in the 1930s, arranged to pay him \$750 for writing "The Gulf," a treatment of a story by Conrad Hall, Jack Couffer, and Marvin Weinstein. Lerner had no production company, but he hoped to find backing to film in Mexico.

During 1948, however, Rolfe could find almost no employment of any kind. His 1948 diary lists a total income of \$850 for the year, most of that from dubbing foreign films into English. Mary earned \$2075 that year, first working for the Actors Lab, which was producing *All My Sons*, and later doing secretarial work at a law firm. Rolfe did, however, become involved in one highly rewarding film project in the fall of 1948—writing the verse accompaniment for *Muscle Beach*. A satirical short co-directed by Joseph Strick and Irving Lerner, it was to acquire a notable reputation over the next few years. It was Strick's first film, shot on California beaches on weekends while Strick was working at the *Los Angeles Times*. The editing, which was what gave the film its immediate impact, was Lerner's responsibility. Rolfe and composer-song writer Earl Robinson worked closely together to coordinate the commentary and the music. Rolfe's script only earned him \$100 plus 10% ownership of the film, but it was work he could do with pride. In 1951 *Muscle Beach* would win a prize at a film festival in Edinburgh and the British film quarterly *Sequence* would review it:

In complete contrast to anything else the evening had disclosed was the already legendary *Muscle Beach*. Here the poet's eye strays observantly, ruminatively, amusedly, over a crowded summer beach, where acrobats and weight-lifters are exercising, young people are lying out in the sun, and their children paddle and gape at the strange antics of their elders. So dazzling are the patterns and rhythms of its editing that one can easily miss the shapeliness of the structure of this perfect little film, whose easy transitions from the lyrical to the humorous are so happily enhanced by Earl Robinson's guitar accompaniment and Edwin Rolfe's witty and affectionate words.

The following year was somewhat easier. In 1949 he was underpaid at \$375 for doing a prose treatment for a possible film of Dorothy Parker's short story "Big Blond," but did better when he wrote a treatment called "Space Ship," based on a story idea by I. Block and J. Rubin. Retitled "Destination Moon," Rolfe wrote a 105-page screenplay for Shenck Productions, earning a total of \$3,500 for the two projects. Along with a \$750 royalty payment on *The Glass Room*, ten percent of which went to his agent, and Mary's 1949 earnings of \$1655, which she received for managing the office of the Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions, one of the surviving Left organizations, they were able to get by.

A treatment coauthored with Carlton Moss, a black writer on the Left, was written in hopes of selling it to a studio. In August of 1949 he wrote to Bern to say “there’s much difference of opinion” about it: “everybody agrees it’s deftly done, but many are afraid the subject’s too delicate for screen treatment.” Titled “About Ben Addams,” it had a black hero; in a 1950 letter to Leo, Rolfe describes it as “a comedy on Jim Crow” that proved “too savage for the studios, too compromising for anything else.”

But at the end of 1949 Rolfe was able to sell another story, “The Dungeon,” to I. G. Goldsmith’s newly formed Gloria Films. It was to be their second production. Disagreements among all involved resulted in Rolfe losing the assignment to do the screenplay, but the purchase price on the treatment was still over \$20,000. Unfortunately, Gloria Films did not do well, and most of Rolfe’s payment was deferred. Rolfe would receive two \$1250 payments for the sale of the story and two months salary (\$1446 after deductions) for revising it, but that was all until he was paid about another \$2,000 from 1951-52. Thereafter, collecting from Goldsmith proved impossible. Retitled “The Scarf” and directed by E. A. Dupont, a man Rolfe considered “a fake, a fool, and a swine,” the film was released, starring John Ireland and Mercedes McCambridge, in 1951. Rolfe thought the screenplay wordy and the film wretched, and most of the critics agreed. But Rolfe retained magazine and book rights, so he expanded “The Dungeon” into a novel, but he could not find a publisher for it. Rolfe described the whole experience in a May 19, 1951, letter to Albert Maltz:

I have no feeling of satisfaction about the whole business, not even the satisfaction of having earned dough, since the good producer fouled it up not only artistically but also, so far, financially. (I should add that not all the latter is his own fault.) So again I’m left with the feeling that I always had toward working in Hollywood (I know you haven’t got it—but it has always kept me from pursuing a single end here with singleness of purpose): that I have somehow befouled myself by contact with the whole foul and heartless process, whose only purpose is to make dough, no matter how. I felt that way, whether I admitted it to myself or not, from the time of my arrival; and I feel even more strongly that way now. The few good films that have been made here in the last thirty years have obviously been accidents; somebody slipped up somewhere, or the man in actual charge was off doing something decent, like whoring, when the good film happened . . . if I can ever work myself entirely free of it, I will pick up and scam. And yet, since I am addicted to three meals a day, I still cast around for work, which is increasingly hard to get.

In trying to market scripts, like so many others, Rolfe would have to resort to using pseudonyms. If he had first taken another name as part of an effort to shape his identity as a writer, he would now, ironically, take other names in an effort to erase his public self, because the country demanded he be no one. In 1953, with Hollywood staggering from HUAC’s depredations and its own cowardice, Rolfe would be angry at the widespread suffering but feel little sympathy for the industry itself. “Hollywood,” he would write to Maltz, “they say, is dying; long may it rot.”

Rolfe would carry on his own resistance in his poems, but it was a mostly unheard and unheralded resistance. Although Rolfe’s primary subject was the great purge—by which the government was winning consent to the cold war—he continued his lifelong effort to define an historically positioned identity. There were also moments of a different kind of resistance to the surrounding culture. “Blues,” an unpublished poem and song, amounts to a moment of resistance through pleasure. Written by one of those who “nevertheless . . . endured in the long darkness,” it honors a reality opposite that of the inquisition. It is a tribute at once to the mutuality and duplicities of consciousness and sensuality in human relations:

## BLUES

*Got a two-handed woman, she loves me night and day  
got a two-handed woman, loves me all the way  
If she ever up and left me, don't know what I'd do or say.*

*Got a two-breasted woman, tastes as sweet as bread,  
got a real hilly woman, sweet as fresh made bread,  
If she ever up and left me, I'd feel that I'd gone dead.*

*Got a two-legged woman, god those legs are sweet.  
got a two-legged woman, live and long and neat,  
She breathes from her hips to her knees right down to her feet.*

*Got a two hipped woman, big as the wide earth,  
got a two hipped woman, big as the wide earth,  
When I hold them in my hands, I feel it's my own true birth.*

*She's only got one trouble, know it when we go to bed,  
Yes, just only one trouble, bothers me when we're in bed,  
She's got two of everything, she's also got two heads.*

*Yes, my two-headed woman, watches me fore and aft,  
my big two-headed woman, watches me fore and aft,  
If it wasn't for the rest of her, I'd sure go daft.*

*My friends say she's a monster, call her mighty queer,  
they call her a monster, call her mighty queer,  
but they never bedded with her, my own true woman and dear.*

*So my own advice to lovers, here and everywhere,  
my true advice to lovers, here and everywhere,  
Is make a virtue of misfortune, always call your own love fair.*

But such moments in his postwar poetry are rare. Mostly he had to carry on his solitary critique of the culture of paranoia. By 1950 the Left was fragmented and liberals were increasingly either cowed or coopted into anticommunism. Publishing political poems was frequently impossible. In April of 1951 Rolfe would write to Maltz, who was now out of prison and living in Mexico—after serving a sentence for contempt of Congress—to say that his poetry was “unpublishable since Bill Benét [at *Saturday Review*] died last year and that southern agrarian Karl Shapiro took over the editorship of *Poetry* magazine in Chicago.” That July he added that the “*New Yorker* will have none of me or mine, *Nation* prints only its own pets, and *New Republic* is beneath contempt.” But Rolfe would continue to write. “The poetry,” he commented to Bern in 1949, “keeps coming whether I want to write the stuff or not.” Two years later he would tell Maltz that life sometimes seems purposeless except for the poetry he continued to produce. Beginning in 1947, he was writing increasingly about America in the midst of the inquisition. He would place two poems in the Left magazine *Mainstream* in 1947 and one poem in *The Saturday Review* in 1948 and again in 1953. That year *Poetry* would take “A Poem to Delight My Friends Who Laugh at Science Fiction.” As the first two stanzas suggest, it too is a poem about the national madness, though its metaphoric substitutions may have made its politics either invisible or acceptable:



*That was the year  
the small birds in their frail and delicate battalions  
committed suicide against the Empire State,  
having, in some never-explained manner,  
lost their aerial radar, or ignored it.*

*That was the year  
men and women everywhere stopped dying natural deaths.  
The aged, facing sleep, took poison;  
the infant, facing life, died with the mother in childbirth;  
and the whole wild remainder of the population,  
despairing but deliberate, crashed in auto accidents  
on roads as clear and uncluttered as ponds.*

Throughout these years, Rolfe was experimenting with various forms and rhetorical strategies appropriate to the need to describe the wholesale terrorizing and transformation of American culture. "What can I tell you about that you don't already know," he wrote to Maltz in April of 1951, "families continue to break up, careers continue to be broken at the moment of maturity and fulfillment, and under and over everything I sense an engulfing fear, from which nobody seems immune. The hearings continue, and the clipped birds continue to chirp." The following month he writes to Bern and Ruth in more detail:

It's not so much gloom I feel as a sense of powerlessness in the face of so many things that happen, small things that, at least in this part of the forest, keep breaking up careers and homes and people. Personally I have little to worry about; I've known lean times before. Besides I've never really been part of the motion picture industry; I despise the medium, at least as it is conceived and practised here. But others—and very good people they are too—have their lives and livings and all their training bound up in it; and they are the ones who are being badly hurt. Of course there are many things to latch on to, and I have some of them. The other side of the spinning coin is quite bright, but at certain times that is scant consolation. I do see the *Guardian* from time to time, and it's good to read. I also, through the thoughtfulness of a friend, get the English weekly *New Statesman* and *Nation*; and it cheers me too, because in a world of blind men, even a one-eyed man is a rarity. Yes, the witch-hunt continues, with time out for General MacArthur. And of course I know, at least by sight or name, a number of the people smeared; they're all members of the screen writers', actors' and directors' guilds. Many of them are just wandering around town now, not really knowing just what has hit them. Some are fighting mad, others just dazed; but all of them know that their film-making days are over for a long time. One aspect of this whole business that you may not have read about is the anti-semitic one, the attempt to get the Jews out of movie-making; and this part of it is mainly in the hands of a group here called 'The Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals' (commonly known as the MPA) of which Hedda Hopper, Ward Bond, John Wayne, etc., are the big drums. (Behind them, of course, are other more powerful but less tangible figures.) At this moment, the rumors are that Columbia Pictures owns \$52,000,000 worth of films which are in danger of failing because of the current hearings (among them a Larry Parks picture, and 'The Brave Bulls' which Robert Rossen directed and produced); that Warner Brothers are thinking of selling out their companies; that even L.B. Mayer is due to retire from M.G.M. I have scant regard for these people, but there it is.

The poetry, it is clear, would not merely be a witness to the hearings themselves, but a reflection on the epistemology of a culture emptied of value, gone mad, given over to malice. But Rolfe's work on these poems was interrupted in July of 1950 when he had another and still more serious heart attack. This time he had to go into the Veteran's Hospital in Los Angeles to rest until September. There, as always seemed to happen when he was ill, he took stock of



his political positioning and symbolically named himself again. On the appropriate anniversary, he reached back to a moment in his youth, in 1927, when he had spent all night in a vigil waiting for Sacco and Vanzetti to be executed:

*I think of two men who were murdered  
Twenty-three years ago, this very day—  
Whose death was my first real introduction to life—  
life as my land and my century know it—  
Sacco the shoemaker, Vanzetti the seller of fish,  
the vendor of human ideas in the market place.*

He pairs the deaths of Sacco and Vanzetti with the death of Federico Garcia Lorca, “the murdered soul of Spain”; with those two sacrifices linking Spain and America, the poet with articulate and politically committed working class heroes, he draws a circle that is sufficient, in retrospect, to define the historical ground of his work.

Just before becoming ill again, he had begun to plan how to issue *Two Wars*, now retitled *First Love and Other Poems*, on his own. As he wrote to Maltz in May of 1950, he was thinking of “getting subscriptions in advance to pay the printer’s and binder’s bills.” After recovering and returning home he gradually makes the arrangements over the next year. As he explains to Maltz in July of 1951, it “would comprise not the new poems but the volume I had ready before the recent outburst” of poems came. The “reason I want this volume out,” he adds, “is that I’d hate to let 1951 pass without a small stab in the direction of a soul-satisfying project.” He notifies Bern in September that the printed prepublication circulars will be out that month, but advises him not to try to sell copies of the book since “one of the poems is dedicated to an old commander of mine [Milt Wolff], of many years ago, who is now in trouble of sorts.” Lia Nickson provides illustrations and the book is issued under the imprint of the Larry Edmunds Bookshop late in 1951. By the end of January 1952, all 375 copies are sold at \$2.75 each. Rolfe has an extra 25 books bound out of leftover printed sheets so he can send some out for review.

Yet the reviews do not come, except for Aaron Kramer in the *National Guardian* and Rolfe Humphries in *The Nation*. Rolfe is happy that the book sold out quickly, but the lack of public recognition exacts a price. “I have enough poems for a new book,” he informs Maltz in November of 1952, “but I hesitate to start for many reasons. First, the last book, though it sold out completely and immediately, left me with no feeling of gratification or achievement. It dropped like a stone into a silent, bottomless well—no waves, no echoes, no nothing except those personal ones which no writer can really exist on. And now I can’t even start such a project, as I did the last, with my own dough down and [no] prospect of more coming in.”

For several years now, indeed, Rolfe had only been intermittently successful at getting politically focused poems accepted. A striking case is “Elegia,” one of his finest poems. A friend, Jose Rubia Barcia, translated it into Spanish and sent it to another friend in Mexico City for possible journal publication and to see how much it might cost to print as a pamphlet. As Rolfe wrote to Bern, in 1949 “this friend turned it over for an estimate to another friend, a printer, who happens also to be one of the foremost Spanish poets. Instead of returning with an estimate, the poet liked my poem so much that he printed 800 of them as a gift to me!” On the other hand, *Masses and Mainstream* demanded revisions when Rolfe submitted “Elegia” in 1948. Rolfe made changes, then resubmitted it; they demanded further changes, Rolfe refused, and they rejected it again in 1949; it was a rejection that hurt him deeply. As he wrote to Leo

in 1950, "The mush-brains on M & M turned it down, or there'd be plenty of copies around. They also nixed my Chaplin poem. It would be a boon to American lit and all honest practitioners thereof—and readers too—if the magazine were quietly to commit suicide."

That Samuel Sillen, who edited *Masses and Mainstream*, couldn't see the importance of a powerful poem that reflected on the moral power of a commitment that had given the Left its broadest alliance of the 1930s suggests how nearly incapacitated the Left was by the forces of repression. It suggests as well how difficult collective progressive cultural work was during the worst part of the inquisition. The most explicit poems against the inquisition that Rolfe was able to publish in fact appeared posthumously, in 1954 and 1955, in *The California Quarterly* and *The Contemporary Reader*, alternative journals started, respectively, by blacklisted screenwriter-novelists Phillip Stevenson and Abraham Polonsky.

In some cases journals were simply afraid. *The Nation* accepted Rolfe's "Ballad of the Noble Intentions" for its December 12, 1953, issue and then backed out, claiming the space had been taken by advertising. They promised its publication in a forthcoming issue, but the poem never appeared. When Rolfe sent his novel *The Blue Bandanna*, revised from *The Dungeon*, to his new agent Harriet Wolf, she wrote to warn him that "some of the things you say would scare the editors out of buying." When he asked her to be more explicit, she responded in a letter of July 17, 1953: "I am sorry I was not more specific about what might 'scare' the magazine editors. I thought that both Thompson's and Lopez's philosophy was a little too much on the progressive side. Since Bucklin Moon and MacLean Farrell were fired from *Colliers*, editors have been more hesitant than ever about including material even slightly off the beaten track."

But fear of retribution, which was hardly unrealistic, was not the only reason why Left publication was difficult. Indeed, the task of mapping out a viable collective Left politics was almost impossible for a time. An extremely instructive case is the struggle by the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade to issue a new anthology on Spain, a project Rolfe was involved in from its inception in 1948 until its publication in 1952.

Alvah Bessie had agreed to edit the anthology, and he asked Rolfe to assemble a group of appropriate poems and to advise him on the other contents. For a time work proceeded uneventfully, though Rolfe became annoyed when the Veterans asked Bessie rather than him to write an introduction to a reprint edition of *Volunteer for Liberty*. As Bessie made clear in a letter to the VALB office, he had in fact asked to write the introduction, though he lacked the full knowledge of the history of the *Volunteer* that he needed to proceed. Rolfe was to regret later that the resulting introduction gave little detail about how the *Volunteer* was edited and published. He wrote a letter to Milt Wolff, who suggested to the New York office and to Bessie that the introduction be collaborative. Bessie, who had perhaps acted from distress at his unemployability, left this option open to the main office in New York but didn't insist on it. Bessie's introduction was later published unsigned. In any case, Rolfe let the matter pass and continued to work on *Heart of Spain*.

Rolfe gave Bessie his suggestions in January of 1949, sending a copy to the VALB office shortly thereafter. Bessie briefly wondered in January what to do about people "who were once good and are now lousy." That March he wrote to Irv Fajans in New York to raise in more detail the issue of the current political positions of contributors who were solidly behind the Spanish Republic from 1936 to 1939. Malraux, he argued, was now a fascist. Sender, Bates, and Sheean were no longer on their side. "There are people who tell me that it doesn't matter where these birds stand today—they wrote well about Spain. I can't agree that we should give currency to

the works of people who have deserted everything Spain stands for." Supposing the political criteria for inclusion could be agreed upon and those to be excluded identified, the next question would be whether their absence should be explained.

After some discussion, it was decided that people who actively supported contemporary versions of fascism should be excluded. People who had declared themselves noncommunist or simply withdrawn from progressive activity, so long as there was no evidence they now disavowed their commitment to Spain, would be included in the book. On that basis, Hemingway, despite the organization's objections to his portrait of André Marty and his treatment of terrorism in *For Whom The Bell Tolls*, would stay in the book.

The issues were quite complex, since the meaning of the commitment to Spanish democracy then and now was at stake. It was a commitment currently under attack, as was the Veteran's organization itself. Moreover, even a symbolic reconstruction of the Popular Front of the 1930s might have some effect in the midst of the inquisition. Bessie argued explicitly that it would "strengthen intellectual circles against the continuing witch-hunt." As it happened, the consensus did not hold for long. Louis Aragon wrote from France to say his poem would have to be withdrawn if Hemingway was to be included. Auden refused to let the Vets reprint "Spain," and Vincent Sheean asked for a clarification of the book's aims. He still stood behind Spain but didn't want to be in the book if "a Communist propaganda purpose is intended."

Rolfe felt strongly that Hemingway should be included. In a long letter to Fajans on February 19, 1950, he argued that "Hemingway's 'On the American Dead in Spain' is the most eloquent and moving thing we could print." Aragon, he added, is "one of the finest poets writing in any language anywhere, but the anthology would suffer less by the exclusion of 'Santa Espina' (one of his less good poems)." But the larger issue, as he pointed out in a letter a few days later, was what kind of a book this was to be:

Are we publishing an anthology for wide distribution, designed to aid the cause of the Vets (the struggle for a free Spain, for building sentiment against Franco *and all who are helping him to remain in power*)—which means the widest kind of common anti-Franco front?

OR

Is it our intention to clarify ourselves and our friends, to engage in polemics on an almost forgotten publication (a whole new generation has come to manhood since Spain), to tighten and *limit*, rather than *extend*, our anti-fascist alliances?

There were strong disagreements over these issues. Bessie wanted to keep Hemingway in, but Aragon and the French Vets stood firm. It was decided, in the end, to drop Hemingway and write a letter of apology to France. Fajans resigned his position in protest against the decision, and Rolfe remained unhappy about Hemingway's exclusion until the end of his life. After the book appeared, Lillian Hellman wrote to say that she wished to withdraw her contribution from any reprinting in the light of Hemingway's absence.

From our perspective, it seems clear that the Left would benefit from reassembling the broadest possible coalition, even if it could only be reassembled in a book. But it was not altogether possible. Despite elaborate efforts at persuasion, the range of national and international interests could not be adjudicated. What remained possible, in part, was individual witness and resistance. It was to those aims that Rolfe dedicated the poetry he would write in the last years of his life.

By the time *Heart of Spain* was published in 1952, the effort to purge American society of its heretics was rampant. President Truman's Loyalty Boards would soon accept suspicion of



communist sympathies as sufficient basis for dismissal. Some 15,000 Federal employees were eventually either fired or pressured into resignation. Similar loyalty hearings, outside judicial process and with no standards for evidence, operated at state, county, and municipal levels. Private industry initiated its own efforts. It seems, he had written to Maltz in 1951, ringing changes on one of the Duke's speeches in *As You Like It*, that we "find spies in stones, foe's ears in the running brooks / traitorous tongues in trees, betrayal everywhere."

In April of 1952 Rolfe received his own summons to appear before HUAC. He describes the sequence of events in a November 8th letter to Albert and Margaret Maltz:

The little pink paper was a foul disrupter of everything—of a job possibility, of work itself. And I permitted myself to be caught up in it. When I first received it, in April, dated for June, I said, 'Oh, what the hell' and set my sights for June. But my opponents are better poker players—they waited until the last week and then set it forward to August; and then to September—with minor date changes in between. The result—my fault, I confess—was to throw me completely off stride . . . Anyway, we struggled along, and then my paper seems to have been quashed on the basis of my medical record. I say seems, because the very day I was to appear I received a further brief postponement. And then another postponement until Nov. 17. And, just a few days ago, an indefinite postponement. (All telegrams, delivered at 6 a.m.—a happy time of day for me.) And now I read in the papers that the whole thing's definitely off until the new boys can get on the job—which means 1953 sometime.

In April of the following year he informs Bern that he "was name-dropped by a name dropper at recent un-Babylonian hearings here; but apparently they'll not call me again. Doctor's letter on my health convinced them I shouldn't be made to appear." Meanwhile, he is writing poems, poems that are variously bleak or witty, poems trying to tease out the multiple ways the depredations of what others have called "the plague years" or "the time of the toad" have penetrated every element of human life. "The poisoned air," he writes in an uncollected poem published in *The Contemporary Reader*, "befouled the whole decade":

*Even the purest in heart were daily bombarded  
with the subtlest lies and slanders, so that at last  
the grip of their fingers slipped from the main mast  
of their lives' integrity . . .*

Characterizing this period of American history is a nearly impossible task, or at least a task that cannot entirely be done on any one occasion but rather must be assayed in multiple ways, by direct assault as well as indirection. In a way, the intensified knowledge it requires is itself nearly disabling:

*To understand the strength of those dark forces  
phalanxed against him would have spelled surrender:  
the spiked fist, the assassin's knife, the horses'  
eyeless hooves above as he fell under.  
To understand the sum of all this terror  
would a priori have meant defeat, disaster.  
Born of cold panic, error would pile on error . . .*

Rolfe writes poems indicting the inquisition and poems honoring those ruined by it. "I heard this man called traitor," he writes of "Political Prisoner 123456789," a representative figure enumerated in every American life:



*His age, description given, his children named, his wife  
mentioned profanely, his private habits exposed; the walls of  
his few rooms torn wide for all to see . . .*

There are poems as well describing the culture of suspicion— “lighted continents / where privacy is publicly outlawed,” a country ruled by those with “the strength / to kill all thought,” where “all the bright awards” are “bestowed by coward on his fellow-coward” and “where even an innocent unguarded eye / means sudden expulsion.” But above all it is the ballads, as his friend the film historian Jay Leyda notes in a letter of September 9, 1953, that seem to catch the mixed emotions of anger, terror, irony, and critique. There is “Ballad of the Noble Intentions”—“And what will you say, my brother, my friend, / when they threaten your family’s food instead”—and there will be “Little Ballad for Americans—1954,” which fuses rage and wit and which even *California Quarterly* does not dare to publish.

On December 30, 1953, Rolfe writes to Bern to explain “A Poem to Delight My Friends Who Laugh at Science Fiction”: it urges us to “wake up and see how closely life in our neck of the world approximates the so-called fantasies of science fiction; how we head ever-closer to a world in which the only ones left alive will be the ‘sullen’ soldiers, ‘unwilling, puppetlike, directionless.’” Meanwhile, Rolfe is working to assemble another book, but his physical condition is worsening. He often lies in bed at night writing, occasionally waking Mary to read her a poem that feels particularly successful. The only poem he does not share with her is “Dawn Song,” which talks of his “treasonous heart” that “pounds on toward certain doom.” In April of 1954 he reports to the Nicksons: “Feel below par physically, but what’s a body anyway.”

But it is in April as well that he writes his most devastating ballad about the inquisition, “Little Ballad for Americans—1954.” It has remained unpublished until now:

*LITTLE BALLAD FOR AMERICANS—1954*

*Brother, brother, best avoid your workmate—  
Words planted in affection can spout a field of hate.*

*Housewife, housewife, never trust your neighbor—  
A chance remark may boomerang to five years at hard labor.*

*Student, student, keep mouth shut and brain spry—  
Your best friend Dick Merriwell’s employed by the F.B.I.*

*Lady, lady, make your phone calls frugal—  
The chief of all Inquisitors has ruled the wire-tap legal.*

*Daughter, daughter, learn soon your heart to harden—  
They’ve planted stoolies everywhere; why not in kindergarten?*

*Lovers, lovers, be careful when you’re wed—  
The wire-tap grows in living-room, in auto, and in bed.*

*Give full allegiance only to circuses and bread;  
No person’s really trustworthy until he’s dead.*

On May 24, 1954, still writing poetry, Rolfe has a fatal heart attack. In the foreword to *Permit Me Refuge*, which *California Quarterly* will publish as its first book in 1955, Rolfe’s friend

Vol. 3 : No. 3 : 1954

75 ¢

# The California Quarterly

PABLO NERUDA  
LES THOMPSON  
TERESA MANN  
DON GORDON  
MILLEN BRAND  
EDITH WITT  
DAVID LEMON  
BERT MEYERS  
WALDEEN  
RAY FABRIZIO  
MELISSA BLAKE  
EUGENE FRUMKIN  
JEANNETTE MAINO  
MELVIN WEISBURD  
BERNARD RAYMUND  
ANNE DE LONGCHAMPS

EDWIN ROLFE: 1909-1954



*A cover to California Quarterly with a portrait of Edwin Rolfe.*

Thomas McGrath says of him: "Rolfe had a gentleness that was shocking. Just the same, there was a lot of iron in him. He was capable of fury and rage. But no malice. . . . So, at the last, you could say that he suffered and he acted. The acting was more than the suffering because he was a revolutionary and, simultaneously, a poet." A few days later, after a memorial service, Philip Stevenson is among those who writes to Mary:

No one was ever less endowed for heroism—physically frail when the task called for giants, sensitive and sweet when the times rewarded the thick-skinned and cynical. Yet he made a mockery of his handicaps and showed us the way to overcome ours. He had a way of bringing out the best in us, of making us feel that we were infinitely better than we are. He said the things about himself and others that we suppressed out of a damnable shyness, and he did the things that we felt uneasy about not having done ourselves. He dared to be a poet and a fighter among us who wished to be poets and fighters. And in this he lives and will live so long as life struggles for full humanity.

Abe Magil, a friend from New York in the heyday of the Left, is more succinct: "In the time of the toad he walked erect."



*Clockwise from top, left: Rolfe dressed for school; summer of 1917 or 1918, Rolfe and Bern as young children; during a polio epidemic, when Bertha took her sons to a farm in Kerhonkson, New York, with Bertha and her children at the center of the wagon; the parents and children at Coney Island.*





*Bertha Fishman with her three sons—Eddie, Stanley, and Bern—about 1930. Photo by Leo Hurwitz.*



*Rolfe in Beverly Hills in 1952.*



*Mary Rolfe, about 1947.*



Clockwise from top, left: Rolfe with novelist and first Volunteer editor Ralph Bates, Madrid, July 1937; Rolfe and Langston Hughes, Madrid, September 1937; Mary and Eddie visiting a relief ship in Barcelona harbor, November 1938; Rolfe and Milt Wolff, the last commander of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion, 1938.







*A front-line monument at Jarama, Spain, June 1937, erected by American volunteers to honor their dead comrades. The olive tree on which the sign is posted is about 75 meters behind the lines. Note the communication trench on the left.*



*Left: American novelist Alvah Bessie in Spain in 1938, after joining the Lincoln Battalion. His 1939 book *Men in Battle* would focus on the Ebro campaign.*

*Below: El Campesino ("The Peasant") at the Fiesta De Los Ninos Alcalá de Henares in late summer of 1937. Originally a guerilla leader, he became a commander of one of the Mixed Brigades and one of the most famous officers of the Spanish Civil War.*



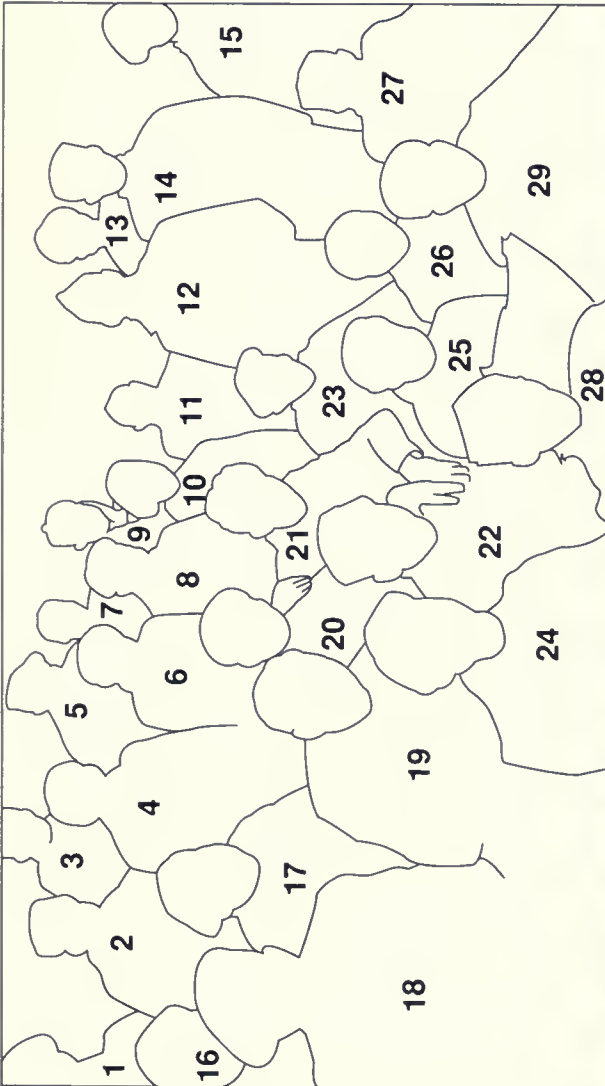




*A group of Abraham Lincoln Battalion members and visitors in April 1938, just after Rolfe joined the men in the field.*

Key to photograph above:

- 1. Howard Goddard
- 3. Elman Service
- 8. Marcus Ranson
- 9. Hank Wentworth
- 10. Roy Scudder
- 13. Bill Mayer
- 14. Paul Merkel
- 15. Leonard Lamb
- 17. Aaron Lopoff
- 18. George Watt
- 19. John Little (YCL)
- 20. Ben Holzman
- 21. Dick Rusciano
- 22. Hy Tabb
- 23. Edwain Rolfe
- 24. Tom O'Flaherty
- 25. Joe Taylor  
*(holding a copy of the Yiddish newspaper The Morning Freiheit)*
- 27. Alva Bessie
- 28. Valentine Koppel
- 29. Joe North  
*(Daily Worker correspondent)*



Part of the October 29, 1938, parade in Barcelona honoring the International Brigades.





*The Barcelona office of the United Socialist Party of Catalonia, 1938. Both the Party name and the war's most famous slogan—"No Pasarán!" They Shall Not Pass—are in Catalan. The sandbags are a partial protection against aerial bombardment.*



Mobilization of the International Brigades prior to their leaving Spain in 1938. Mitt Wolff offers the following caption: "André Marty and Luigi Longo march past with big brass." This may be a group of Soviet volunteers.





*Soldiers of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion at a swimming hole near Marsa in July of 1938.*



*Paul Peters, Ernest Hemingway, and Edwin Rolfe in a New York hotel in the fall of 1940. Peters, who had been active in the theater in the 1930s, was now working for Life magazine, which was planning an article on Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Hemingway had asked Rolfe to help select photographs.*



*Rolfe (center) and Lou Bunin and Hollywood technicians working on a sequence for *The Ziegfeld Follies* in Los Angeles in 1944.*





*Edwin Rolfe, about 1928. Photo by Leo Hurwitz.*

## SELECTED LETTERS

WE ARE PUBLISHING HERE and in the opening biographical essay only a few representative letters and poems from the archive that will be of immediate literary and historical interest. Whenever it is practical to do so, we reproduce the letters in facsimile. Two exceptions are a letter from Mike Gold and a long letter by Albert Maltz written about his prison experiences as a member of the Hollywood Ten. Gold's letter is on extremely darkened paper; Maltz's letter is one of several carbon copies that he sent to friends. Those letters we thus set in type. As an introduction to the letters, we are providing brief comments on their authors and identifications of the people they mention.

**JAMES T. FARRELL (1904-1979)**

A novelist whose best-known work, *The Studs Lonigan Trilogy*, began to appear in 1932. In addition to his numerous other novels, his widely debated *A Note on Literary Criticism* (1936) made what is still a major contribution to our understanding of the relations between politics and literature. Farrell and Rolfe were in regular contact in the mid-1930s. The letter we are publishing here, written from Yaddo (the writers' colony), was sent to Rolfe while he was coediting *Partisan Review*.

**MIKE GOLD (1893-1967)**

One of the most visible figures on the Left in the 1920s and 1930s, Gold served as an assistant editor of the original *Masses*, edited *Liberator* from 1920 to 1922, and helped found *New Masses*. He is well known for his loosely autobiographical novel *Jews Without Money* (1930) and his *Daily Worker* column. Rolfe took a writing class from Gold in the late 1920s. The letter published here was sent to Rolfe in Spain. Gold mentions the following people in his letter:

**ALLAN, Ted.** A journalist in Spain during the civil war.

**FREEMAN, Joseph.** A senior figure on the American Left, Freeman was a poet, novelist, nonfiction writer, and editor of *New Masses*. His autobiography, *An American Testament* (1936), is probably his most famous book.



**NELSON, Steve.** An American immigrant from Yugoslavia, Nelson became an active Communist Party member. A political commissar in Spain, he was seriously wounded by a sniper in the battle for Belchite. He was later tried during the McCarthy era.

**NORTH, Joseph.** A co-founder and editor of *New Masses*, North was a correspondent in Spain during the civil war.

**RYAN, Frank.** An IRA member since 1918, Ryan became the chivalrous leader of the Irish volunteers in the International Brigades in Spain. He had the rank of Captain and commanded the Irish company of the British Battalion. He was also a coeditor of the *Book of the 15th International Brigade*. In the spring of 1938 he was captured by Fascist forces. Turned over to German troops in Spain, he was eventually murdered by the Gestapo.

### ERNEST HEMINGWAY (1898-1961)

Hemingway is most well known for such novels as *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). After Rolfe met Hemingway in Spain, they corresponded and remained friends throughout Rolfe's life. They tended to get together whenever Hemingway was in New York. In December of 1940, when Mary was in a New York hospital, Hemingway arrived and insisted on moving her to a private room.

We are publishing for the first time two of Hemingway's letters to Rolfe. The first, written in the spring of 1940, dates from the time when Hemingway was in the midst of writing *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. The second, dated April 13, 1950, was written as Hemingway was awaiting the proofs of *Across the River and into the Trees*, which was published that September. Rolfe had just sent him his long, powerful poem "Elegia," which would be published as the penultimate poem in Rolfe's *First Love and Other Poems*, a book that Hemingway kept in his library in Cuba. The city for which Hemingway shed his tears was Madrid.

The "other always present war" to which Hemingway refers at the end of the 1940 letter is probably the class war; the discipline he says he couldn't take, therefore, would be Party discipline. Hemingway mentions the following people in his letters:

**BOFILL, Jaime.** A Veteran of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.

**COPIC, Vladimir.** A Yugoslavian volunteer in the International Brigades, he commanded the XVth International Brigade at the battle of Brunette in July of 1937.

**CUEVAS, Basilio.** Possibly a Cuban volunteer in the International Brigades.

**DURÁN, Gustavo.** A young Spanish composer whom Hemingway met in Paris in the 1920s and again in Madrid in 1937. He led one of the Mixed Brigades in the battle for Madrid and commanded the 39th Division of the Loyalist army at the battle of Brunete in 1937. In July of 1938 he succeeded in blocking the Nationalist advance in the Levante.

**GAL.** A naturalized Russian of Hungarian birth, he was for a time the Colonel who commanded the XVth International Brigade. According to Arthur H. Landis in his *The Abraham Lincoln Brigade* (1967), "As to what happened to Gal himself, other than rumor his fate is not known." Hemingway has suggested Gal may have been killed after he returned to the Soviet Union.

**GUILLEN, Nicolas.** Cuban poet well-known for works on colonialism and other social and historical issues. His third book, *Espana* (1937), focuses on the Spanish Civil War.

**HAWKS**, Howard. Major American film director. He directed the 1944 movie version of Hemingway's *To Have and Have Not*.

**HUGHES**, Howard. The notorious American businessman and film producer.

**HOURIHAN**, Martin William. A Veteran of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. He commanded the Lincolns in a counter-attack in March of 1937 and was seriously wounded that July.

**IVENS**, Joris. Dutch documentary film director. Hemingway accompanied Ivens while the director was shooting footage for *The Spanish Earth* around Madrid in 1937; later that year Hemingway wrote the narration for the film. Rolfe also met Ivens in Spain and stayed in touch thereafter. The book that Hemingway acknowledges (presumably in response to a Rolfe letter) Ivens is "still steamed up about" is most likely *The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Stories* (1938).

**JOHNSON**, Major Allan. The highest ranking American Army officer to volunteer for the armed forces of the Spanish Republic, he was in charge of the training base at Tarazona for a time. His real name was Allan McNeil. See Arthur Landis's *The Abraham Lincoln Brigade* for details about his life. Also see Johnson's series of articles on military strategy in *Volunteer for Liberty*.

**KELLER**, Freddy. A Veteran of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. He became famous for escaping Republican capture and swimming the Ebro river to rejoin the Lincolns. See Rolfe's *The Lincoln Battalion* for full details.

**LARGO CABALLERO**, Francisco. A prominent revolutionary socialist who served as prime minister and minister of war for the Spanish Republic between September 1936 and May 1937.

**KLÉBER**, Emilio. Born in 1895 in Rumania, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, he fought in World War I and in the Russian Civil War. He became one of the first commanders of the International Brigades and held the Casa del Campo in Madrid against Nationalist assaults in November of 1936.

**MARINELLO**, Juan. Cuban writer who was President of the Cuban Communist Party in 1940, the same year he chaired a meeting in Buenos Aires to organize continuing support for the defeated Spanish Republic. Rolfe and Hemingway met him in 1937 when he was part of a Cuban delegation in Madrid.

**MARTY**, André. A leading European communist, Marty was a member of the Comintern's central committee. He played a key role early in Spain by obtaining food and clothing from France for the volunteers and as the first chief of the French communist volunteers. Fluent in Catalan, he was influential in the Spanish Communist party. Toward the end, he struggled to hold the International Brigades together. A hero to some, to others he was a ruthless commander, executing deserters and political opponents unhesitatingly. Hemingway's hostile portrait of him in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* angered the communist Left in the 1940s.

**MATTHEWS**, Herbert. *New York Times* correspondent in Spain during the Civil War. Both Hemingway and Rolfe met him there. See his several books on the war.

**MARKOVICZ, Mirko.** A Yugoslav-American who commanded the George Washington Battallion for a time.

**MUSSOLINI, Benito.** Head of Italy's Fascist party and of the Italian State. Hemingway interviewed him in Milan in 1922. Later that year, at a Peace Conference in Lausanne, Hemingway wrote a satiric report on a Mussolini press conference. See *By-Line: Ernest Hemingway. Selected Articles and Dispatches of Four Decades* (1967).

**PASIONARÍA, La (Dolores Ibarruri Gómez).** A powerful orator and tireless organizer, La Pasionaria is one of the most famous figures of the Spanish Civil War. Her 1936 radio speech rallying the defenders of Madrid gave the Republic its battle cry: "No Pasaran!" In March of 1939, hours before the fall of the Republic, she escaped by plane to continue the struggle in exile.

**PIKE, William.** A volunteer who became the Lincoln Brigade's first doctor.

**REGLER, Gustave.** A German communist novelist who became political commissar of the XIIth International Brigade. He fought in the Madrid battles in 1936 and again at Huesca in 1937, where he was wounded in an air attack in June. He was hospitalized for many months before being able to leave Spain. Hemingway was part of an effort to get Regler out of a French concentration camp after the war. See Regler's *The Great Crusade* (1940) and *The Owl of Minerva* (1960), the former with a preface by Hemingway.

**VIERTEL, Peter.** American novelist and screen writer. Son of Salka Viertel. Jigee Viertel is his wife. His screen credits include the screenplays for Hitchcock's *Saboteur* and the film version of Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*.

"**WALTER.**" A Polish general who commanded the XIVth International Brigade; his real name was Karol Swierczewski. His scarred, shaved head made him a striking figure, and he became a partial model for General Golz in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. He was murdered in Poland in 1947. See Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (1961), for further information.

#### ALBERT MALTZ (1908-1985)

Rolfe met Maltz when he was active in the Theatre Union in New York in the mid-1930s. The Theatre Union produced Maltz's play *Peace on Earth*, coauthored with George Sklar, in 1933. At the time of Maltz's August 9, 1937, letter, which was sent to Rolfe in Spain, Maltz had recently completed "Red Head Baker," a radio play about progressive education, and was working on his novel *The Underground Stream* (1940), about the struggle to unionize auto workers. It would be as a novelist and screen writer that Maltz would become well-known. After resisting the House UnAmerican Activities Committee's efforts to abrogate the U.S. constitution, Maltz was convicted of contempt of Congress. He entered prison in June of 1950 and was released the following April. Soon thereafter he and his wife, Margaret, moved to Mexico. Maltz mentions the following people in his letters:

**BIBERMAN, Herbert.** A theater and film director who, like Maltz, went to prison as one of the Hollywood Ten. They were charged with contempt of Congress after HUAC's 1947 hearings. Blacklisted in 1947, Biberman did not work on a Hollywood distributed film again until 1969. His most famous film is *Salt of the Earth* (1954), an independent feature completed against great odds.



**BLACK, Helen.** A Close friend of Margaret Maltz.

**DYMTRYK, Edward.** Another Hollywood director imprisoned as one of the Hollywood Ten. In an effort to save his career, Dymtryk later broke with the Ten and testified before HUAC in 1951, naming twenty-six names in public testimony. He also recanted his earlier Left commitments in a *Saturday Evening Post* article, which Maltz answered in his "Open Letter to the *Saturday Evening Post* on Edward Dymtryk," published in the *Hollywood Reporter* in 1951.

**PETERS, Paul.** Like Maltz, Peters was on the Executive Board of the Theatre Union. Peters and Sklar coauthored *Stevedore* for the Theatre Union and Peters adapted Bertolt Brecht's *Mother* for them as well.

**TRACHTENBERG, Alexander.** Head of International Publishers, which published Maltz's first collection of stories, *The Way Things Are*, in 1938.

Oct. 17/34

Dear Ed;

Thanks for letter, and do let me know if P R wants that story. If not, I shall let someone else look at it. As to the story, it is one of the ones that leads me into sociological bogs. I have previously stated that there is prosecution of negroes etc. The reason for it is two- one that it, since I also want to get into my work the development, breakdown, and reorganization etc of neighborhoods, which means the larger play of one type of so-called social force, it seems necessary for me to try and bring in the negro question again, and second, that it tries to hint at least, two different negro attitudes. A thing most of the revolutionary critics never thought about several years ago when they talked all over the place about social consciousness and sociological content in writing- was this- the problems that it involved. Which means that their writing was hortatory only. And hence, writers have to go on settling these problems as best they can, and heedless of many of the things that have been said of social consciousness.

Naturally I am sometimes in one of these bogs- it is this- there are a number of facts etc that I need to account for in my stories and novels. These facts make it impossible for me to try and work along the lines of formal literary pattern, and anyway I am weak in that respect. Net result. Sometimes I am lead into repetition, and sometimes, I have written more than one story that says much the same thing. My justification for this is- I add so many characters, so many scenes, so many facts, so much vernacular etc to my output.

This leads me into your review. And as I suggested, you shouldn't pull any punches, neither should I. So here goes.

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First- in some respects, you vitiated your review- it is apparent that these stories are the product of various years of writing, and that almost all of them are, from the dates, the first stories, among the first stories, which I have written. Then, what is the point of saying that stories written in 1928, 29, 30, 31, and 32 show no progress in the year 1934?

Second I don't consider the stories as self-stocking taking. I am equally as interested in writing short stories as I am in writing novels, and I want to write as many volumes of short stories as I do of novels, and I want them both to be so many panels of one work. These are then some of the early panels.

Third- I disagree with you that the material I choose is so intrinsically interesting. It seems to me that it is not, that is very commonplace stuff, and that the people are generally describable as commonplace.

Fourth- I don't like the attitude of looking at these characters as bestial, degenerate etc. I don't look at them in precisely these terms. They are, generally, quite like many other characters to be found in America. If we want to understand them, we must try and catch a sense of the meanings of their activities to them and I try to do that. Often, whatever they are, they are that because of circumstances, or so I feel. And they are represented most generally as facts of American life, and with these facts there is sometimes attempted, a development of certain potentialities of these facts- thus the story Just Boys in its ending is conceived as a potential development out of that kind of environment.

Fifth- a writer is never completely aware of what he is doing. Particularly when he starts to write, his awareness is fairly unacute, and ~~fairly~~ limited. Writing in part is a growth in self-consciousness, the development of aims and purposes. When these stories in many cases were written, I was ~~more~~ less aware of what I was trying to do than I am now.

Sixth- it depends what you mean by saying playing on one theme- I don't think the same precise theme is played in "as House Mc Ginty as in the Lonigan novels, and in the stories there is not always the same precise theme, or the same environment. The



if the characters in, say, Calico Shoes, in Honey We'll Be Brave, in Sunday are, for instance, not precisely the same. Also, again, one of ~~my~~ my intentions is to bring out in concrete pieces, the potentialities some of them and as many as I can, of the milieu with which I write. Hence, the story Meet the Girls, is conceived by me, now, as being a potential indication of the end of the partygirls, and a suggestion of what might be the potential development of the girls from the stories, Well That's That, and The Scarecrow.

Also in writing, we sometimes interest ourselves in moods, in concrete matters etc. Writing is in part a reservoir into which is poured the overflow from life- I shall suggest that the meaning of writing in its aspects of a reservoir, one of its functions as it were, can be most completely or pertinently described in The Coming Struggle for Power, the first paragraph from the first of the two chapters in which Strachey describes literature. Well anyway, it deals with moods, passing scenes, a whole host of attendant surface phenomenon. One of my stories, Helen I Love You is something of that, expression of a mood called by some such name as Adoration. Another of the story is an establishment of a state of mind, and a characteristic city scene- Looking 'Em Over. Another is a passing street occurrence, A Casual Incident. I want in every book of short stories to use one or two such stories- chance meetings, and leavings on a street corner etc.

I am not clear on your demand for a note of hope. Notes of hope sometimes don't come into the lives of these people. When you try to say to them that the revolution is a note of hope, they often change the subject, or start talking about baseball. Take for instance the story- Calico Shoes- where is the place for a note of hope in that story? As to such characters, they are equally as real- I mean such characters in actual life, as any others. They are also very definitely a product of the American environment. From what is given of their situation and life, the rest should be imagined, and if the story is successful, it should be a presentation of the grasping and greedy petty bourgeois foreigner of a type to be found, with a differing nationality, in the slum districts all over the country. The very fact that these people exist should by implication make it clear that here is another of the developments of American life, and well this shows us another of the things that offer a reason why there should

be social changes- I shall not attempt to decide on what merit there is in such a story, how well done it is, etc. An author naturally assumes that his intentions are going to be successfully carried out, and he tries to carry them out.

When I went over most of them, I couldn't do much to change them, and had to leave them practically as they were, ~~with~~ with changes in phrasings and the like of a relatively minor order, from their earlier writings. They weren't, however, in the main hastily or carelessly prepared for publication. The story Calico Shoes was written anywhere from thirty to forty times in various manners, over and over again. If it, was, for instance, careless, it was because I couldn't do any better with it than I did. So be it. They are largely a series of early impressions, and culled from my first writings- I should like to have added others, but I had to limit myself to a printable number of stories, and also had to use what I had with me rather than in storage, and the selection of them was the result of having thought over a first book of short stories for a long time- in fact, for three years I had been planning and changing what I would use in this book, and propositioning Henle about when we would publish it etc. The story on which the least time, the least amount of writing etc was given was A Front Page Story, written three times over, or maybe four in a period of three weeks or so last winter.

I'll write again, and regards from Dorothy. I'll write again. Gannett asked me for a list of books- the thing they publish several times a week- such and such an author recommends the following books- so in it I put "e other strength. It doesn't help a lot, but I thought that I might as well add it for what little it might help.

I wanted to add that I thought that your review of Calico Shoes was exceedingly well-written etc, but that, my disagreements in so far as they are disagreements etc result in the fact that we don't see things precisely the same way. As ever

Jim.

FROM MIKE GOLD

Feb. 6, 1938

Dear Ed,

I should have written you sooner, and feel guilty about it. But you know New York, and you know what a mess of writing, speaking and the like I am always drowned in.

I received the New Year's cards from yourself and Frank Ryan, and have acknowledged them in one of the columns in the Daily. Give Frank Ryan all my warmest good wishes, and thanks for his fine greeting.

Ed, I envy you your present experience. It must be a hard life, but one that arouses epic feeling in a man. I would not recommend war as a stimulus to writing, yet I am sure that many of the boys who come back from Spain will be the organizers, writers and leaders of the next decade in America. The ones I have met here seem to my impressionable mind to have acquired a certain manliness and quiet power that is impressive in youth. I wish I could get over for a while—not just for writings' sake, either. But just about the time the war broke I got me a baby, as you must have heard, and without some cash for the mother and babe, I could never go and leave them. I was always scared of such a responsibility, as you know, but now it has come it is the most normal and fruitful thing I have ever experienced. Well, Joe North managed to get across and his game wife tends the phone at the Daily, which is one way of seeing a man off to Spain. Anyway—maybe I will yet make it. Do you see Joe, by the way? Here in New York I have met Ludwig Renn, Frank O'Flaherty, Steve Nelson, and many others from Spain. I guess you must know that Hemingway's Spanish play may go on this season. I haven't seen him, but feel sure his Madrid experience has re-educated him. Dos Passos, on the other hand, has become a mean isolationist—he trains with the whole Trotzkyite crew of snivellers and sabotegers—it is strange to see the change that comes over some of these folk.

I received a splendid letter from an Irish lad named Thos. O'Malley which I printed in the column recently. You must get the Daily and will see it, no doubt. Do you know this O'Malley? Give him my warmest greetings, and try to show him the column, if you can make the connections easily.

Mary said I ought to write something for your paper. Darned if I know what or how to write. To tell the truth, Ed, I feel a little ashamed being at home here, and telling others to do the dirty work. So what could I tell the boys? I am self-conscious about such oratory—but if you know of any concrete thing I could do to fill some need, I will do it for you. How about a letter every two weeks on New York—theatres, books, etc., chatty news, etc.

Joe Freeman is somewhere in the country—and a bit in the dumps, I gather. The New Masses has its usual finance problems, but Herman Michelson is doing a fine job. As usual, the

solid man. Did you see the story we ran by Ted Allan—A Gun is Watered—a swell piece on the Lincoln Boys, I thought. The old Daily is a little better—the staff is swell, management as amaterish as ever, and the Chicago daily opens Feb 12th—Lincoln day. The movement is growing very solidly, I think—though from my jaundiced view there's still lots of room for popularization.

Well, Ed, I must close now—another column is due. I have become a good old working milk-horse these days, and must make the daily round. Have done little other writing for a year, but the old urge is still there and will yet bust out, I am sure—as with all of us. Greet any friends for me, and all the boys—tell them it's impossible to exaggerate the pride and affection our whole movement here has for the whole brigade. Salud. And if you have time sometime drop me a brief note on the state of your poetic soul.

Yours, as ever,

Mike Gold /s/

send me if you can some short [human?] interest stuff for the column—it would be a good help to the money-raising campaign here—



Dear Ed;

Herbert says his mail isn't censored . But they are nuts if they don't read it and Mussolini hasn't ever been nuts . He can talk nuts and sometimes he acts nuts . But he is really a very smart wop . I used to know him well in the old days and he was the most completely cynical guy I've ever known . You write Herbert anything you think . Only don't incriminate him . I won't send the Fischer thing . It is ~~worth~~ right for you to write Herbert what you think same as to me . These are bad times Eddie and honest guys should talk honestly with each other .

Maybe I wrote you this ; but Italians are very funny . So is everybody else of course but the Italians still send me La Vittoria which is el Organo ufficiale mensile dell'associazione nazionale fra mutilati e invalidi di guerra and if I would go into an Italian Consulate ( which I wouldn't ) I could get the twenty two years back dough they owe me on my medaglia d'argento al valore militare . On other hand they would knock me off and may get and would throw me in the can if I came into the country .

Here's something else funny . Mussolini hasn't got any medaglia d'argento . Of all those rows of medals he wears the one on the top , nearest the heart , on the left side ( which is how they rank ) is the Croce di Guerra . I've got five of those . Mussolini knows he was plenty spooky in the war . He was really scared and not really a good soldier . He got brave afterwards and is plenty brave now . But he was fundamentally as spooky as that great warrior Major Alan Johnson who greeted me , a newspaperman whose political beliefs he knew nothing about , in these exact words , " My name is not Johnson . I am from the American General Staff . The party sent me and I came . " That's verbatim . Ask Joris . Just watching him walk around the bar where nothing was happening I formed an opinion of him and I bet Bill Pike a bottle of whiskey , that the guy was yellow . I bet another one with Marty Hourihan . Marty paid up quick . But didn't get my whiskey from Bill until there wasn't any whiskey any more .

Am awfully happy if the play makes some dough . It sounds now as though it would . By the time my end is split with Glazer and then my split of that re-split with my various dependents it won't be weighty sugar ; but it will be a long way from hay too .

It is swell Regler is out . But plenty of other guys are still in and should be helped . But it ought to be done right . I would hate to be in any can where I could be used as an object for collections and think Folsom and Co. would want me out of that can . Maybe that's too tough to say so I withdraw it . Also I wouldn't say it to anyone else . But that's the way it works sometimes Eddie . I think in the end all the immorality of ends justifying means will prove to be wrong . That's only my opinion . I just think it catches up with people too fast and that way does more harm than good . If you knew what I had to actually do to get Gustav out and how it was really done . Hell . Things are very complicated .

Am damn glad Joris is still steamed up about the book . Maybe he and I could work with Hawks and Hughes and make a picture from it later . Hughes has the dough . Hawks wants to work with me and I could get Joris in and probably get in Duran too . He is in London and o.k. Did you ever know ~~him~~ He was a concert pianist , composer , and guy around town , one of the ~~hundreds~~ of chicote's in the old days . I could have thought the guy would be a fascist . Instead he fought on our side from the first day and formed a motorized machine gun unit . Then went on Kleber's staff . Walter took him from Kleber and trained him . He had a brigade in that April 5 show in the Casa del Campo ( Largo's offensive ) and he took the Higodrome with 850 casualties out of 2500 . He was wounded in that La Granja attack where his brigade and the 14th I.B. had such a horrible balls up and Walter shot so damned many people . He had a division all through Teruel . When the break through came he held solid in all that high mountain country

p.c. of E. R.

Journal

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between Lister ( at Cherta .) and the people based on San Mateo ( where the cut through was finally made . The fascists cut through to Vinaroz on one side of him and Tortosa on the other and he was up there in the mountains and we were all worried sick about him . O.K. He got his division through and ~~was~~ out of that and reformed and held at Alcala de Chivert on the other side . Almost Christ .It was a piece of soldiering such as you couldn't believe . It was at that point that Herbert and I flew over there and I took Herbert up to Duran's so he would know him while there still was a Duran .

Well they gave him an Army corps and he defended Castellon and finally held solid as a rock in that awful fighting for the Segorbe road .

At the end when Passionaria decided it was better to fly in an airplane than die on your knees and the plane seats were whacked up and the privelegiados got them ( I understand why it was necessary to save the cadres to fight again .You don't need to explain that to me ) Am just telling you how things go . ) Duran was still holding solid as a fucking rock at Segorbe .Nobody had told him it was over . Well he made it finally behind the boilers from Valencia to England . I staked him and now he is o.k.I wish the hell you could know him.

But when I see Freddy being a professional hero ( I know why they had to do that with him and understand it and it is o.k. for everybody but Freddy . It was a terrible thing for him .I mean to do to a human being .) I wish guys like Freddy could know about guys like Duran and keep their sense of proportion right .

When Freddy was in Madrid I was always trying to teach him about standards of soldiering and about the Spaniards . You can't ever tell Americans anything but tried to show him .Copic ran his brigade like a badly administered ~~pig-sty~~ pig-sty and handled it ( whenever he had anything to do with the direction ) like an old apple woman with locomotor ataxia

trying to be a blocking back against the N.Y.Giants . Ask Mirko Mirkowitz (who is as good a guy as I know and who soldiered plenty ) if that wasn't true .

I know what a son of a bitch Andre Marty is ;how unfit to command ; how his own rotteness ;excitability , and bad judgement affects and infects anything he has to do with ; and I know some of the worst damned crimes he omitted . Gall was shot ,Copic was shot and Marty ought to be shot . They can't shoot him because he is a symbol . But sometime I am going to write about him so that he can never be given the opportunity to do the harm he did again .

Listen Ed. I am full of shit . But I miss the spanish war because life is fine and work ( as now ) the hardest thing to do . But it was fine to fight for something you believed in and be able to go straight to headquarters about pricks instead of having to suffer under them as when I was a kid .I wish the hell there was a war I could go to when I finish this book that I believe in . But there aint any such war : ( You don't have to tell me there is the other always present war .I know about that . And I know ,truly ,I couldn't take the discipline . ) anything I do except writing ,which is the hardest thing for me to do , is taking a way out . Well have finished Chapt.32.Thanks very much for writing .I think you are very sound about politics and I appreciate you writing me straight . If you don't get the Guggenheim and you and Mary are short of dough it would mean a lot to me to make a small bet on you . You could denounce me as a Mannerheim Heminsteina Whiteguard anytime too . I wouldn't be trying to put you under obligation . I have a funny hunch I'm not going to live very long . But I always get that every spring and every fall and it probably has something to do with the sap in the trees . Do my best to all the guys and say you heard from Hemingstein and he was full of .

*Yours always  
Ernest*

## FINCA VIGIA, SAN FRANCISCO DE PAULA, CUBA

13/4/50

Dear Ed:

Got back four days ago and just found your letter and fine ELEGIA .

If you send ten here will see that they get to the best people . The negro Capt. you mention was Basilio Cuevas . Very good ball player . I think he is dead ; but if not will find him . Guillen is fine . We are always friends no matter what . Marinello is a career man . There are better people than him that should have your poem but I will deliver one to him if you wish .

Thanks for not reading book in serialization . Actually it is a good book ,written when sure I would die and trying to write best book writer could write . I will send you a copy as soon as there is one . ~~xxxx~~Am waiting for proofs (galley ) now haveing delivered corrected ms. to Scribners . In the galleys I will put some more fighting in and boucher les trous . I think you will like it . It is a very good book and you can take me out and hang me if it isn't .

Your fucking poem made me cry and I have only cried maybe four times in my life which is now gone on for half a hundred years and 8 months . If this is any value as literary criticism there she is and how do you like it now ,Gentlemen ? Anyway the times ( five now ) I always cried for other people and now for a fucking town .

Hope your Mary is well . Always remember the time that doctor gave it to me in a package because I used the wrong word for negro ( in describeing my financial condition .Mine . Not anybody elses ) and wishing to pay him and to be a blood donor ( modest ambitions ) . But he gave it to me in the teeth . Fortunately good teeth and no son of a bitch ever more than loosened them .

We saw quite a lot of Jige and a little of Peter Viertel . They have life really screwed up I think on how to write and when and for who and whom etc. But I guess that I am not the un-screwed because maybe I have mis-laid my analyst and there is not a couch in the house that has not been slept on . I was very fond of Jige and one reason was that she said she was a friend of yours and Mary's .

Will stop so this will get off . One of the guys I would like to give the poem to is Jaime Bofill ; now no-good but long time ago good as we say in Northern Cheyenne translated into English .

If you ever get problems writing think of poor old papa who thinks in Indian , translates into Spanish , writes in English and it is about Italy

*Quest*



August 9.

1937

Dear Eddie,

I just realized that there was something troubling me as I sat down to write to you: how to write a sort of special letter, or something, in view of the special thing you are doing. But I daresay it is best to take the latter for granted---and to make the letter as full of ordinary news as possible, which is what you undoubtedly want to know.

Margaret and I settled down to a long summer on the Cape in the first week in June. Two weeks later her father died and she went to New Mexico for a month. She is just about established here again and the summer is once more whole.

We have an awfully nice little house on a tree covered dune in back of Provincetown. It lets us be free from the burly burly of the town which is very much that in the height of the summer season. And at the same time we have the use of the town and the swell beach here which is about the best ~~swim~~ swimming to be found.....Schedules are fairly strict: up at seven, two hours in the afternoon for swimming, and the rest at my book. I get about six to eight hours daily at the desk and I find that I need all of it if the book is to be published sometime before 1940. I don't know why it is, but each additional year at writing seems to make me a little less fluent, and each thing I write subject to more rewriting. I suppose the kind of organic constipation which overtook my Grandmother, much to her surprise, after she had passed the age of eighty six. Evidently I am not so hardy as her---the Flatbush versus the Warsaw environment. However there is no other way unless I were willing to let my work go through in very shoddy state---and the first few drafts are so much that, that I have no choice except to be allegedly painstaking. Personally I would much rather be slipshod and have the novel published this spring; now I think it may not be completed in time.

I think you will be interested to know that I have found my work on the novel much more re-warding, in a day by day sense, than on a play. With the kind of emphasis on character which I have now, something very difficult to handle in a play in the first place, there is an additional opportunity for all of that kind of rich--(or so it seems) incidental statement which the lean scope of a play makes impossible. Even though the book is third person and not autobiographical, many of the character elements of the leading figure are drawn from personal experience, and some of his emotions and thoughts are, of course, mine. I find myself therefore, for the first time---since the short story form was also too narrow---to state so much that has been at the core of all I have felt deeply about people and life---and to have that kind of statement a germane part of the necessary pattern of the ~~novel~~ story. You will see therefore why I do find it so re-warding. It is the kind of thing, I imagine, which most writers go to writing for in the first place.

In addition something has become apparent in the first few chapters that I know, too, you will be interested in. It is, of course, very personal with me, but it does present an example of the kind of fruit that comes from psychoanalysis. Margaret remarked an immediately apparent change in my ~~writing~~ writing: the presence of a constant type of psychological interlarding, etc, and of a kind of "stated opinion" about life, which had not been present before. It



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comes, I know, from analysis. In one way of looking at it, analysis you see, is a sort of period of reflective thinking about all phases and aspects of life and your own attitude toward it. . . What has to occur, if the patient is to change, is a marked change in certain of his attitudes. These changes have to be, at some point, conscious. In addition, the very nature of analysis forces one to examine various premises of his thinking and life values, which hitherto have been taken for granted or barely examined or ~~examined~~ confused. So, as a different person emerges from the analytic process---and that is precisely what happens---the person is a very much more conscious (not ~~is~~ self-conscious) animal. All of that has begun to reflect in my new writing--much to its advantage. It is not a thought-out thing, ever. It never consists in my recalling something that ~~transpired~~ transpired in analysis and then setting it down. Rather it is just writing in the same old way, but ~~finding~~ finding with a little surprise that the author, myself, is different than he used to be. That he has a great many opinions, convictions, etc, which he expresses just in passing which he never could express before.....It is a most interesting business, I can assure you, and I haven't been with it long enough to take it for granted. It is that kind of result of ~~analysis~~ analysis which is positive, as opposed, for instance, to the merely negative results like the removal of psychic paralysis, or impotence---although that is putting it with false simplicity. And it is the kind of result that only comes in the later stages of analysis. Those people who go to analysis for only a short time, to remove certain bothersome ~~neurotic~~ neurotic patterns, perhaps, and then leave, fail to get into this aspect of what the doctors call "character analysis." The whole business has endless objective, intellectual fascination for me, in addition to its personal side. I would love to be able to write a book explaining just what it is does happen. But it is exceedingly ~~difficult~~ difficult to communicate ---so subtle and twisted are the patterns and links that the patient day to day visits finally disclose---and beyond that one forgets immediately. It is impossible for me, even to myself, to literally remember more than one tenth of what has gone on over my eighteen months in analysis. It has all been lived through and assimilated---but it is not there like notes I could use for a book.

We heard from Helen Black a curiously garbled little story about Paul Peters that will amuse you. This was apropos of the difficulty of those who have been analysed communicating an understanding of the process to those who have not been. It seems Paul was trying to explain such to some friends and the story came back to Helen that he had said that his wife had had the habit of opening the ice box door all the time, and that proved she was frigid.'''

Incidentally, to finish off all this about analysis which I didn't expect to get into---Paul has finished his, ~~Margaret~~ Margaret, I believe will not go back to hers, and I ~~have~~ have stopped for the whole summer but will take a few more months in the fall.

I had a very trilling experience early this summer. I think you know about the radio series "America in the Future" for which I wrote the half hour play on progressive education in the future.

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In middle June it went over a national hookup on C.B.S. I had gone into the thing originally for the money. When I got writing on it I got really interested in the subject---having turned now into a passionate devotee of functional education---I didn't know anything about it before-----but still I was occupied with my novel and was unwilling to give it much time. I did research and wrote the who's play in two weeks with another week subsequently for re-writing. It was an effective little play, I know, when it finally went off but you get the measure of it when I say that I do not want it published. It is not something to stand for, as it were----By God it turns out to be the most successful and important thing I have ever written. In the first place people heard it, as we know from letters, from one side of the country to ~~and~~ another--from big cities to the Goddamdest little places. And it has completely revised my notions of the value, and personal reward, of the various writing media. Because here I wrote something, and it came right back to me in the form of the most personal letters from people of all stations of life. A number of letters, some of them heartrendingly pathetic, came from people who begged for information: they wanted to send their own children to such schools. There were hundreds of letters in all---something that never happens to one in using other forms---and when you read them over you damn well know that you are really affecting people by all your labor. I'm going to make extreme efforts now to try and get more to do on the radio now. God, if we only had a radio station to use. I'm going to try and get our friends to entertain the idea of using a playlet, instead of a speech, for one of their mayoralty broadcasts--if any. I wish we had only used them in the election campaign of last year. I'm sure they could have had greater effect than some of the speeches.

All summer I have been trying to get Trachty to answer letters and tell me when or whether, my book is coming out. He is either hibernating or changing his mind.....My flophouse novelette is coming out in Story this month...another novelette being serialized (with editorial abridgement, God Help me) in the S.W. And x a small ~~story~~ story scheduled for the N.M. one of these weeks or years..... You will be interested to know that the Catholic article finally appeared in mid-summer. It got very good response, above average; and created a good deal of stir on the West Coast as I heard from a letter. We thank you for fighting for it.

Maragret and I are hoping that Mary will come up for a week as she has been promising to do all summer. She has not yet come through. But since we are remaining up here for another month, there is still time.

Well Ed, much love from all of us. Mike B. is here on a visit and will write you. I hope things are going well with you. You know how I feel.....

Albert

P.S. Don't bother to write us. Mary will tell us.. But we will write again.

May 29, 1951.

Dear Eddie,

What a rotten time you have been having. I'll bet money you walked down the same street with Dmytryk without knowing it and that is why a contamination entered your body and gave you an infected appendix. But we are very happy it went smoothly, since it had to be, and that you are on the mend.

The health front is better here also. A second exam indicated that the inflammation and swelling of my liver, while not gone, has improved. A noxious thing but apparently diet is the cure. I am feeling more vigor as well.

Its a curious thing about your two letters, especially the one first when your mood was heaviest. If you had been of a mind to make a carbon of them, and then read them over when some months had past so that they read fresh, you would say, as I said, and Margaret said, "What sharp, incisive, mordantly witty, original writing." They were striking letters, Eddie, and I mention it in order to ask you a serious question, or questions: Have you ever ~~xxx~~ tried to write in a literary form that would allow you to express yourself intellectually with the same fluid freedom and bite of these letters? Genet in the New Yorker would like to write as you did in these two letters, but can't come 50¢ near it. Goodness knows I don't mean to make you self-conscious so that you dry up in any future letters to me, or get self-conscious. But I was so struck by the bite in thinking and writing that I had to mention it...As for the poem, and don't denigrate it by the term doggerel, it is written with the same sharp, hot flint as your letters and is very, very good I think, and Margaret also, who has a taste for the high art as you know.

Men's moods have their own secret sources and one cannot always command them, try as one might. You have had much to contend with in these past years and so it does not suprise me that for some time past you have felt gripped by a kind of lethargy in relation to work. Equally it would not have suprised ~~ge~~ had your report been the opposite, or if your mood were swiftly to change. I hope it will. But this is a dark, heavy time and we feel it.

I had my bad times in prison, of course, and I feel the weight of events now, but it is so fine a thing to be free, reunited with family and able to work, that I cannot but be comparatively high. And yet, as I write to you, I am waiting for Margaret to call me for the ten P.m. news, which we get from a Texas station, in order to know ~~z~~ whether the Court has acted on the Smith Act. And if there has been a decision, and that bad, as I expect, how I shall feel then in the new world created by that for all of us, I don't know.

But surely I will feel great, steady anger, for that I feel already. It seems to me that a certain harshness may come into my writing ~~there~~ that was never there before. Certainly it will if all that I now feel about life finds literary expression. This damnable machine they have set up, this series of bear and fox traps, by which they make men and women grovel, lose all self-respect, deny the validity of their entire past, repudiate in advance any possible integrity for the future, vomit in public and lick their vomit and call it good---this kindles fires of real fury in me. I released a little of it last week by writing a rebuttal to Dmytryk's Post article. If it gets the widespread publication I hope, by the means I suggested to Herbert, it will chop that hypocrite down a little. It certainly made me feel better. As you know from war,



2.

the most difficult of all states in which to sustain morale is when one is pinned down in a fox hole, helpless to retaliate at all, under enemy shell fire. It is very good to be able to hurl an article, if not a grenade.

Even though part of each work day I am making notes for a fat binder on the year and the men in prison, prison is otherwise far behind me I find. I don't think of it and I feel of it as far back, certainly more than two months ago. I expect much of this is due to our having come here. In L.A. or the East I should constantly have been speaking in public and in private telling people and answering queries on the year. But here there are not many old friends, and not many new ones because we have been living close to home, and no speeches. And, for all of us, deep interest in the new way of life, culture, language that is on every hand. I am extremely glad to be here right now, it is very good for me physically and mentally.

Goodness---just heard the news and the Supreme Court has let another Monday go by on the Smith Act. Is it possible they will adjourn without a decision? What a gigantic triumph that would be. I will be as suprised as I will be encouraged.

Why don't you try sending your poem to The New Yorker--the Nation -- the New Republic? It will only cost ~~12~~ 18¢ for the round trip. It is so good one might take it.

Cuernavaca is an ancient town, as rich in history as in the poverty of most of its residents, a vacation spot for the well-to-do as far back as Cortes, and now. A colony of Americans here, of whom we have met a few, but most we would live side by side with for years and never meet, just as in L.A., a sad, lost alcoholic crew. We have met more Mexicans, although our total social life has been small. The country, we are told, is going through great industrial expansion at the expense of the workers and farmers. There is a class of extremely wealthy manufacturers, large land owners, speculators who are coining money ---but the mass of the population is literally beginning to groan under the inflation. Shoeless feet and thin bodies, heavy burdens, ragged clothes, blind beggars; and guitars, patient faces, snazzy cars brushing past bent men carrying immense loads upon their backs; new schools and children being taken out of school to add a few pesos to the family pot; new roads abuilding so the new bourgeoisie can whiz from Mexico City to Acapulco ~~many~~ and pass quickly the thatch huts, the women carrying water from the drainage ditches and the loads of wood on burros led by bent men. The labor movement in ~~the~~ the past dozen years has been rendered impotent, captured by the government through bribery, endowment and similar soft devices. The C.P., rent by factional struggle, is small and utterly ineffective now. Yet politicians must still pay tribute to the Revolution they have aborted, and Zapata-land-liberty is a coal within the hearts of the people. It will take time, man is stoked by suffering.

We live on the outskirts, in a monster large house that is like other "haciendas" all around, and that sometimes makes me think of a bordallo, but is just Mexican style with a profligate use of space. It is very workable for us because it gives me a quiet upstairs work room, and has enough bedrooms for us and children and Katherine, who is with us. Sheep, goats, cows, horses, laden burros wander past the house; and the milkman with his cans astraddle the horse and the pandadero with his great tray of bread balanced on his head, going from door to door; and the spiders, fleas, beetles, flies and a few scorpions come into the house



3.

where we greet them with D.D.T., swatter and curses. The paper and tile roof was thoroughly patched by the owner, so at the first heavy rain it leaked. Then we paid money to have the job done properly, as it was, so at the second heavy rain it leaked in some other places. So now we will live with it through the rainy season now upon us, marking the places that need pots and pans below them.

The children are in an English speaking and Spanish teaching school, with kids of various nationalities and tongues and colors of skin, very good and relaxed. An upright and proud Indian man, wife and children live and work for us, who worked for Constanca de la Mora until her death. We carry on in a stange melange of their English, our Spanish and many gestures, and it works. And Kathy says Si, Si, por favor don't do that, to their little girl and boy, and I'm sure this time here is excellent for the kids. They are both fine. Peter matured wonderfully, wonderfully over the year---with an ease and comparative amiability of personality that delight~~s~~ us. He is growing fantastically, already taller than me at thirteen and a half, a ready lad. I pray he will stop before 6'6.

I am at work and while we don't try to plan ahead I want to stay with the work, the rest, the quiet for a while. We will see. Art is still a weapon, I hope, and perhaps I will be forgiven if I let the speeches go for a while and write. I think, by the way, that I ~~am~~ may now write under another name. I have been thinking of it. I think too many doors have shut upon me, as upon others, and I propose to go around the back way and kick them open again if I can.

I wish you good cheer, and Mary. And good health after long burdens. No people ~~x~~ every deserved better for what they are in themselves, which is very mucho magnifico.

Yours,

Allen

FROM ALBERT MALTZ

April 25, 1951

Dear Mary & Ed —

Please forgive me for writing a letter to you that I will send to others at the same time. There are a number of friends East and West with whom I want to re-establish contact. To tell each one about the same year as fully as possible, but not to be weeks doing it, is my purpose. Please accept that I write to you personally and affectionately, even if not alone.

The nine months in lock-up were not too bad, certainly not good. They were much easier in some respects than I had anticipated—for instance, in the attitude of the other inmates and of the prison guards. (More of this later). But they were harder in other respects than one could realize in advance—the cumulative frustrations: of a routine that becomes increasingly monotonous; of separation from wife and children: of a life that is basically arid. And, underlying all of these, the sheer violation of one's spirit in being forcibly locked up.

Still, in the words of all the unrepentant sinners, lechers and alcoholics of all time, I don't regret it. I would follow the same path of wickedness all over again if the clocks were turned back.

I emerged the worse for it physically, it turns out. One of the mysteries of human chemistry is why certain people thrive, and others decline, on the same diet. There were men in prison who ate only meat, bread, potatoes, hotcakes, etc., no vegetables, no fruit. They remained well and strong and cut timber daily. But others, eating the same diet or better, did lose strength and complain of being tired by ten in the morning. For myself, delicate creature that I am, my physical energy declined as the months wore on. I was several months getting over the exhaustion that followed an ordinary winter cold.

Now, it turns out, I have a liver condition resulting from the inadequacy of diet. However, my doctor feels that rest and solid feeding will correct it in three or four months.

You likely have heard from Margaret, or from another source, that I was in a minimum security prison. The Mill Point Prison Camp was in an isolated cup in the West Virginia Mountains, a quite lovely spot. Our population had a high of about 280, a low of 100, depending upon the time of year and whether the Courts were sitting. Men lived in barracks (capacity 80 men in double decker bunks), and there were no locks, cells, bars, or fences—only signs that said "stay inside." (Crossing beyond these signs, except on work detail, meant prosecution for attempted escape.) Actually, as I know from men with army experience, life in Mill Point was, in a good many ways, like life in an army camp. Here, however, you had no furlough for the duration of your sentence—letters were three a week—visits two hours a month—the food not as good.

Interestingly enough, however, army men said you had to take less discipline and chickenshit at Mill Point.

You must not take this picture of Mill Point to be accurate also for the prisons in which the other men were, and are. I, and Dmytryk, were the only ones in a Prison Camp. Conditions for the others were somewhat different. According to the talk of other inmates with more penal experience, at Danbury, Texarkana and Ashland, the security regulations were much tighter, the discipline harsher, relations between men and officers much more formal, cold and hostile. On the other hand food, sleeping conditions, recreational facilities were said to be better. We will find out as we exchange letters.

For myself, I was glad to have been sent to Mill Point, liver condition notwithstanding. Our population was two thirds white, one third negro, with old men leaving, new men coming in, every week. About one third came from cities or large towns— Washington, Cincinnati, Roanoke, Chattanooga; the remainder from small towns, or R. F. D. farm houses, or from isolated cabins in the mountain “hollers” of Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, the Carolinas and Georgia.

About one third of our population was illiterate upon entrance. Another third had the equivalent of fifth grade. The remaining third had men who had finished elementary school, some high school. There were several with College educations.

The city men had committed a variety of crimes: petty forgery; mail theft; postal hold-up; income tax violations; fraud involving Federal matters; Mann Act; narcotics. This was one third of the population. The other two thirds, with only a few exceptions, were men in prison for making, transporting, or selling illegal whiskey. These “hill billies” were men whose fathers, grandfathers, and beyond had made their own whiskey, and whose children play “still” the way ours play hide-n’go-seek. There were many amongst them who were serving their 2nd— 3rd— 4th—5th—and 6th term for whiskey making. To them prison was an occupational hazard.

Only a very few in our population were men who lived solely by crime, or who had no trade other than illegal activities. This was not a prison of “underworld characters,” but one of workers and farmers who had “slipped”; or of men who had been laid off in the mines and “had decided to make a little whiskey”; or of mountain men who lived where farming was impossible, where the only trade was making whiskey. So in point of fact—(and quite different from the Washington jail where we all were at first)—life at Mill Point was one of association with farmers, laborers, saw mill and timber men; with building trades men, etc.—rather than with criminals. They ran the gamut from petty city sharpies to men from the hills who had never voted or been on a train, who had never seen a shower bath before coming to Mill Point, who had never been to school or used a handkerchief—but who know how to make “mountain dew,” to hunt and live in the woods, and who knew the way of animals and birds in fascinating detail.



The work of the camp involved men in the following main categories:

- a) Timber cutting in the woods and operation of the camp sawmill.
- b) Farm work, except in mid-winter, on the camp farm.
- c) Strip mine for camp coal in winter.
- d) Forestry Detail—cleaning brush, etc., along woods.
- e) Camp Maintenance—kitchen, laundry, dormitory orderlies, plumbers, electricians, office staff, etc.

I was, as you likely know, in camp maintenance as medical orderly.

My job was a divided one. About a third of my time was devoted in this way: to first aid for cuts, wounds, sprained ankles, etc.; to the dispensing of carthartics, aspirins, remedies for colds, upset stomachs, etc; to the medical records. Two thirds of my time was porter work: cleaning, mopping, waxing, dusting, polishing, the 6 bed hospital, the dispensary, the isolation room etc.—a considerable square footage; also to the care of hospital patients, carrying their food from the chow house, etc.

As jobs went it was not too bad. It had one great drawback—I was always on call, I never had a day off in eight months, the weekly hours of work when the camp was at full complement were sometimes 50 to 60 hours. But it had one great, great advantage that made me want it—I had a private room in the hospital, a clean bathroom and shower. The latter meant a great deal as the months wore on. Barracks life in Mill Point was not pleasant—the two man cells in the D.C. jail were better for living. Ex-inmates of Atlanta, etc., were always comparing the living conditions of the barracks unfavorably with those of other prisons. But all men were glad to remain at Mill Point because we got 3 days a month extra good time.

Recreation was as follows: soft ball in the possible months; an indoor gym with a ping pong table and weights; cards, dominoes, checkers, chess; horse shoe pitching; one movie a week (old); and a small but excellent library. I played twilight ball until the cold stopped it by mid-September. I played a great deal of chess, particularly with one man, who became a close friend there. Chess is a wonderful prison game. Of course I read.

I did no writing. Free time outside of work was not great, the interruptions many. This made any writing difficult. Beyond that I found that the only writing I wanted to do was about prison life. But to this there was a great drawback—all such material was subject to censorship. If it failed to pass censorship, then the work could not be taken out. This was a psychological hurdle that stopped me dead. I could not bear to attempt a piece of writing, under quite difficult circumstances, complete it—and then have it buried. However, I did secure permission to take notes out of the camp. These were also subject to censorship, but local, not Washington. So I devoted my attention to the men around me and came out with a considerable amount of valuable material.

I have been asked already what the attitude of the other inmates was to a political prisoner involved in a case like ours, one concerning Communism. Rather surprising and refreshing. Broadly speaking, when told my crime, they would answer, "Contempt of Congress? What the hell is that?" If any explanation was offered, they would "comment": "Well you were right—it was no god damn business of theirs what you are. I'd tell 'em to go to hell if they asked me." Most of these were the unorganized workers and farmers of America with no trade union history, no political activity, no political interest. They had no ideas or feelings about Communism, it was only a word. Their attention was directed to personal welfare and little else. In addition, they carried immediate sympathy for any fellow inmate as against the Law, the F.B.I., the Government, all of which were responsible for their own imprisonment. As time passed some of the men came to know that I was a writer, that I was from Hollywood. Only about 5% found anything of interest in this— enough to ask me a question or two. All in all, inmates were equal. Whether it was forgery, whiskey or the Mann Act that had brought a man there, no one cared, or passed invidious judgment. A man was taken for what he was, respected and liked, or rejected and despised, on a purely human basis. My relationships through the year were cordial always, extremely warm in some cases. I met many men I liked extremely well, and I have invitations to visit, stay, drink moonshine and hunt squirrel from Harlan, Kentucky to Franklin County, Va.

The attitude of the officers were equally interesting. These were men of more education and awareness, few of them "intellectuals," but all of them of intelligence, most of them very decent. I know, because men told me, that a few of them were actively hostile to Dmytryk and me when we first arrived, and warned inmates against the dangers of associating with us. Most of the officers, however, were not particularly concerned what we were, so long as we gave them no trouble. Before we arrived, as I later found out, the Administration was busy speculating about us. Previous experience with professionals, who were conscientious objectors in the war, had not always been pleasant for them—demands for special treatment, refusal to take certain jobs, etc. We were classed as potential trouble makers, with Hollywood "wealth" as an additional cause for custodial anxiety. However, none of the officers, even the hostile ones, treated us differently from any other inmate. In this respect the operating code of the Federal Penal system, (in my experience), is splendid and progressive penology. Men are really treated equally—there is no favoritism or discrimination. This factor, more than anything else, was important in my year. No matter what the crime, the length of sentence, or the past history, men were given an absolutely equal deal. Whether this will change as political passions are further incited in the country remains to be seen. (Likely it will. But at this time it makes enormous difference to the political prisoner that this equality of treatment is the rule.) (Remember, I am telling only of the Federal prison system. The States are a different matter. And, for all I know, the other men might not have found it as I did in their Federal prisons.)

In the case of Dmytryk and myself, when the officials saw that we refused no work—(the first weeks, before classification, called for K.P., mowing grass, plucking chickens, assisting in the slaughtering of hogs, etc.); and when they found that we did not spend our time “soap-boxing” around the camp or agitating the other inmates into “revolt”—they were relaxed toward us. Relations were established on an easy plane and continued that way. At Mill Point, in fact, the officers seek to minimize custodial attitudes and act more as leaders of a group of men. Consequently officers and men talk, joke, are easy with each other, even though always unpersonal. This not true in any of the Federal institutions except the four prison camps: it makes for a much easier atmosphere in which to live than the atmosphere of close custody.

Well—there you have a partial portrait of the place. A million miles from being [in] a concentration camp, equally far from the road camps, chain gangs and many State Prisons in the U.S. where men *now, today* are brutally over-worked, brutally underfed, brutally punished by whippings, by being strung up by their thumbs, by a dozen foul means of torture that men in our camp had seen or experienced, and that I intend to write about presently. And Oh, the local County jails, where men choose to sleep on the floor rather than the vermin ridden beds, where there are two meals a day of beans and coffee, and where men languish for months waiting trial, etc. The amount of human suffering at this moment in American prisons is staggering.

Mill Point was not this—but, make no mistake, it was a prison, and it was the hardest year I’ve ever put in. To be locked up is a very, very deep violation of one’s living spirit. The conditions are of great importance, and I am grateful that mine were comparatively easy. But whatever the conditions, underlying all is the arid life, the monotony of repeated days, the deprivations and frustrations. You “adjust” and next day must “adjust” again; you feel easy of a morning and fight down inner rebellion and discontent by noon; you cross off the days and say, “Time is going fast this week,” or “time is heavy this week”; you live with time, time, time, as your most intimate companion; you wait for the visit, it is inexpressibly, fantastically precious, and then as your wife rises to leave, the two hours so quickly spent, such seething anger, rebellion and indignation, rise within your heart as threaten to burst it.

There you are, about as much as can be told in one letter.

What now? We have no definite plans. I need to get well, I want to start writing immediately. We have decided to stay here for a little, but for how long we will see. The children are coming down.

We greet you all with love and affections. Down with the damn Committee on Un-American Activities, and up [with] America.

Yours,

[Albert Maltz]

# THE EDWIN ROLFE ARCHIVE

THE EDWIN ROLFE ARCHIVE INCLUDES an extensive collection of manuscripts by Rolfe himself: 1,300 pages of published and unpublished poetry, two dozen unpublished short stories, ten screenplays or treatments, eight unpublished essays, and one unpublished novel. There are also seventeen of Rolfe's diaries and eight of his address books. Miscellaneous materials range from publication contracts to clippings of publications and reviews. All of this is presently being catalogued and will be available for consultation in the Rare Book Room of the University of Illinois library in 1992.

While in Spain from June 1937 to December 1938, Rolfe collected 225 photographs and a number of pamphlets and broadsides pertaining to the Spanish Civil War. Lists of these items may be obtained from the Rare Book Room.

We are publishing here a detailed register of the correspondence in the archive, since this is the part of the collection that will be of interest to the widest range of researchers and since it can be accessed within reason without having to travel to Champaign-Urbana. The letters are now being treated for preservation and will also be available to researchers in 1992.

## CATEGORY DIVISIONS

1. General Correspondence
2. International Brigades Correspondence Written During the Spanish Civil War
3. Correspondence from the United States Requesting Information on Americans Serving in the Abraham Lincoln Battalion
4. Correspondence From Edwin Rolfe

## KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

- TLS (typed letter, signed)
- ALS (holograph letter, signed)
- TL-CBN (carbon copy of a typed letter)
- TLS-XC (photocopy of a signed, typed letter)
- ALS-XC (photocopy of a signed, handwritten letter)
- VALB (Veteran of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion)
- E.R. (Edwin Rolfe)
- M.R. (Mary Rolfe)
- [ ] (Date supplied by Nelson and Hendricks from internal evidence)



## 1. GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE--Unless otherwise noted, all correspondence is addressed to Edwin Rolfe.

- AALTO, Bill [VALB; American poet]  
 ALS, 4 pp., Dec. 9, 1941  
 TLS, 1 p., Sept. 21, 1942  
 ALS, 2 pp., Sept. 1, 1943  
 ALS, 1 p., Jan. 13, 1944  
 ALS, 2 pp., Jan. 13, ?  
 ALS, 2 pp., April 10, ?  
 ALS, 2 pp., Nov. 28, ?
- ABBOTT, C. D. [Director of Libraries, Lockwood Library, SUNY, Buffalo]  
 TLS, 1 p., Jan. 16, 1937  
 TLS, 2 pp., Aug. 5, 1937
- ALGREN, Nelson [American novelist]  
 TLS, 1 p., April 22, 1950  
 TLS, 1 p., June 4, 1950  
 TLS, 2 pp., June 27, 1950  
 TLS, postcard, Sept. 5, 1950
- [a portion of which follows:  
*"Sartre and De Beauvoir would very much like to print American poetry, it's only that usually it's too tough to translate. I'll try them with 'The City'—if I can locate a copy—and if you could send on the poem on Chaplin, ELEGY and the Rukeyser poems you suggest I'll try them there also. Mlle De. B. says she would very definitely be interested in half a dozen good leftwing poems. They're hard up for French material—it's hard for most of them to keep writing while burdened with the conviction that, one way or another, France is fini. She says that, in a hundred years she believes French will be a tongue for students of languages, nothing more. And believe you me, she says it with sorrow . . ."*]
- TLS, 1 p., Oct. 5, 1950  
 TLS, 1 p., Oct. 13, 1950  
 TLS, 1 p., Nov. 20, 1950  
 TLS, 1 p., 1950  
 TLS, 1 p., March 5, 1951  
 TLS, 1 p., June 11, 1951  
 TLS, 1 p., July 11, 1951  
 TLS, postcard, Jan. 5, 1952  
 TLS, 1 p., June 3, 1954 [to M. R.]  
 TLS, 1 p., Oct. 29, ?
- ALLEN, Ted [journalist]  
 TLS, 1 p., July 31, 1938
- AMERICAN Committee for Rehabilitation of European Jewish Children  
 TLS, 2 pp., Feb. 18, 1947
- ARTZT, Robert [German veteran of the Spanish Civil War]  
 TLS, 3 pp., Jan. 12, 1947 [translation of a letter originally written in German and addressed to "Robert"; translation arranged by Helene Brecht]
- ATLANTIC MONTHLY editorial correspondence  
 4 TLS, 1 p. each: Aug. 17, 1945; Dec. 13, 1948; Feb. 4, 1953; March 16, 1953
- ARVIN, Newton [American literary critic]  
 TLS, 1 p., May 7, 1932
- BAKER, Carlos [American literary critic; Hemingway biographer]  
 TLS, 2 pp., Jan. 8, 1954  
 TLS, 1 p., Feb. 17, 1954  
 TLS, 1 p., Dec. 28, 1964 [to M. R.]  
 TLS, 1 p., Jan. 19, 1965 [to M. R.]
- BALLANTINE BOOKS editorial correspondence  
 3 TLS, 1 page each: Jan. 29, 1953; [Spring/early Summer?] 1953; Sept. 25, 1953
- BARNARD, Mary [poet; Curator of the Poetry Collection, Lockwood Library, SUNY, Buffalo]  
 TLS, 1 p., April 29, 1940
- BARSKY, Edward K. [VALB; Head of American Medical Corps in Spain]  
 TLS, 1 p., Feb. 7, 1944
- BATES, Winifred  
 TLS, 2 pp., Dec. 21, 1939
- BENÉT, Jim [VALB]  
 TLS, 2 pp., Sept. 19, 1947  
 TLS, 1 p., Nov. 22, 1948  
 TLS, 1 p., July 14, 1950
- BENÉT, Stephen Vincent [American poet]  
 TLS, 1 p., ?
- BENÉT, William Rose [American poet and critic; editor at *The Saturday Review of Literature*]  
 TLS, 1 p., May 1, 1945  
 ALS, 1 p., June 27, 1945  
 TLS, 1 p., Nov. 2, 1945  
 ALS, 1 p., Jan. 16, 1946  
 ALS, 1 p., Feb. 10, 1946  
 TLS, 1 p., March 19, 1946  
 TLS, 1 p., Aug. 11, 1946  
 ALS, 1 p., Sept. 16, 1947  
 ALS, 1 p., Oct. 13, 1947  
 TLS, 1 p., Jan. 30, 1948  
 TLS, 1 p., March 24, 1948  
 TLS, 1 p., May 27, 1948  
 TLS, 1 p., Dec. 1, 1948  
 TLS, 1 p., April 6, 1950  
 TLS, 1 p., April 24, 1950  
 TLS/ALS, 1 p., ?
- BESSIE, Alvah [VALB; American novelist, screenwriter; Hollywood Ten]  
 TLS, 1 p., Sept. 8, 1939  
 TLS, postcard, Oct. 19, 1939  
 TLS, 1 p., [1939?]
- TLS, 1 p., [1939?]  
 TLS, 1 p., March 23, 1943  
 TLS, 1 p., April 13, 1943  
 [written while Bessie was writing screenplays for Warner Brothers in Hollywood—a portion of which follows:  
*"I spent six weeks on Brooklyn USA; then they killed it; then I spent 6 weeks on a Marine Corps story; then they postponed it; then I spent three days on Country Lawyer, and yesterday I was yanked out to do a quick job of finishing an Erroll Flynn cops and robbers about the Northwest Mounted Police, that is a combination of Desperate Journey, Across the Pacific and the Invaders. It is strictly crap; strictly not my alley, but will probably result in my getting a screen credit before my option is due, which is the first step toward establishing yourself in this biz. So excuse it please. Tell everybody in advance excuse it please. If you work in a big biz and they tell you, make some gears for us, and you say, but I hate gears, I love to make cylinders, you don't last long. So I am making gears, that will earn WB five million dollars, don't ask me why. Then they will love me. They would love Uncle Joe if he made them only one million dollars . . ."*]
- TLS, 1 p., May 7, 1943  
 TLS, 2 pp., Nov. 26, 1951  
 TLS, 2 pp., Feb. 6, 1952  
 TLS, 2 pp., July 14, 1952  
 TLS, 1 p., May, 29, 1952  
 TLS, 1 p., May 26, 1954 [to M. R.]
- BROOKS, Cleanth [American literary critic; editor of *The Southern Review*]  
 TLS, 1 p., Oct. 2, 1936
- BULOSAN, Carlos [Phillipino-American poet]  
 TLS, 1 p., July 15, 1947
- BURGUM, Edwin Berry [American critic, professor, and editor]  
 TLS, 1 p., Dec. 1, 1953
- CANNATA, Joe [Liberal Press]  
 TLS, 2 pp., Sept. 11, 1937  
 TLS, 2 pp., Nov. 20, 1937
- CASALS, Pablo [Spanish cellist]  
 AL, card, [1950]
- CLARIANA, Bernardo [Spanish poet]  
 TLS, 1 p., May 22, 1950 [plus 3 page typed poem by same]
- CLURMAN, Harold [American critic and theatre director; founder of The Group Theatre]

- ALS, 2 pp., Dec. 12, 1945  
 TLS, 1 p., April 30, 1946  
 ALS, 2 pp., April 18, 1947  
 TLS, 1 p., Dec. 29, 1948  
 TLS, 1 p., May 27, 1954 [to M. R.]
- COLLIER, John [British fiction writer; screenwriter in Hollywood]  
 ALS, 3 pp., May 17, 1952  
 ALS, 1 p., June 8, 1954 [to M. R.]
- COLLIER'S editorial correspondence  
 5 TLS, 1 p. each: Dec. 1, 1944; Dec. 11, 1944; Jan. 2, 1945; Jan. 16, 1945; March 26, 1946.
- COMMINS, Saxe [editor at Random House]  
 TLS, 1 p., June 13, 1944
- COOK, Jerry [VALB]  
 TLS, 2 pp. May 21, 1943  
 TLS, 2 pp., June 4, 1943  
 ALS, 4 pp., [1943?]
- COWLEY, Malcolm [American critic, poet, and editor at *The New Republic*]  
 TLS, 1 p., Dec. 16, 1935 [includes two typed pages of E. R.'s poetry]  
 TLS, 1 p., Oct. 22, 1937
- DARTT, Jason G. [writing for Otto H. Kahn, American banker and opera patron]  
 TLS, 1 p., Sept. 6, 1929
- DAVIDMAN, Joy [American poet and novelist; later married C. S. Lewis]  
 TLS, 1 p., Dec. 29, 1942
- DEVRIES, Peter [American novelist and editor for *The New Yorker*]  
 TLS, 1 p., March 14, 1945 [in *The New Yorker* file]
- DELL, Floyd [American novelist, editor, and spokesperson for radical causes in the teens and 20s]  
 ALS, 3 pp., June 8, 1929  
 ALS, 1 p., [1929?]
- DRAPER, Theodore [foreign editor at *New Masses*; later historian of American Communism]  
 TL, 2 pp., Sept. 14, [1938]  
 TL, 1 p., Oct. 19, [1938]  
 [a portion of which follows:  
*"Your cables to the Daily have improved tremendously. I think you have gotten into the swing of it now. In the beginning, your stuff was very loose and wordy. Now you write much more cleanly and informatively. The cables on the treason trials are good; the Times carries little and your stuff is almost the only regular coverage. If you keep it up, a lot of people are going to read Rolfe because they just can't get it elsewhere."*]  
 TL, 1 p., Nov. 11, 1938
- DURANT, Marcia [daughter of Genevieve Taggard]  
 TLS, 1 p., Sept. 20, 1944
- EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE, miscellaneous  
 19 cards and letters, 1 to 2 pages each, dating from June 13, 1944 to August, 1953
- ELISCU, Edward  
 TLS, 1 p., Nov. 28, 1945
- ELLIOTT, Faith  
 TLS, 1 p., 1944
- FAJANS, Irving [VALB]  
 TLS, 1 p., April 4, 1950
- FARRELL, James T. [American novelist and critic]  
 TL, 4 pp., Oct. 17, 1934
- FELSEN, Milt. [VALB]  
 ALS, 2 pp., June 11, 1945
- FELSEN, Roberta. [wife of Milt Felsen]  
 ALS, 2 pp., [Dec. 1945?]
- FELTENSTEIN, Evelyn [wife of Milton Feltenstein]  
 ALS, 4 pp., April 15, 1943  
 ALS, 8 pp., Jan. 1, [1944]  
 ALS, 6 pp., Feb. 22, 1944  
 ALS, 6 pp., Oct. 20, 1944  
 ALS, 4 pp., Dec. 10, 1944  
 ALS, 10 pp., Jan. 11, 1945  
 ALS, 2 pp., April 12, 1945  
 ALS, postcard, July 5, 1945  
 ALS, postcard, Oct. 25, 1945  
 ALS, 6 pp., [?]
- FELTENSTEIN, Milton [Rolfe's physician in Los Angeles]  
 TLS, 1 p., Feb. 7, 1944  
 TLS, 1 p., Feb. 23, 1944  
 TLS, 1 p., April 6, 1944  
 TLS, 2 pp., July 21, 1944  
 TLS, 2 pp., March 5, 1945
- FISHMAN, Bertha [E. R.'s mother]  
 ALS, 2 pp., Sept. 17, 1937
- FISHMAN, Nathan [E. R.'s father]  
 TLS, 1 p., June 27, 1930 [to Nathan Fishman, from University of Wisconsin]
- FISHMAN, Stanley [E. R.'s younger brother]  
 TLS, 1 p., [early 1950s]
- FOWLER, Joe [patient in V. A. hospital with E. R. in 1950]  
 ALS, 4 pp., Nov. 27, 1950
- FRIENDS OF WIDOWS AND ORPHANS OF THE FRENCH RESISTANCE  
 TLS, 1 p., April 14, 1947
- FRITCHMAN, Stephen [Unitarian minister in Los Angeles]  
 TLS, 1 p., Oct. 26, 1954 [to M. R.]
- FREEMAN, Joseph [American critic, poet, and novelist; major figure on the American left]  
 TLS, 1 p., Jan. 24, 1935 [writing as J. F. Evans]  
 TLS, 2 pp., June 5, 1938  
 [a portion of which follows:  
*"The news from Spain is good these days—and that has a fine effect on all sorts of people and things. I was at a luncheon for Spain several months ago, when the rats were seemingly having everything their own way toward the sea, and Gustave Regler said: things may look black at the moment, but we'll win, be sure of that. It would have done your heart good to have seen that meeting: Spain has united people from the most unexpected places. Of course Jay Standard and B. W. Huebsch and Lee Simonson and others of that kind were there, but think of Benny Goodman and SALLY RAND giving money to the Loyalist cause!"*]  
 TLS, 1 p., Dec. 4, 1939  
 TLS, 1 p., July 28, 1943  
 TLS, 1 p., Sept. 4, 1943  
 TLS, 1 p., Oct. 8, 1951  
 TLS, 2 pp., Nov. 13, 1951  
 TLS, 2 pp., Dec. 19, 1951  
 TLS, 1 p., Aug. 10, 1952  
 TLS, 1 p., Nov. 1, 1954 [to M. R.]
- GELLHORN, Martha [American journalist and fiction writer; married to Ernest Hemingway 1940-45]  
 TLS, 1 p., [early 1940s]  
 TLS, 2 p., Feb. 4, [1941]  
 TLS, 1 p., Oct. 6, 1942  
 TLS, 4 pp., [Dec. 8, 1942?]  
 TLS, 1 p., March 29, 1950
- GOLD, Mike [American novelist, poet, critic, editor, and major figure on the American left]  
 ALS, 2 pp., [c. 1932]  
 TLS, 2 pp., Feb. 6, 1938
- GORDON, Liz [wife of Mike Gordon]  
 TLS, 3 pp., [1944?]  
 TLS, 1 p., [1944?]
- GORDON, Mike [theatre and film director; member of the Theatre Union and the Group Theatre]  
 TLS, 2 pp., March 3, 1944  
 TLS, 2 pp., March 13, 1944  
 TLS, 3 pp., April 3, 1944  
 TLS, 2 pp., [1944?]  
 ALS, 6 pp., Oct. 12, 1951  
 ALS, 2 pp., June 2, 1954 [to M. R.]
- GREENWOOD, David [American poet]  
 TLS, 1 p., March 1, 1937  
 TLS, 2 pp., May 13, 1937
- GREGORY, Horace [American poet and critic]  
 ALS, 1 p., Nov. 13, 1933  
 TLS, 1 p., Feb. 27, 1935  
 TLS, 1 p., [1935?]  
 TLS, 1 p., Jan. 12, 1936

- GROSS, Nathan [VALB]  
 ALS, 1 p., Feb. 29, 1944  
 ALS, 1 p., Apr. 7, 1944  
 ALS, 1 p., May 15, 1944  
 ALS, 1 p., May 28, 1944  
 ALS, 9 pp., July 30, 1944  
 ALS, 1 p., Aug. 20, 1944  
 ALS, 1 p., Sept. 24, 1944  
 ALS, 2 pp., Dec. 2, 1944
- GURMAN, Dan  
 ALS, 8 pp., July 6/7, 1938
- HARE, Stan  
 ALS, 1 p., Oct. 1950 [card]
- HARPER'S MAGAZINE editorial correspondence  
 3 TLS, 1 p. each: June 27, 1945; May 10, 1950; Feb. 26, 1953
- HAYDN, Hiram [American literary critic; editor of *The American Scholar*]  
 TLS, 1 p., March 13, 1953 [both in Am. Scholar file]  
 TLS, 1 p., May 21, 1953
- HELLMAN, Lillian [American playwright and memoirist]  
 TLS, 1 p., Feb. 15, 1940
- HEMINGWAY, Ernest [American fiction writer]  
 TLS, 1 p., Oct. 7, 1939  
 TLS, 1 p., Jan. 21, [1940]  
 TLS, 1 p., [Jan. 30, 1940?] ["Have just written...."]  
 TLS, 2 pp., [Winter-Spring 1940] ["I believe as...."]  
 TLS, 2 pp., [Spring 1940?] ["Herbert says his...."]  
 TLS, 1 p., [April 21, 1940?]  
 Telegram, 1 p., July 27, 1940  
 ALS, 2 pp., [Dec. 10, 1940?]  
 TLS, 2 pp., [Jan. 6, 1941?]  
 TLS, 1 p., July 6, [1941?]  
 TLS, 1 p., [Aug. 7, 1941?]  
 TLS, 1 p., [Fall 1941?] ["Thanks for looking...."]  
 TLS, 1 p., Feb. 23, 1942  
 TLS, 1 p., May 30, 1942  
 TLS, 2 p., [Jan. 1943?] [I'm sorry the introduction . . . ]  
 [a portion of which follows:  
*"Anyhow remember I am fonder of you and respect you more than any guy I know and when I make mistakes remember sometimes I make the other too and not even Ted Williams hit over .400 this year. Wish you'd been down here when the Dodgers were here. Curt Davis, Billy Herman, Augie Galan and Johnny Rizzo are really wonderful guys. Reese and Reiser are sweet ball players but ignorant punks. Freddy FitzSimmons could have been a company union guy. Larry French is a good guy; smart and mean and educated. You ought to have been there the night Hughey Casey and poor old papa fought in the living room with gloves sometime after midnight to count one knockdowns. He's as mean as the south is and has many of the south's good qualities . . . ."*]
- ALS, 2 pp., April 18, [1943]  
 TLS, 2 pp., Oct. 18, 1943  
 TLS, 2 pp., Dec. 12, 1943  
 Telegram, 1 p., Feb. 24, 1944  
 ALS, 1 p., Oct. 23, 1946  
 TLS, 2 pp., Aug. 23, 1947  
 TLS, 4 pp., Oct. 25, 1947  
 [a portion of which follows:  
*"Made many good friends in this last war but it was very different from Spain. This one was just to fight in and get over with ; I couldn't feel anything. We never sang anything except Fuckem All-the long and the short and the tall. It was necessary to invade France and destroy the German Army and break into Germany and destroy the Nazi system and I was happy always doing whatever I could to be useful and I liked to kill bad krauts but everything always seemed too late. The Russians had beaten them already when we fought them. We used to wonder what it would have been like if we had to fight the 1940 Krauts . . . ."*]
- TLS, 1 p., April 13, 1950  
 TLS, 1 p., June 13, 1953
- HICKS, Granville [American critic, novelist, biographer]  
 TLS, 1 p., Oct. 3, 1933  
 TLS, 1 p., Jan. 10, 1934
- HINMAN, Harold  
 ALS, 2 pp., Jan. 27, 1944  
 ALS, 2 pp., Nov. 8, 1944  
 ALS, 6 pp., Nov. 20, 1945  
 ALS, 4 pp., Dec. 10, 1951
- HOUGHTON MIFFLIN editorial correspondence  
 3 TLS, 1 p. each: July 12, 1945; Oct. 29, 1947; Feb. 3, 1948
- HUGHES, Langston [American poet]  
 TLS, 1 p., Sept. 7, 1937 [included with 43-line typed and signed poem dedicated to Rolfe]  
 ALS, 1 p., [Aug./Sept. 1937?]  
 ALS, 1 p., [Aug./Sept. 1937?]  
 TLS, 1 p., Jan. 21, 1952
- HUMPHRIES, Rolfe [American poet, translator, and anthologist]  
 ALS, 1 p., Jan. 17, 1953
- HURWITZ, Leo T. [photographer; filmmaker; Film and Photo League]  
 TLS, 3 pp., April 3, 1926  
 ALS, postcard, July 26, 1926  
 ALS, postcard, July 28, 1926  
 ALS, 4 pp., Sept. 24, 1926  
 ALS, 2 pp., Nov. 13, 1926  
 ALS, 3 pp., Nov. 19, 1926  
 ALS, 1 p., Nov. 22, 1926  
 ALS, 1 p., Jan. 31, 1927  
 ALS, 1 p., Mar. 4, 1927  
 ALS, postcard, May 25, 1927  
 ALS, postcard, Sept. 27, 1927  
 ALS, postcard, Dec. 21, 1927  
 ALS, postcard, Jan. 18, 1928  
 ALS, postcard, Mar. 22, 1928  
 ALS, 1 p., Dec. 10, 1928  
 ALS, postcard, Jan. 10, 1929  
 ALS, 6 pp., Feb. 28, 1929  
 ALS, postcard, Oct. 10, 1929  
 TLS, 2 pp., Mar. 10, 1930  
 ALS, postcard, May 24, 1930  
 ALS, 2 pp., Dec. 19, 1930  
 ALS, 2 pp. [late 20s/early 30s?]  
 ALS, 2 pp. " "  
 ALS, 4 pp. " "  
 ALS, 1 p., " "  
 ALS, 2 pp. " "  
 ALS, 4 pp. " "  
 ALS, 1 p., " "  
 ALS, 2 pp. " "  
 ALS, 2 pp. " "  
 ALS, 2 pp. " "  
 ALS, 4 pp. " "  
 ALS, 4 pp. " "  
 ALS, 4 pp. " "  
 ALS, 5 pp. " "  
 ALS, 1 p., " "  
 ALS, 4 pp. " "  
 ALS, 4 pp. " "  
 ALS, 2 pp. " "  
 ALS, 2 pp. " "  
 ALS, 1 p., " "  
 ALS, 4 pp. " "  
 ALS, 4 pp. " "  
 ALS, 7 pp. " "  
 ALS, 4 pp. " "  
 ALS, 1 p., " "  
 ALS, 4 pp. " "  
 ALS, 2 pp. " "  
 TLS/ALS, 2 pp. " "  
 ALS, 4 pp. " "  
 ALS, 3 pp. " "  
 ALS, 4 pp. " "  
 ALS, 4 pp. " "  
 ALS, 6 pp. " "



TLS, 2 pp., Aug. 2, 1937

[a portion of which follows:

*"For the past six or seven weeks, I have strongly felt that I was with you in Spain. I've been working fifteen and sixteen hours a day (sometimes 22) with Paul on a Spanish film which we have called HEART OF SPAIN. As you know Herb brought back some material on the work of the blood transfusion institute which he and a beginning Hungarian cameraman shot in Spain. The rushes were definitely very discouraging. The photography wiggled all over the screen in unsightly pans, aside from many other technical faults including terrific scratches. Herb had never made a film and knew nothing about shooting a scene from the necessary angles so that it can finally be put together into a sequence. The cameraman had never held a camera in his hands before and quite naturally committed the ordinary amateurish technical errors. And of course, on the whole the photography was inexpressive . . .*

*But Herb has a certain natural flare for the dramatic, and some of the scenes they brought back had quite a bit of power, though most of the dramatic power in many of the scenes were the stories that Herb told about them. Herb got me out bed one morning and in the way he has practically made me promise to edit the film. I was loath to do it because of the amount of work I had at Frontier, and because of the difficulty of the material. But I said OK and got Paul to work with me. We looked at the rushes several times and sat down in Herb's hotel room to work out a scenario that the material would fit itself into . . .*

*Finally we got into a cutting room and spent the days and nights of five weeks there worrying out every sequence, using every ounce of imagination, feeling and skill to overcome the shortcomings of the material and get a moving film out of it."*

ALS, postcard, Aug. 9, 1937

ALS, 1 p., Oct. 8, 1939

ALS, 10 pp., Aug. 4, 1944

ALS, 3 pp., Aug. 28, 1945

TLS, 2 pp., Nov. 27, 1947

ALS, 3 pp., Sept. 10, 1950

ALS, 1 p., ?

ALS, 4 pp., ?

INGALLS, Jeremy

ALS, 2 pp., Feb. 14, 1944

IVENS, Joris [Dutch documentary filmmaker; directed *Spanish Earth*]

ALS, 1 p., 1944

JAMIESON, K.

TLS, 1 p., Sept. 5, 1954

JEWELL, Dean

TLS, 1 p., Sept. 5, 1950

KANTOROWICZ, Alfred [German journalist and author]

TLS, 1 p., May 20, 1943

TLS, 1 p., July 8, 1943

TLS, 1 p., Dec. 25, 1943

TLS, 3 pp., Sept. 25, 1944

TLS, 2 pp., May 14, 1944

TLS, 1 p., Jan. 1, 1945

TLS, 3 pp., Jan. 21, 1945

TLS, 2 pp., June 6, 1945

TLS, 2 pp., Aug. 20, 1945

TLS, 2 pp., Feb. 14, 1946

TLS, 2 pp., Aug. 18, 1946

TLS, 2 pp., Aug. 31, 1946

TLS, 1 p., Sept. 15, 1946

TLS, 1 p., Sept. 24, 1946

TLS, telegram, 1 p., Nov. 10, 1946

TLS, 2 pp., March 3, 1947

TLS, 1 p., Dec. 30, 1947

ALS, 2 pp., Nov. 21, ?

KAUFFMANN, Stanley [editor at Ballantine Books; later film and drama critic]

TLS, 1 p., Jan. 29, 1953 [in Ballantine File]

KAZAN, Elia (signed "Gadget") [American theater and film director and novelist]

TLS, 2 pp., [1937 or 1938]

KRAFT, Jill

ALS, 1 p., July 7, 1950

KLINE, Herbert [photographer; Film and Photo League]

ALS, postcard, August 15, 1939

TLS, 1 p., ?

TLS, 2 pp., ?

TLS, 1 p., Feb. 10, ?

LAMB, Constance and Lenny [VALB]

TLS, 1 p., Nov. 3, 1944

ALS, 1 p., Jan. 30, 1945

ALS, 2 pp., April 22, ?

TLS, 2 pp., Dec. 10, ?

LARDNER, Ring Jr. [screenwriter, author, Hollywood Ten]

TLS, 1 p., April 28, 1980 [to M. R.]

LASH, Joe [American journalist and biographer]

ALS, 2 pp., Aug. 26, 1937 [written in Spain]

LIEBER, Max [literary agent]

TLS, 1 p., June 28, 1945

TLS, 1 p., Nov. 20, 1945

TLS, 1 p., Nov. 23, 1945

TLS, 1 p., Jan. 22, 1946

TLS, 1 p., March 18, 1946

TLS, 1 p., June 6, 1946

TLS, 1 p., Aug. 26, 1946

TLS, 1 p., Dec. 3, 1947

TLS, 2 pp., Oct. 1, 1951

LERNER, Irving [film director; Film and Photo League]

TLS, 1 p., Nov. 1, 1951

TLS, 1 p., Nov. 4, 1951

LEVENE, Carol

ALS, 1 p. Feb. 1, 1951/plus carbon of story, "The Reincarnation of the Brooklyn Babe," 13 pp.

LEYDA, Jay [film critic and historian; Film and Photo League]

TLS/ALS, 2 pp., [c. August] 1950 [to Jay Leyda from Viking Press about E. R.'s *First Love*]

TLS, 1 p., Sept. 14, 1950

ALS, 1 p., Sept. 25, 1951

ALS, 1 p., Jan. 2, 1952

TLS, 1 p., April 29, 1952

TLS, 1 p., Aug. 1, 1953

ALS, 2 pp., Sept. 9, 1953

ALS, 1 p., June 17, 1954

ALS, 2 pp., April 23, ?

LITTLE, BROWN & COMPANY editorial correspondence

TLS, 2 pp., April 21, 1947

LLOYD, Thomas [VALB]

ALS, 2 pp., Feb. 22, 1943

MACLEISH, Archibald [American poet and essayist]

TLS, 1 p., Feb. 14, 1936

TLS, 1 p., July 17, 1936

TLS, 1 p., April 6, 1937

MADDOW, Ben [American poet and screenwriter]

ALS, 1 p., Sept. 11, 1936

ALS, 1 p., Oct. 23, 1946 [with magazine clippings]

ALS, 7 pp., [early 1950s?]

ALS, 4 pp., ? [oversize paper—17 x 24]

MADISON, L.

TLS, 2 pp., July 4, 1944

MAGILL, A. B. [poet, critic, and editor for *New Masses* and *Masses and Mainstream*]

TLS, 1 p., June 2, 1954 [to M. R.]

MALTZ, Albert [American novelist; Hollywood Ten]

TLS, 3 pp., August 9, [1937]

TLS, 1 p., [1938?] [typed on carbon of Maltz's recommendation for E. R. to Guggenheim Foundation]

TLS, 3 pp., Oct. 7, 1938

TLS, 3 pp., Nov. 27, 1938

ALS, 1 p., [mid-1940s?]

ALS, 1 p., [mid-1940s?]

ALS, 1 p. [late 1940s-early 1950s]

TL, 6 pp., April 25, 1951

TLS, 3 pp., May 29, 1951

TLS, 2 pp., Nov. 7, 1951

TLS, 2 pp., Jan. 16, 1952

ALS, 5 pp., Dec. 24, 1952



- ALS, 2 pp., June 3, 1954 [to M. R.]  
ALS, 1 p., ?
- MALTZ, Margaret Larkin  
TLS, 2 pp., Nov. 12, 1950  
TLS, 2 pp., May 15, 1952  
TLS, 1 p., May 27, 1954 [to M. R.]  
TLS, 2 pp., Sept. 22, 1954  
typed poem, "For Helen" [on Helen Black's death—1953?]
- MARCUS, Albert [Canadian solicitor]  
TLS, 1 p., May 10, 1937
- MATTHEWS, Herbert [*New York Times* correspondent in Spain]  
ALS, 2 pp., Sept. 26, [1938]  
TLS, 1 p., March 24, 1939  
TLS, 1 p., Oct. 14, 1939  
TLS, 2 pp., Feb. 13, 1940
- MAXWELL, William [American novelist and editor for *The New Yorker*]  
TLS, 1 p., Oct. 25, 1944 [all in *The New Yorker* file]  
TLS, 1 p., Dec. 13, 1944  
TLS, 1 p., Dec. 29, 1944  
TLS, 1 p., Feb. 28, 1945
- MCCOMBS, Paul  
TLS, 1 p., [1937?]
- MCGRATH, Thomas [American poet]  
TLS, 1 p., [early 1950s]  
mimeograph poem entitled, "Christmas Music 1953"  
TLS, 1 p., June 26, 1954  
ALS, 1 p., Dec. 22, 1956, with mimeograph poem "A Christmas Fable"
- MICHELSON, Clarina [family friend; worked in left causes for many years]  
ALS, 1 p., Nov. 28, 1939
- MILLER, Ben and Zelma  
ALS, 1 p., July 17, 1945  
ALS, 1 p., Aug. 19, ?
- MILLET, Martha [American poet]  
ALS, 5 pp., April 30, 1952  
TLS, 2 pp., June 16, 1952
- MONROE, Harriet [editor of *Poetry*]  
ALS, 1 p., Aug. 1, 1932  
ALS, 2 pp., April 16, 1935
- MORA, Constanca de la [Spanish novelist]  
ALS, 1 p., ? [to: "Miss Hurwitz"]
- MOWRER, Rich. [correspondent for *The Chicago Daily News* in Spain]  
TLS, 1 p., April 13, 1939
- MURRA, John [VALB]  
ALS, 5 pp., May 8, 1945  
ALS, 4 pp., Sept. 1945  
ALS, 2 pp., Nov. 21, ?  
ALS, 2 pp., ?  
ALS, 2 pp., ?  
ALS, 4 pp., ?  
ALS, 2 pp., ?  
ALS, 4 pp., ?  
ALS, 2 pp., ?  
ALS, 4 pp., ?
- ALS, 4 pp., ?  
ALS, 2 pp., ?
- THE NATION editorial correspondence  
5 TLS, 1 p. each: March 16, 1953; July 23, 1953; July 24, 1953; August 13, 1953; Dec. 8, 1953
- THE NEW YORKER editorial correspondence  
2 TLS, 1 page each: Sept. 21, 1939; Nov. 12, 1945
- NICKSON, Richard [American poet; professor of English]  
ALS, 2 pp., Oct. 9, 1944  
TLS, 1 p., [during WWII]  
ALS, 9 pp., Dec. 23, 1947  
ALS, 5 pp., Feb. 19, 1948  
TLS/ALS, 2 pp., March 9, 1948 [includes 6 pp. typed poem by R. N.]  
ALS, postcard, April 20, 1948  
ALS, 8 pp., Oct. 6, 1948  
TLS/ALS, 2 pp., May 30-31, 1950 [includes 1 p. typed poem by R.N.]  
TLS, 1 p., May 28, [1954]  
5 pp. mimeographed poem by R. N.
- NORTH, Joe [American journalist on *The Daily Worker* and *The New Masses*]  
TLS, 2 pp., [Fall 1938]
- ODETS, Clifford [American dramatist; screenwriter]  
TLS/ALS, 2 pp., Feb. 21, 1945  
ALS, 1 p., Jan. 5, 1948  
ALS, 2 pp., May 5, 1949  
ALS, postcard, Nov. 25, 1949  
TLS, 1 p., Aug. 25, 1950  
ALS, 1 p., Nov. 11, 1950  
ALS, 1 p., Dec. 3, 1950  
ALS, 1 p., July 9, 1951 [includes set of Greek stamps sent by Odets]  
ALS, postcard, July 17, 1951  
hand-made Christmas card to Ed and Mary Rolfe, Dec. 29, 1952
- OPLER, Charlotte [family friend born Charlotte Fox; married anthropologist Marvin Opler; named first child after E. R.]  
ALS, 2 pp., July 24, 1933  
TLS, 2 pp., Aug. 30, 1939  
ALS, 2 pp., Sept. 1, 1940  
ALS, 4 pp., Dec. 2, 1940  
ALS, 4 pp., Jan. 6, 1941  
ALS, postcard, Oct. 31, 1941  
ALS, postcard, Dec. 31, 1941  
ALS, postcard, April 7, 1943  
ALS, postcard, April 22, 1943  
ALS, postcard, April 26, 1943  
ALS, postcard, Dec. 22, 1943  
ALS, 4 pp., Jan. 30, 1944  
ALS, postcard, Dec. ?, 1944  
ALS, 6 pp., Dec. ?, 1944  
ALS, postcard, Jan. ?, 1945  
ALS, 4 pp., Jan. 17, 1945  
ALS, postcard, March 21, 1945
- ALS, 1 p., March 26, 1945  
ALS, 6 pp., April 18, 1945  
ALS, postcard, June 11, 1945  
TLS/ALS, 2 pp., Sept. 18, 1945  
ALS, 2 pp., Dec. 16, 1950  
ALS, 2 pp., June 5, 1954 [to M. R.]  
ALS, postcard, [early 40s?]  
ALS, 2 pp., Jan. 20, ?  
ALS, 4 pp., Nov. 26, ?  
ALS, 1 p., April 16, ?  
TLS, 3 pp., Jan. 26, ?  
ALS, 2 pp., March 13, ?  
ALS, 2 pp., June 9, ?
- ORNITZ, Samuel [American novelist; Hollywood Ten]  
TLS, 1 p., Oct. 21, 1951
- PARKER, De Witt [philosophy professor, U. of Michigan; his son died in Spanish Civil War]  
TLS, 1 p., March 10, 1939  
TLS, 1 p., May 24, 1940
- PAYNE, Robert [English professor; editor of anthology on Spanish Civil War]  
ALS, 2 pp., Dec. 31, 1948  
TLS, 2 pp., Feb. 27, 1949  
TLS, 2 pp., Dec. 21, 1949  
TLS, 1 p., Nov. 28, 1950  
TLS, 1 p., June 14, 1954  
ALS, 2 pp., ?  
ALS, 1 p., ?
- PERLMAN, Rosalind  
ALS, 4 pp., Sept. 27, 1944
- PITTENGER, Ted  
TLS, Nov. 7, 1952
- POETRY: A MAGAZINE OF VERSE editorial correspondence  
3 TLS, 1 p. each: May 26, 1937; March 26, 1945; May 9, 1945  
5 postcards—3 ALS: Jan. 19, 1945; Nov. 8, 1945; [Nov. 1945?]  
1 TLS: April 28, 1945  
1 TL-XC: Nov. 16, 1945  
4 TLS, 1 p. each: Jan. 29, 1945; Feb. 28, 1945; March 26, 1945; April 8, 1946  
1 TL, 1 p., March 6, 1953
- PORTER, Katherine Anne [American fiction writer]  
ALS, 1 p., Nov. 20, 1945
- POZNER, Vladimir [novelist; born in Soviet Union but taken to France as a child; in U. S. during the Second World War]  
TLS, 1 p., June 19, 1942
- REPLANSKY, Naomi [American poet]  
ALS, 1 p., Jan. 29, 1953 [poem entitled: "H is For How Find a Rhyme to Heroin?"]
- REXROTH, Kenneth [American poet, critic, anthologist]  
signed mimeographed letter, 1 p., April 20, 1949

- RIGGS, Ted  
 TLS, 1 p., May 24, 1937
- RINEHART AND COMPANY editorial correspondence  
 4 TLS, 1 p. each: May 8, 1946; July 3, 1946; July 25, 1946; Feb. 6, 1953
- ROBINSON, Earl [American composer and songwriter]  
 ALS, postcard, March 22, 1939
- RODMAN, Selden [American poet, critic, editor]  
 TLS, 1 p., April 7, 1936
- ROSENTHAL, Louis  
 ALS, 1 p., Sept. 14, 1944  
 TLS, 1 p., Oct. 24, 1944  
 TLS, 1 p., March 31, 1945  
 TLS, 2 pp., Dec. 12, 1945
- ROSTEN, Norman [American poet]  
 ALS, postcard, June 12, 1948  
 TLS, 1 p., Sept. 25, 1949  
 ALS, postcard, May 8, 1950  
 TLS, 1 p., April 14, 1950  
 TLS, 1 p., Oct. 6, 1950  
 ALS, 1 p., April 27, ?  
 ALS, 1 p., May 6, ?
- RUKEYSER, Muriel [American poet]  
 ALS, postcard, Sept. 8, 1936  
 TLS, 1 p., April 4, 1937  
 TLS, 2 pp., Oct. 24 [1937 or '38]  
 ALS, 1 p., Sept. 26, 1939  
 ALS, 1 p., March 14, 1945  
 ALS, 1 p., May 22, 1945  
 ALS, 1 p., Dec. 16, 1945  
 TLS, 2 pp., Aug. 22, 1950  
 TLS, 2 pp., Jan. 21, 1952  
 TLS, 1 p., ?  
 TLS, 1 p., ?  
 ALS, 1 p., ?
- SANFORD, John [American novelist]  
 TLS, 1 p., Jan. 25, 1952  
 TLS, 2 pp., April 6, 1952
- THE SATURDAY EVENING POST editorial correspondence  
 TLS, 1 p., Aug. 16, 1945  
 TLS, 5 pp., [mid 1940s?] [to Vincent Sheean]
- THE SATURDAY REVIEW OF LITERATURE editorial correspondence  
 TLS, 1 p., Nov. 6, 1952 [see also the William Rose Benét file]
- SEAVER, Edwin [American editor]  
 TLS, 1 p., Nov. 15, 1939
- SCHMIDT, James Norman  
 TLS, 2 p., Feb. 2, [1952?]
- SHEEAN, Vincent [American journalist, novelist, biographer]  
 TLS, 2 pp., Dec. 17, 1938
- TLS, 1 p., Jan. 2, 1939
- TLS, 1 p., Mar. 27, 1939
- TLS, 1 p., Aug. 31, 1939
- TLS, 1 p., Oct. 19, 1939
- TLS, 1 p., Feb. 23, 1940
- ALS, postcard, May 2, 1940
- ALS, 2 pp., June 13, 1950
- TLS, 2 pp., ?
- SHEEHAN, Roy  
 ALS, 1 p., Dec. 12, 1945
- SHEPHERD, Paul  
 TLS, 1 p., May 17, 1937
- SILLEN, Samuel [editor of *Mainstream*]  
 ALS, 1 p., May 6, 1947  
 TLS, 1 p., March 11, 1947
- SIMS, Thomas [editor, *Daily Clarion*, Toronto]  
 TLS, 1 p., Nov. 26, 1938
- SMITH, Lorna  
 TLS, 1 p., Aug. 14, 1946
- STAROBIN, Joe [American historian]  
 TLS, 1 p., Jan. 29, ?
- STOWE, Leland [journalist in Spain]  
 TLS, 1 p., [1937?]  
 TLS, 1 p., Aug. 3, 1938
- STRAND, Paul [photographer and filmmaker; Film and Photo League]  
 ALS, 4 pp., Oct. 7, [1938]
- STRAND, Virginia [wife of Paul Strand]  
 TLS, 1 p., [Fall 1938]
- STURAT, Michael  
 TLS, 1 p., Sept. 15, 1950
- TAGGARD, Genevieve [American poet, professor, critic]  
 ALS, 2 pp., Aug. 27, 1947
- TAYLOR, Joe [VALB]  
 ALS, 3 pp., Nov. 25, 1943
- TEBLUNS, Eddie  
 TLS, 2 pp., Aug. 14, 1937
- THAYER, Donald [VALB]  
 ALS, 1 p., May 25, 1944  
 TLS, 2 pp., June 21, 1944  
 TLS, 2 pp., April 17, 1945  
 TLS, 2 pp., July 23, 1945  
 ALS, 6 pp., Oct. 27, ?  
 ALS, 2 pp., ?
- TOLLER, Ernst [German poet and dramatist]  
 ALS, 6 pp., [1937?]
- TROWBRIDGE, Don [American poet of the left]  
 TLS, 1 p., March 24, 1937  
 TLS, 1 p., March 29, 1937  
 TLS, 1 p., May 17, 1937  
 ALS, 1 p., April 6, ?
- VAN DONGEN, Helen [film editor; married to Joris Ivens; worked with Ivens and Robert Flaherty]  
 telegram, 1 p., Sept. 9, 1944  
 TLS, 4 pp., Sept. 27, 1945  
 TLS, 1 p., Dec. 28, 1945
- ALS, 2 pp., [1945?]  
 TLS, 1 p., April 8, 1946  
 TLS, 2 pp., Jan. 28, 1947  
 ALS, 1 p., May 7, ?
- VALB [Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, New York Office]  
 TLS, 2 pp., Nov. 17, 1943  
 TLS, 1 p., Dec. 1943  
 TLS, 2 pp., Mar. 28, 1944  
 TLS, 1 p., April 25, 1944  
 TLS, 2 pp., Oct. 31, 1944  
 TLS, 1 p., July 5, 1945
- WARNER, Sylvia Townsend [New Zealand writer]  
 TLS, 1 p., Nov. 13, 1936
- WILLIAMS, Oscar [American poet, critic, and anthologist]  
 TLS, 1 p., Jan. 21, 1955  
 TLS, 1 p., Jan. 31, ?  
 TLS, 1 p., Dec. 31, ?
- WOLF, Harriet [E.R.'s literary agent]  
 TLS, postcard, June 25, [early 50s?]  
 TLS, 1 p., July 17, 1953  
 TLS, 1 p., Sept. 24, 1953  
 TLS, 1 p., [1953?]  
 TLS, 1 p., Feb. 15, 1954  
 TLS, 1 p., March 31, 1954  
 ALS, 1 p., June 2, 1954 [to M. R.]
- WOLFF, Milton [VALB; last commander of the ALB in Spain]  
 ALS, postcard, July 17, 1942  
 ALS, 2 pp., July 22, 1942  
 ALS, 3 pp., Aug. 29, 1942  
 ALS, postcard, Sept. 6, 1942  
 ALS, 2 pp., Sept. 20, 1942  
 TLS, 2 pp., Dec. 28, 1942  
 TLS, 1 p., 1942  
 ALS, postcard, Jan. 5, 1944  
 ALS, postcard, March 13, 1944  
 ALS, postcard, June 20, 1944  
 TLS, 2 pp., Oct. 29, 1944  
 TLS, 1 p., Jan. 16, 1945  
 TLS, 1 p., March 20, 1945  
 ALS, 1 p., Aug. 27, 1950  
 ALS, 2 pp., April 8, 1952  
 Telegram, May 27, 1954  
 ALS, 2 pp., April 4, ?  
 ALS, 2 pp., June 24, ?  
 ALS, 4 pp., June 2, ?  
 TLS, 1 p., Feb. 7, ?  
 TLS, 1 p., Feb. 9, ?
- WOLMAN, Gordon Markley ("Reds")  
 ALS, 4 pp., Aug. 22, 1945  
 TLS, 2 pp., Jan. 25, 1946
- YANK: THE ARMY WEEKLY editorial correspondence  
 3 TLS, 1 p. each: July 9, 1945; July 18, 1945; Oct. 15, 1945

2. CORRESPONDENCE INTERNAL TO THE INTERNATIONAL BRIGADES WRITTEN DURING THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR. *All addressed to Edwin Rolfe except as noted.*

- BATES, Ralph [novelist; editor of *Volunteer for Liberty* in Spain]  
ALS, 1 p., [1937-38]  
ALS, 8 pp., [1937-38] [included with typed 7 p. manuscript on Spanish Civil War]
- BESSIE, Alvah  
ALS, 2 pp., Aug. 6, 1938
- BUSCH, Dr. Irving [Chief Medical Officer, American Battalion]  
TLS, 1 p., Oct. 29, 1937 [to *Volunteer for Liberty*]
- COPIC, Victor  
ALS, [1938] [to John Gates]
- DORAN, Dave [commissar in ALB]  
TLS, 2 pp., Sept. 10, 1937
- FRIEDMAN, Jack  
ALS, 1 p., Aug. 13, 1937  
TLS, 1 p., Aug. 30, 1937
- GIER, Leo  
ALS, 3 pp., Aug. 9, 1937  
ALS, 4 pp., [1937?]
- HUTNER, Dan  
ALS, 1 p., Aug. 15, 1937  
ALS, 2 pp., [1937?]
- KELLER, Freddy  
ALS, 4 pp., Aug. 30, 1937  
[the text of which follows:  
"August 30, 37  
at the front  
  
Dear Ed:  
The last time we saw you turned out to be quite a day for us (M. Baily, W. McCorty, M. Goldberg, and myself) and I thought you might be interested.  
BEGINNING  
They put out the lights and shut down Madrid too early for us so we went for a subway ride and landed at Casa de Compa. We found up north a Spanish pick and shovel company and started marching for the front. We passed most of the sentries by showing them a guarantee from a dollar watch and saying something about "Americanoes."  
At the second line trenches we were politely challenged and were taken to see several "Capitanoes" who passed us on to see their  
superiors who sent us to see the Commandant of the 75 Brigada Mista. He turned out to be a swell fellow who was formerly a seaman and had been all over USA. We soon told him all about the Seaman's SEction of the M. G > Co., and from then nothing was too good for the "Americano Marinoes."  
For a start we had good Brazilian Coffee (it's been a long time) and 17-year old cognac, and we finished off with some very good champagne and then started a tour of the front. The Political Commissar apologized because the front was so tranquil and then we tried to stir it up by yelling across at the enemy. The dialogue goes something like this. The loyalist soldiers shouted across and asked the Franco man where he came from. The Fascist said "From Seville," the Loyalist: "From Seville, then you are a Spaniard! Why do you fight against Spaniards?" The fellow from Seville answered with a burst from a light machine gun.  
In the morning a 40 piece brass band played with great enthusiasm while we had one of the best breakfasts we have had since we came to Spain. After we were introduced to several more high ranking officers we went through the former Royal Grounds and Palaces.  
We went swimming in one of these beautiful swimming pools that was formerly a luxury spot for the very rich. There we met many Spanish soldiers who were enjoying a swim after 8 hours on the front. All spoke very well of the Americans in Spain and asked a lot of questions.  
We returned to Madrid after all this royal treatment to find out Battalion had left 24 hours before and it took us five days to catch up with them, just two hours before we went into a big attack, and now it is over and we rest between air raids writing letters. I hope you don't mind.  
Salud  
Freddy Keller"]  
ALS, 7 pp., June 22, 1938  
ALS, 4 pp., June 25, 1938 [to Milt Wolff]
- KURTZ, Sidney  
TLS, 3 pp., March 25, 1938
- LAWRENCE, Bill  
ALS, 2 pp., [1937] [letter introduces Langston Hughes]
- MERRIMAN, Robert [Chief of Staff, ALB; widely considered the model for Robert Jordan in Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*]  
ALS, 2 pp., Aug. 19, 1937
- MURRA, John  
TLS, 1 p., Aug. 4, 1937  
ALS, 1 p., [1937?]
- R., Arnie  
ALS, 1 p., Aug. 31, 1937
- REED, Joe  
ALS, 2 pp., Aug. 12, 1937
- ROLFE, Edwin  
TLS 1 p., Aug. 17, 1937 [to Medical Commission in Madrid]  
ALS, 3 pp., March 25, 1938 [to Dr. Busch]
- ROSE, Sol  
ALS, 1 p., Nov. 1, 1937  
ALS, 1 p., Dec. 17, 1937
- SIMON, John L.  
ALS, 2 pp., Oct. 21, 1938
- TIVIN, Isadore  
ALS, 1 p., Aug. 1937 [to Joe Rosenstein]  
ALS, 2 pp., Aug. 1937 [to E. R.]  
[a portion of which follows:  
"I was supposed to have been sent to an American Hospital from #15 Hospital in Madrid. Instead I was dumped in a Spanish Hospital. I am the only American. I can't get any reading material, I can't talk to anyone and no one can talk to me. I am going crazy here. Please get me out of here, or else I am done for . . ."]  
ALS, 2 pp., Aug. 28, 1937  
ALS, 2 pp., Sept. 1, 1937
- UGARTE, Javier  
ALS, 6 pp., Sept. 29, 1937
- WENDORF, Paul  
ALS, 1 p., Oct. 20, 1937
- WOLFF, Milt  
ALS, 1 p., Sept. 4, 1938  
ALS, 1 p., [1938?]
- ZAMERES, Joe  
ALS, 1 p., Oct. 8, 1937



3. CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE UNITED STATES REQUESTING INFORMATION ON AMERICANS SERVING IN THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN BATTALION. *All addressed to Edwin Rolfe except as noted.*

Requesting information about:	JAMES, Mable Williams (Pittsburgh) (nephew, John Cookson)	SACHS, Louis A. (Patterson, N.J.) (his son, David Sachs)
BRISKER, Luka (Washington, D.C.) (a relative, Don Madden)	TLS, 1 p., Nov. 29, 1938	ALS, 2 pp., Oct. 30, 1938
ALS, 2 pp., Oct. 26, 1938	MADDEN, Stella (family member, Don Madden)	SCHEIDER, Edward (NYC) (classmate, Hardy Corrigan)
COLVER, Joseph (NYC) (his son, Robert Colver, a.k.a. Douglas Hitchcock)	ALS, 6 pp., July 13, 1938 [to Don Madden]	ALS, 1 p., Aug. 5, 1938
ALS, 2 pp., Oct. 12, 1938	NORTH, Helen (NYC) (her husband, Ramon Castel)	<i>"I do not want you to persuade him to come home. All I would like is to know whether he is alive or dead."</i>
FRIEDMAN, Jean (Brooklyn) (her son, Laurence Friedman)	TLS, 1 p., Aug. 15, 1938	
TLS, 1 p., Oct. 18, 1937		

4. CORRESPONDENCE FROM EDWIN ROLFE.

To: BAKER, Mary	TLS-XC, 2 pp., Dec. 28, 1951	To: MOE, Henry Allen [Guggenheim Foundation]
TL-CBN, 1 p., May 3, 1945	TLS-XC, 3 pp., Jan. 23, 1952 [from M. R.]	TLS, 2 pp., July 11, 1938
To: BENÉT, Stephen Vincent	TLS-XC, 1 p., March 5, 1952	To: REXROTH, Kenneth
TL-CBN, 1 p., ?	TL-XC, 1 p., Nov. 8, 1952	TL-CBN, 1 p., July 8, 1949
To: CAMERON, Angus [Little, Brown, and Company]	TL-XC, 2 pp., Feb. 19, 1953	To: ROLFE, Mary
TL-CBN, 1 p., March 19, 1947	TLS-XC, 1 p., April 12, 1953	14 signed letters and 2 postcards written in the 1930s, 161 signed letters from Spain, and 51 signed letters and 49 postcards written in the 1940s. Envelopes included.
To: CRICHTON, Kyle [editor at Collier's]	ALS-XC, 1 p., May 8, 1953	To: SEAVER, Edwin
TL-CBN, 1 p., Jan. 10, 1945	TLS-XC, 1 p., June 15, 1953	TL-CBN, 1 p., March 22, 1946
To: DAVIDMAN, Joy	TLS-XC, 1 p., July 8, 1953	To: WILLIAMS, Oscar
TL-CBN, 2 pp., Jan. 7, 1942 [plus 12 poems by Spanish Civil War soldiers, 7 pp. carbons]	TLS-XC, 1 p., Oct. 5, 1953 [from M. R.]	TL-CBN, 1 p., Dec. 19, 1944
To: JOHN DAY COMPANY	TLS-XC, 2 pp., Dec. 14, 1953	TL-CBN, 2 pp., Jan. 4, 1945 [includes biographical note]
TL-CBN, 1 p., March 26, 1946	TLS-XC, 2 pp., Dec. 30, 1953	TL-CBN, 1 p., Dec. 4, 1945
To: DON, SAM	TL-XC, 1 p., Feb. 18, 1954	TL-CBN, 1 p., Jan. 27, 1946
TL, 2 pp., Oct. 10, 1938	TL-XC, 1 p., May 7, 1954	To: WOLFF, Milton
TL-CBN, 1 p., Oct. 11, 1938	To: HATHAWAY, Clarence [editor, <i>The Daily Worker</i> ]	AL-XC, postcard, July 6, 1941
TL-CBN, 1 p., Nov. 5, 1938	TL-CBN, 1 p., Nov. 18, 1938	TL-XC, 1 p., Jan. 22, 1943
TL-CBN, 1 p., March 25, 1946	To: HAY, John [editor, <i>Yank: The Army Weekly</i> ]	TL-XC, 2 pp., Feb. 13, ?
To: FISHMAN, BERNIE AND FAMILY	TL-CBN, 1 p., July 13, 1945	TLS-XC, 2 pp., Feb. 28, 1945
TLS-XC, 1 p., Feb. 2, 1950	To: HOUGHTON-MIFFLIN PUBLISHERS	TLS-XC, 1 p., April 27, 1945
ALS-XC, 3 pp., Aug. 14, 1950	TL-CBN, 1 p., Feb. 16, 1945 [plus 1 page application for Poetry Award]	TLS-XC, 1 p., Jan. 29, 1949
TLS-XC, 2 pp., March 26, 1951	TL-CBN, 1 p., July 8, 1945	TLS-XC, 2 pp., Feb. 3, 1949
TLS-XC, 2 pp., May 2, 1951	To: HUMPHRIES, Rolfe	TLS-XC, 2 pp., Feb. 19, [1949?]
TLS-XC, 1 p., May 23, 1951	TLS, 1 p., Dec. 19, 1952	TLS-XC, 2 pp., April 6, 1950
TLS-XC, 2 pp., June 21, 1951	To: LAUGHLIN, James [editor of <i>New Directions</i> ]	TLS-XC, 1 p., April 4, [1951 or 52?]
TLS-XC, 2 pp., Aug. 31, 1951	TL-CBN, 1 p., Dec. 26, 1946	TL-XC, 1 p., ?
TLS-XC, 1 p., Sept. 10, 1951	To: LIEBER, Maxim	
TLS-XC, 2 pp., Oct. 16, 1951	TL-CBN, 1 p., Nov. 20, 1948	
TL-XC, 1 p., Nov. 13, 1951 [from M. R.]	To: KIRCHWAY, Freda [editor of <i>The Nation</i> ]	
	TL-CBN, 1 p., Aug. 4, 1953	



# Edwin Rolfe: A Working Bibliography

## 1. BOOKS OF POEMS

1933

We Gather Strength. *Poems by Herman Spector, Joseph Kalar, Edwin Rolfe, Sol Funaroff.* Introduction by Mike Gold. New York: Liberal Press, 1933.

(The poems by Rolfe, printed on pages 37-46, are: "Asbestos," "Brickyards at Beacon," "Credo," "Winds of Another Sphere," "Portrait of a Death," "Kentucky—1932," and "Homage to Karl Marx.")

### Reviews:

- Anon. *The Daily Worker*. May 30, 1933, p. 2.  
 Calmer, Alan. "We Gather Strength" shows Growth of Revolutionary Verse" *The Daily Worker*, August 14, 1933, p. 5.  
 Kline, Herbert. "Comrade Poets," *Left Front*, 1:2 (September/October 1933), p. 15.  
 Maas, Willard. "Four Young Revolutionists," *Poetry*, 44:1 (April 1933), pp. 50-53.

1936

*To My Contemporaries: Poems By Edwin Rolfe.* New York: Dynamo, 1936.

(Poems included are: "Credo," "Winds of Another Sphere," "Testament to a Flowering Race," "Asbestos," "Brickyards at Beacon," "Faces No Longer White," "Somebody and Somebody Else and You," "Georgia Nightmare," "Kentucky," "Letter to One in Russia," "The Patterns of Our Lives," "Homage to Karl Marx," "These Men Are Revolution," "Room With Revolutionists," "Three Who Died," "Witness at Leipzig," "Poem for May First," "Unit Assignment," "Unit Meeting," "Season of Death," "Definition," "To My Contemporaries")

### Reviews:

- Anon. *The Nation*, 142 (June 17, 1936), p. 784.  
 Anon. Evaluative Notice. *The New Yorker*, 12:43 (December 12, 1936), p. 110.  
 Bénét, William Rose. *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 13:16 (February, 15, 1936), p. 26.  
 Fearing, Kenneth. *Daily Worker*, January 23, 1936, p. 7.  
 Freeman, Joseph. *New Masses*, 18:11 (March 10, 1936), pp. 23-25. Also see Freeman's

"What a World" column in *The Daily Worker*, November 17, 1933, p. 5.

- Rodman, Selden. *Common Sense*, 5:3 (March 1936), pp. 28-29. (Review, along with Kenneth Patchen's *Before the Brave*.)  
 Rosenberg, Harold. *Partisan Review and Anvil*, 3:3 (April 1936), pp. 29-30.  
 Rukeyser, Muriel. *Book Union Bulletin*.  
 Stone, Geoffrey. *American Review*, 7 (April 1936), p. 108.  
 Walton, Edna Lou. "Three Young Marxist Poets," *The New York Times Book Review*, June 21, 1936, p. 16. (Review of *To My Contemporaries*; Kenneth Patchen, *Before the Brave*; Stanley Burnshaw, *The Iron Land*.)  
 Wilson, T. C. *The New Republic*, 87:1123 (June 10, 1936), p. 139.  
 Zabel, Morton Dauwen. "Poets of Five Decades," *The Southern Review*, 2:1 (Summer 1936), pp. 160-186. (Omnibus review of seventeen books of poetry, including *To My Contemporaries*; see pp. 185-186 for a response to Rolfe.)

1951

*First Love, and Other Poems.* Los Angeles: Larry Edmunds Book Shop, 1951. Illustrations by Lia Nickson.

(Poems included are: "Entry," "City of Anguish," "Death By Water," "Catalogue," "Eyes of A Blind Man," "Casualty," "Epitaph," "Elegy For Our Dead," "The Guerillas," "To Thine Own Self," "After Wang Chi," "Pastoral," "Pastoral (2)," "Night World," "The Ship," "Prophecy in Stone," "The Arctic Remembered," "Song," "Song (2)," "Essay on Dreiser," "Postscript To A War," "Biography," "About Eyes," "Survival Is Of The Essence," "Marching Song Of The Children Of Darkness," "Song (3)," "May 22nd 1939," "Soledad," "Sentry," "War Guilt," "Recruit," "The Melancholy Comus," "Song For A Birth Day In Exile," "The Cell," "Lanes Of Death And Birth," "More Than Flesh To Fathom," "At The Moment Of Victory," "Elegia," "First Love")

### Reviews:

- Humphries, Rolfe. "Verse Chronicle," *The Nation*, 174:5 (February 2, 1952), pp. 113-14.  
 Kramer, Aaron. "New Rolfe Book," *National Guardian*, January 16, 1952.  
 McGrath, Thomas. "Belated Recognition for A Splendid Book of Poetry," *Daily People's World*, May 12, 1954.

1955

*Permit Me Refuge.* Los Angeles: The California Quarterly, 1955. Preface by Thomas McGrath.

(Poems included are: "A Dedication," "Many an Outcast," "Bequest," "Catalogue of I," "What Does the Novice Soldier Think," "Poem," "Vincent," "Now the Fog," "Night World," "The Glory Set," "Mystery," "All Ghouls' Night," "Mystery II," "In Praise Of," "Ballad of the Noble Intentions," "Idiot Joe Prays in Pershing Square and Gets Hauled in for Vagrancy," "On Rico LeBrun's Crucifixion," "After Tu Fu (A.D. 713- 770)," "Kill the Umpire!," "And If You Don't See What You Want, Ask for It," "Political Prisoner 123456789," "A Poem to Delight My Friends Who Laugh at Science-Fiction," "A Hunter Went Killing: A Fable," "Bal Masque," "Conscript's Song," "Words Found on a Cave's Wall," "Still Must I Love You," "Manuela," "Undersea Poem," "Dawn Song," "Bon Voyage")

### Reviews:

- Bessie, Alvah. "Edwin Rolfe Says Farewell in a Moving 'First' Book of Poems," *Daily People's World*, November 3, 1955, p. 7. Rpt. *The Daily Worker*, November 10, 1955, p. 7.  
 Frumkin, Gene. *Coastlines*, 1:4 (Spring 1956), pp. 30-31.  
 Kramer, Aaron. "A Legacy of Light: The Poems of Edwin Rolfe," *National Guardian*, January 2, 1956, p. 10.  
 Rodman, Selden. "Classic and Modern," *The New York Times Book Review*, January 1, 1956, Section 7, p. 4. (Review of *Permit Me Refuge*, as well as Kenneth Rexroth, *One Hundred Poems from the Japanese*;

Witter Bynner, *Book of Lyrics*; P. D. Cummins, *Some Phases of Love*; and Robert Conquest, *Poems*.)

Weiss, T [heodore]. "A Neutral Platter," *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 39:24 (June 16, 1956), pp. 51-52.

## 2. POEMS FIRST PUBLISHED IN PERIODICALS, NEWSPAPERS, & ANTHOLOGIES

Key: \* uncollected poems

1927

\* "The Ballad of the Subway Digger," *The Daily Worker*, August 6, 1927 (*The New Magazine*), p. 5.

\* "Processional," *The Daily Worker*, November 21, 1927, p. 6.

1928

\* "Modern Croesus," *The Daily Worker*, March 10, 1928, p. 5.

\* "John the Baptist Goes to Heaven," *The Daily Worker*, March 17, 1928, p. 5.

\* "Jonah and the Whale—1928" *The Daily Worker*, April 26, 1928, p. 6.

\* "Portrait of a Farmer" *Cooperative Bulletin*, May 3, 1928.

\* "May Day Song" *The Daily Worker*, May 5, 1928, p. 5.

\* ["The little pigeons"] *The Daily Worker*, May 23, 1928, p. 6.

\* "Paunchy Paytriot" *The Daily Worker*, May 24, 1928, p. 6.

\* "Eight O'Clock Whistle" *New Masses*, 4:1 (June 1928), p. 18.

\* "Red Planet" *The Daily Worker*, September 1, 1928, p. 4.

\* "The 100 Percenter" ["Asbestos"] *The Daily Worker*, September 22, 1928, p. 6.

\* "Any Slave" *The Daily Worker*, November 9, 1928, p. 4.

1929

"Brickyards at Beacon" *The Daily Worker*, June 22, 1929, p. 6.

1930

\* "Beyond" *The New York Times*, September 11, 1930 [24:6].

\* "In Suns More Golden" *The New York Times*, October 3, 1930 [26:6].

\* "Clay of Life" *The New York Times*, November 28, 1930 [18:6]. Rpt. in *The Knickerbocker Press* (Albany, NY), November 30, 1930, p. 8; *The Ottawa Journal*, December 3, 1930, p. 6; *The Enquirer* (Cincinnati),

January 26, 1931, p. 4; and *The Albany Evening News*, February 5, 1931, p. 28.

1931

\* "Needless" *The New York Times*, March 3, 1931 [28:6].

\* "From the Chrysler Tower" *The Left: A Quarterly Review of Radical and Experimental Art*, 1:2 (Summer/Autumn 1931), p. 36.

\* "Prospectus" *Front*, 1:4 (1931), p. 340.

1932

\* "Eventualities" *Pagany*, 3:1 (January-March 1932), pp. 45-46.

\* "Sunday Evening Revery" *Pagany*, 3:2 (April-June 1932), pp. 16-17.

\* "Entreaty at Delphi" *Pagany*, 3:3 (July-September 1932), pp. 88-89.

\* "Sonnet" ("Precise, the undulating mockery") *Contempo*, 2:7 (September 25, 1932), p. 4.

1933

\* "Lanes of Death and Birth" *Poetry*, 41:5 (February 1933), pp. 266-7.

"Homage to Karl Marx" *New Masses*, 8:8 (April 1933), p. 9.

"Kentucky—1932" *The Daily Worker*, September 9, 1933, p. 7.

\* "Barn in Wisconsin," *The Anvil*, no. 3 (November/December 1933), p. 20.

1934

\* "Something Still Lives" *The Anvil*, no. 4 (January/February 1934), p. 23.

"Three Who Died" *New Masses*, 10:7 (February 13, 1934), p. 6.

"Poem" ("Not Christmas nor the New Year white with snow") ["Poem for May 1st"] *Partisan Review*, 1:1 (February/March 1934), pp. 32-34.

"The Pattern of Our Lives" *Dynamo: A Journal of Revolutionary Poetry*, 1:2 (March/April 1934), pp. 13-15.

\* "First Lesson" *The Daily Worker*, July 3, 1934, p. 5.

\* "Homecoming (August 7, 1934)" *New Masses*, 12:8 (August 21, 1934), p. 10.

"Witness at Leipzig" *New Masses*, 12:13 (September 25, 1934), p. 22.

\* "Communists" *Magazine*, 2:2 (September/October 1934), p. 100.

"Room With Revolutionists" *Partisan Review*, 1:4 (September/October 1934), pp. 17-18.

"These Men are Revolution" *New Masses*, 13:12 (October 9, 1934), pp. 20-21.

"Unit Assignment" *The New Republic*, 81:1043 (November 28, 1934), pp. 76-77. Rpt. in *The Daily Worker*, December 4, 1934, p. 5. "Somebody and Somebody Else and You" *Partisan Review*, 1:5 (November/December 1934), pp. 9-10.

1935

\* "Nuthin' But Brass" *New Theatre*, 11:7 (July 1935), p. 25.

\* "Not Men Alone" *The Anvil*, 3:13 (October/November 1935), p. 10.

"The Sixth Winter" ["Season of Death" is a revised and condensed version] *International Literature*, No. 9 (September 1935), pp. 46-50.

\* "Cheliuskin" *Soviet Russia Today*, (November 1935), pp. 65-67.

1936

"Georgia Nightmare" *New Masses*, 18:4 (January 21, 1936), p. 10.

"The Ship" *Poetry*, 48:2 (May 1936), pp. 61-62. (Social Poets Number, edited by Horace Gregory)

"Night-World" *Poetry*, 48:2 (May 1936), 62-63. (Social Poets Number, edited by Horace Gregory; Rolfe's two poems are published under the general title "Before the Hour")

"Prophecy in Stone" *The New Republic*, 88:1137 (September 16, 1936), p. 154.

1937

"The Arctic" ["The Arctic Remembered"] *Forum and Century*, 97:2 (February, 1937), p. 116.

\* "The Nine" *New Masses*, 22:10 (March 2, 1937), p. 8.

\* "Winter's Ghost Plagues Them" *New Masses*, 21:11 (December 8, 1937), p. 6.

"Madrid," [Parts 4 and 5 of "City of Anguish"] in *Romancero de los Voluntarios de la Libertad* (Madrid: Ediciones del Comisariado de Las Brigadas Internacionales, 1937), pp. 81-82.

1938

"Elegy for Our Dead" *The Volunteer for Liberty*, 2:1 (January 3, 1938), p. 9. Rpt. in *The New Republic*, 95:1225 (May 25, 1938), p. 65, and in *The Daily Worker*, October 1, 1939, p. 5.

1939

"No Man Knows War" [from "City of Anguish"] *The New Republic*, 99:1285 (July 19, 1939), p. 300.

"For Arnold Reid" ["Epitaph"] *New Masses*, 32:5 (July 25, 1939), p. 11.

1943

"Madrid" ["City of Anguish"] in Joy Davidman, ed. *War Poems of the United Nations*. New York: Dial Press, 1943, pp. 358-362.

"Poem" ["Catalogue"] in Davidman, ed. *War Poems of the United Nations*, pp. 363-4.

"Poem" ["Postscript to a War"] in Davidman, ed. *War Poems of the United Nations*, p. 364.

1944

"Poems of Three Years" *New Masses*, 50:3 (January 18, 1944),

1. ("Running from the shadow coach") ["Entry"], p. 10-11.
2. ("Nearing land, we heard the cry of gold") ["Death by Water"], p. 11.
3. ("On shore later") ["Death by Water, Part II"], p. 12.
- \* 4. ("One does not feel hatred") ["Not Hatred"], p. 12.
- \* 5. ("You will remember, when the bombs") ["Paris—Christmas 1938"], p. 12.
- \* 6. ("To say we were right is not boastful") ["Brigadas Internacionales"], p. 12.

1945

"Casualty" *Poetry*, 66:1 (April 1945), p. 12.

"To Thine Own Self" *Poetry*, 66:1 (April 1945), pp. 12-13.

"Survival is of the Essence" *Poetry*, 66:1 (April 1945), pp. 13-14.

"Recruit" *Poetry*, 66:1 (April 1945), p. 15. Rpt. *The New York Times*, May 6, 1945.

"The Guerillas" *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 28:37 (September 15, 1945), p. 42.

"First Love (Remembering Spain)" *Yank: The Army Weekly*, September 28, 1945, p. 21.

"Song" ("There is indeed now reason for rejoicing") *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 28:41 (October 13, 1945), p. 15.

"Song" ("Through all the cowering world, crouching, shrinking") *Poetry*, 67:3 (December 1945), pp. 134-135.

"About Eyes" *Poetry*, 67:3 (December 1945), pp. 135-136.

1946

"Three Sonnets" *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 29:12 (March 23, 1946), p. 57.

1. ("At the moment of victory he examines his own") ["At the Moment of Victory"]
- \* 2. ("He knows, at last, good will is not enough")

\* 3. ("He remembers the fevers, the symptoms of disease")

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- II. ("Now, on this bluest of mornings, we wake")

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2. ("Now the fog falls on the land") ["Now the Fog"]

\* 3. ("The poisoned air befouled the whole decade")

4. ("To understand the strength of those dark forces") ["In Praise Of"]

5. "After Tu Fu (713-770)"

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Addendum: Nine of Rolfe's poems, including "Definition" and "Elegy for Our Dead," were translated and reprinted in *Pátá Pocni Doba: Antologie Americké Radikalni Poezie* Prague: 1959.

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- "Anachronistic Literature," (essay) *The Daily Worker*, November 12, 1927, p. 8.
- "Waiting for the Ashes of Two Martyrs," (sketch) *The Daily Worker*, November 19, 1927, p. 4.
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- "Muller And His Choral Society in the Factory" *The Daily Worker*, June 2, 1928, p. 5.
- "Irish Guild Players Present Three Tidbits at Playhouse" (theatre review) *The Daily Worker*, June 13, 1928, p. 2.
- "A Novel of 'Poor Whites' By a Literary Ku Kluxer" (Review of Edwin Granberry, *Strangers and Lovers*) *The Daily Worker*, September 8, 1928, p. 4.
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"Promotions Reward Lincoln Boys" *The Daily Worker*, October 2, 1938, p. 7.

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# EDWIN ROLFE

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*A Biographical Essay and Guide to the Rolfe Archive  
at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

## HIGHLIGHTS:

The first detailed biographical essay about poet, journalist, and Spanish Civil War veteran Edwin Rolfe. Unpublished poems or letters by James T. Farrell, Mike Gold, Ernest Hemingway, Langston Hughes, Albert Maltz, and Edwin Rolfe.



*A cardboard loyalist soldier given to Rolfe on his birthday by Langston Hughes on September 7, 1937, in Madrid. The Fascist insect is green. The soldier's leg moves up and down when a string is pulled.*

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS ■ URBANA AND CHICAGO

ISBN 0-252-01794-3