

ANSELM HOLLO--AN INTERVIEW
 CONDUCTED BY BARRY ALPERT
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BA: *Anselm, when did you start writing poetry?*

AH: I grew up surrounded by books. Books always seemed very desirable, you know, like my parents' house was lined with books, literally, books for wallpaper. So I was making up little magazines and books from whatever age I could write, read and write, which was fairly early I think, like six, five to six.

BA: *In Finnish?*

AH: In Finnish and German. German was my first language. In fact I spoke German only up to the age of 5½ or 6. Then my father, knowing that I had to go to school there, taught me Finnish in two weeks or so. At that age you just learn that fast. But in high school, when I first thought of writing, I wrote prose, short stories, I was interested in that. I guess all the poets I had read up to 13, 14 or so, were German. I read the German classics, not really liking any of them too much or understanding them too well. I even read Goethe, but didn't really understand him too well, at that time.

BA: *Were they in the house? Books on the shelf?*

AH: Oh yes. But Heine was the one I really dug. So the one and only book of poems in Finnish that I ever published, which was in 1956, was sort of dismal imitations of Heine in Finnish. Which seemed like the thing to do at the time, but I'm glad that that book has totally disappeared.

BA: *You don't claim it on your bibliography.*

AH: No, I wouldn't particularly, except as a curiosity. It's ok--I'm not really ashamed of it or anything, it's like the first book, you know, you just do something, generally some garbagy thing, but you need to have done it. When I saw it in print I realized that it wasn't really what I wanted to do.

BA: *It was published in Finland then?*

AH: That was published in Finland. Say from, I started out about the age of 10, but like from my later teens onward most of my reading

matter was English, and American literature, mainly.

BA: *That was in the house too?*

AH: No, that I had to go and get. I mean, the classics were in the house, you know, Whitman was in the house obviously, Poe, Melville. Melville I remember reading with very minimal comprehension, but at the age of 12 or something, Moby Dick, a mindblower. That impressed me vastly, in fact. I guess the first time poetry seemed really interesting was when I came across Ezra Pound. And specifically I came across The Cantos before anything else, and that may have been even somewhat traumatic because I can't really remember when this was, or how, where I got the book. You know, I think it must have been still at home--or at my grandfather's place in Germany, possibly. But I don't think it was that late. Anyway, that seemed very exciting and then I went on to find out, you know, where did this guy come from, what is this all about, and stumbled on, obviously, Eliot--backward: Browning, forward: Williams. And Williams seemed to be the first one to really again provide a possibility of writing myself.

BA: *In English or Finnish?*

AH: In English. By that time I had really drifted into the, into living my life in English.

BA: *You didn't find Williams a "foreign American," like a lot of people . . .*

AH: No. there was instant recognition. I guess, you know, I really believe in that "speech of Polish grandmothers" thing. I mean it's a wonderful slogan, but it's true too. I think there is something there that ain't English English you know, but that is something else. It only became possible here and I'm still patching that up, in my own head, you know, like with Gertrude Stein's essays on Island Poetry, Garden Poetry, and, you know, American Poetry. How poetry, or any kind of writing, on this continent--well, Olson obviously was a help there too--is bound to be something else, bound to take possibly even, you know, any kind of form. Like bizarre forms at times. Poe would be an instance of that, obviously. Longfellow is quite bizarre, if you can think of it. Like unknown, previously unthought-of forms, in terms of size, in a way. I mean size, not meaning, I don't mean vastness, it's not one to one that easy, you know; Whitman ok, but there's Dickinson too. That enormous variation in scale and possibility that we have, say, from Dickinson to Whitman.

BA: *You didn't see that in any other language?*

AH: No. I don't think it exists to this day in any other language. I can't say, I can't speak for the Chinese, or, you know . . .

BA: *Formal possibilities too?*

AH: Formal, emotional, intellectual, the whole bag. It's all 'formal,' you know, I mean, what do we do when we make art? We make form. But I think it is freedom, risk, danger, utter disaster or triumph . . .

BA: *You mentioned Williams and Pound. What about Charles Olson? How did you pick up an interest in Charles Olson, and what kind of interest is it in relation to your own kind of sense of yourself as, let's say, "a 'traveling man' yet a householder as well." It seems to be an Olsonesque kind of statement. I'm referring to your statement in the New American Poetry Circuit catalogue.*

AH: I guess I came to Olson's work fairly late. I'm indebted for that discovery to a British poet, Michael Shayer.

BA: *Published by Fulcrum?*

AH: One book out from Fulcrum. And Migrant Press was run by Gael Turnbull and Shayer.

BA: *Did they publish you early?*

AH: They did my first book in English, those two people. Shayer was the one more interested in Olson. Coming from Lawrence--he was like a Lawrence scholar--to Olson.

BA: *You mean he came to Call Me Ishmael via Lawrence's Studies in Classic American Literature?*

AH: That was his way into it. Those people told me about him; gave me a book.

BA: *This is 1960?*

AH: 1959-60. It was quite late. At that time I already knew the work of Ginsberg and Gregory Corso and Frank O'Hara to some extent. I guess the first Olson book I read was that first Jargon edition of the Maximus Poems. The first book of the Maximus Poems, the one that Jonathan Williams did with Corinth. -And that was such an amazing, lovely, vast book, the first thing of that kind I'd ever seen since The Cantos, or Paterson, yet it seemed quite different; so I wanted to find out more about it. And then went on to read Human Universe, and you know, back issues of the Black Mountain Review. I guess I haven't really looked back since. Dorn some-

where said, the incredible thing, I think, that's in What I See in the Maximus Poems.

BA: *Yeah, that was a Migrant Press book too.*

AH: Dorn says somewhere in there, I think--or maybe it was in a later piece--he says, like, in his teaching experience, trying to tell kids about, you know, students, and especially also his colleagues, about Olson, and reading his poems to them, how it constantly amazed him that they did not see the kind of, I'm paraphrasing obviously, he says like pared down and, in the best sense of the word, "contemporary beauty of Olson's writing." It always strikes me, as I look at the Maximus Poems especially now that we have the second book, and what I know was to be the third book--it's like extremely beautiful writing. Writing that turns me on, although again I know the conventional 'objection' to it has been that it's too sparse, too prosy, skeletal, and I can see where that comes from--you know, if you think of, if what you really love is the kind of density and 'texture' that you get in Hopkins or Thomas or--you know, you don't get too much of that in Olson, but you get another texture and density that is, say, even the shorter poems--what is now collected in Archaeologist of Morning--"A Newly Discovered 'Homeric' Hymn (for Jane Harrison, if she were alive)": I can't think of quite anyone else who could have written that in the 20th Century. There is a lot of density and texture and energy in that, it's like suddenly walking, in the Chicago Art Institute, when you walk into the room--when you walk through the American Gallery, and you walk through all the rooms with certainly great things in them, but then you walk into the room where they have the big Philip Guston and the Rothko and wonderful deKooning next to a pretty good Pollock--boy that room suddenly just, it's like walking into some huge tent full of laughing gas! It's so exhilarating. And that's how I finally feel about Charles' work, when it's, I mean I'm not saying that it's all like that, but it sure as hell, a very excellent batting average there, you know.

BA: *Do you think his poetry in any way resembles the painting of Jackson Pollock, whom Creeley quotes to that effect?*

AH: Obviously there are connections. Well, Fielding Dawson is the man who tells us about Kline, and obviously inhabits a curious historical position between Olson and Kline, as evidenced in The Black Mountain Book. But, like Creeley once said, people talk about the Black Mountain School, what is that, you know, Duncan and Olson and me? What school? Where is the school?

BA: *They're all different.*

AH: Or for that matter, deKooning and Kline, you know, or Pollock and

Kline. They are distinct, and they are . . .

BA: *Don't you think the general aesthetic is similar, but it's an aesthetic that's designed to be used by people of different sensibilities and physiologies, so that obviously each artist's work will be distinct?*

AH: What is held in common--there is a concern for the art as art, and not as social activity or political activity or, you know, self-consciously historical activity, but the art in itself, in all those aspects. The person always staying very close to what he is doing in the art.

BA: *What kind of interest do you have in poets like Frank O'Hara?*

AH: I love his work.

BA: *When did you start reading him?*

AH: As I said, you know, in the late 50's. I've just been through the Collected Poems and I think that's such a, that's only 1/3 now of the works to be published of his, and that's such a, it's an intimidatingly beautiful book!

BA: *Do you think of yourself working in similar modes, then? Is that why it intimidates you?*

AH: It's 'intimidating' in the sense of, I mean, not really intimidating, I love to read it, but intimidating--amazing. As instances of craft and variety. I think Ginsberg is somewhere on record as saying that The Cantos provide a compendium, or textbook of prosody--which I don't think they really do, I mean they do provide a lot, but for instance O'Hara's Collected Poems would be much more useful as a textbook of possible forms. He obviously tried them all. And really was very good in many of them, you know, there's hardly any misses in that book. And even the misses are interesting. You can see what's happening. I guess that's another point Dorn was making about Olson, that it is like, it is almost Bauhaus that way: you can see the mistakes. You know, where they are: they're left in there. There they are, you know. It's not an accident. I mean you leave a mistake in there, because you want people to see how this thing came about.

BA: *The process of composition is just as important as the art. What about Apollinaire?*

AH: Well, I think we haven't had anybody quite like that.

BA: *When you say we, you mean . . .*

AH: In English or American. I think Apollinaire will, I mean, you can put up Whitman against him, but yet you can't because Whitman was earlier and Apollinaire really was contemporary with and an active element in the very vast change of consciousness at the beginning of the century, in terms of art. I mean, in a sense, Apollinaire in his works and in his writings on art, although they're not the highest level of art criticism, they were propagandistic writings essentially, but he presages and pre-empted to some extent even Marcel Duchamp, who I think is about as far as our present-day conceptual artists have gotten; what they are battling with is Duchamp, and how to go beyond Duchamp at all, you know. So I think he's just like, he's a) a wonderful poet in the French classical tradition, lyric tradition; b) an inventory of a lot of poetic forms, you know, the discontinuous consciousness form as in "Zone,"; c) making collage poems, out of what people are saying around you, putting that together; d) I can go on, like The Windows relating the art of words to the art of painting in the sense that in English we had to wait until Gertrude Stein to really get that sensibility in.

BA: *To make a poem like a painting?*

AH: Apollinaire thought of all those things. He may not have done them all. Again concrete poetry, if we think of that, visual poetry, graphics, I mean that area where graphics and poetry overlap: well, Apollinaire thought about that.

BA: *Do you have a personal interest in doing that yourself, is that why you might have been interested in Apollinaire?*

AH: Not really. I know a number of concrete poets, you know, Mary Ellen Solt here in Bloomington, Ian Hamilton Finlay in Scotland, Sylvester Houédard in England, and always found it interesting and delightful, but maybe basically too far removed from speech or language as I see it to be; I see it something you do with your tongue, you know, la lengua.

BA: *That's what you do in your poems?*

AH: I think so, I think I'm basically more into speech and 'tongue,' you know; into thought and idea and feeling and so forth, more than the visual thing. I mean, I'm very interested in how things work on the page as you read it, or as you think it, the use of blank space on the page. I think nobody has really--that's almost as hard as trying to write a coherent work on Carlos Williams' prosody--to write something on "The Throw of the Dice," The Cantos, Williams, Olson, O'Hara, and now the younger New York Poets, say Padgett, Berrigan, some of the things I've been trying to do myself with a page. I mean, they're not, none of that is program-

matic, none of that is 'exact' in any scientific sense, like . . .

BA: *Like concrete poetry is?*

AH: I think concrete poetry tends more to achieve that state of grace of exactness . . .

BA: *Create a system?*

AH: Right; and repetition. That you can repeat it, and it will be the same each time, whereas I think what all the people I ran through are doing with the space on the page is more to indicate time, certainly . . .

BA: *Well how about themselves at that moment, too, the process of their own psyche at that time?*

AH: Right, and they recognize it when they read it. And hopefully others will too, but it's not exact, it's not like one inch indicates two hours or five seconds or any of that. You can't like--that's very hard to write about--I would like to compose an anthology of poems that look, visually, you know--like David Jones is somebody I should mention who uses the page too. Cummings too, obviously, an extreme case, that gets away from the straight left margin, you know--once you start moving around; and later poets like Kelly, too, I should mention. It would be interesting to see in how many different ways the page can be used. Simply say from Mallarmé to Robert Kelly.

BA: *You mean as a critical enterprise?*

AH: I wouldn't, I mean I couldn't even imagine now what to say critically about it, but I'd like to see a book like that. There's a Dutch, Flemish poet too, Paul Van Ostaijen, who along about 1910-20, wrote poems that look a lot like Charles Olson's, you know, on the page. And actually there are certain connections there. This German poet, Arno Holz, thought of using the centered line, you know that McClure is using, i.e., like having a symmetrical page. Which again, that's baroque conceit almost, making poems look like trees or something, George Herbert. But otherwise I can't think of any European, except Apollinaire again. And then Mallarmé finally, and "The Throw of the Dice." Jack Hirschman wrote an essay once, like a first attempt at trying to deal with "the page", in Kulchur, years ago. But I never followed that up either, I guess, I can see why, because it would be a vast enterprise. I don't think that it needs to be codified, I would hate to have a poem by Ted Berrigan analyzed in terms of how does it compare to what Mallarmé does in "Un Coup de Des." I mean, not necessarily at all, whereas I think yeah, more fruitfully maybe you could pick things

like Big Blue Jay Composition by Padgett--to my mind, really a wonderful take on "Un Coup de Des." Again, the weeks you'd spend on writing that, I don't know, I could probably spend better writing some of my own . . .

BA: *Why do you translate?*

AH: I guess I just grew up with different languages. As I said, German was first, then Finnish, Swedish, English came in. We were a tri-lingual family, and it seemed like a very natural thing. I have done a number of translations that were commissions, people asked me to do them, and I said ok I'll do them. Red Cats was commissioned by Ferlinghetti. A couple of novels from the Swedish, from the Russian via the French, or you know, with the help of Russian scholars that I know. A Man Survives is in there, I did that from the French. And Jungle of Cities by Bertolt Brecht, that I really enjoyed doing. That was a commission too, from the German.

BA: *Are some of the Finnish poems . . .*

AH: The Finnish poems were more like labors of love, actually, they really were. Saarikoski, Haavikko especially, and Anhava as well.

BA: *When did you settle in England?*

AH: I guess we got there in 57. 57-58. January 58.

BA: *What did you do? Did you work?*

AH: Yeah, I worked for the BBC. I worked for the BBC for about 8½ or 9 years.

BA: *Oh, I see. Essentially the same job?*

AH: Well no, it changed, a variety of jobs. I entered the corporation as something called a program assistant, which is like, you know, doing anything, and ended up with the designation producer, which meant director. It's all sound radio, and they do a lot of features, radio plays, stuff like that. Most of that was in their European services, which are like the Voice of America, but not quite as politically honed as VOA is. So I did a lot of work in Finnish for them, some in German, Josie did some in German for them too. It wasn't a bad time, it gave us a chance to live in London all that time, and a lot of people drifted in and out, interesting people. It's like, the place I worked was right off Fleet Street, right in the heart of journalism in London. So it was ok, except I sort of left when they started kicking me upstairs, like i.e., not doing thing anymore, sitting behind a desk and ad-

ministering things and I said no. Then I freelanced for about a year and a half, or two years, getting translations, doing occasional things for the BBC. And I was then invited, this came about through Robert Creeley, whom I'd gotten to know in the meantime, to teach at SUNY at Buffalo for a summer. That, in turn, led to an invitation to come and teach at the Iowa Writers' Workshop. I guess that's how it's gone. I mean, 3 years, 4 years, my 4th year now, and so, I never was, really curious, I mean, my father was an academic person, I never really thought of myself as even potentially one, but . . .

BA: *That's where the jobs are these days.*

AH: Goddamn, yeah, here we are.

BA: *What kind of poets do you think of yourself as involved with or influenced by, say in your years in London and now? Do you ever think of yourself as a purely insular British poet? There was that sense, around England in the 50's, but you weren't really involved in it.*

AH: Not really involved. Basically, opposed to it. In fact, the people I knew, I mentioned Shayer and Turnbull before, Roy Fisher should be mentioned too, who I think may be, really, in a sense a wonderful 'insular' poet--you know, really that kind of quirky erratic little garden that he creates there. But I mean those were slightly older people. Of the younger ones, the ones that I really got to know and like and somehow feel kinship with in England while I was there were Tom Raworth, Lee Harwood, to some extent Michael Horowitz, Pete Brown, who I did things with, you know we used to go around the country and give incredible poetry readings in basements and stuff. And Stuart Montgomery, of Fulcrum. I mean all of whom are basically mavericks to this day, I think, in the official British poetry scene. There's people like Christopher Middleton and Nathaniel Tarn with whom I got lumped together in Lucie-Smith's anthology British Poetry Since 1945, as "Foreign Influences." Middleton goes right back to Sir Thomas, in fact, I mean nothing much, nothing too foreign there, actually. But I guess that was because Middleton and Hamburger have been translating German poetry . . .

BA: *You've been translating . . .*

AH: Sure. Well I'm a bloody foreigner anyway, as far as England goes. So you know, I mean those people too, and Hamburger, I should mention him too, I think.

BA: *Well, what about when you got to America? Or what Americans did you find yourself having certain kinds of affinities with when they came to London?*

AH: Well I mentioned Creeley.

BA: *You met him in London?*

AH: Yeah. That's where I met him first. And he certainly is a poet I greatly admire; both poems, prose, anything--he's a writer, he's a real writer, and in fact I think that we will be quite, or even more, astonished by him.

BA: *On retrospect?*

AH: Presently. Things to come. Edward Dorn, Olson, I mentioned. I was fortunate enough to know Olson, personally. I first met him in London and then went to see him in Gloucester, when I came over here. John Wieners, let's see, I mean, these are not personal contacts in the sense, but that I think are important. Jonathan Williams and all that he brought in, in a sense. I mean the sense of continuity and connections, you know, because he really is, and has been a gathering force, through Jargon Books, and, well, his entire career. Of a lot of writing, Paul Metcalf, people like, you know, writers that people don't really know about, or don't think about.

BA: *Still don't know about.*

AH: Still don't know. Like Paul Metcalf or Douglas Woolf. Incredible writers. Jonathan Williams, one of the great gathering forces in the 1950's and 60's. Jerome Rothenberg, who--I'm trying to remember, Williams I initially met through my connection with Creeley, and Rothenberg must have come about through City Lights, through the Red Cats book. He'd done the New Young German Poets book, not too long, a couple of years before that. Rothenberg, and then the people I got to know through him, like David Antin, Jackson MacLow, Carol Bergé. And Paul Blackburn, who was the first person to ever introduce a poetry reading given by me over here, this side of the Atlantic.

BA: *Where was that?*

AH: St. Mark's Church. When Paul was still running it, this must have been 66 or 65. You know, I guess in a curious way, I sometimes feel like some freaky living proof of Carlos Williams' notion of a new and non-English but American poetry and possibility. Because, in a way, all these names I've been running down here can be connected back to Williams. In a way that a lot of other names I might, you and I might mention, could not be, you know. I mean there is a certain very loose and very various tradition, and although there may be disagreement on even quite crucial points of aesthetics between say Jerome Rothenberg and Ted Berrigan, neither of them would have been or be as much in my range of vision as they

are, without that door that I came in. You know, if I'd come in another door, I might have seen one or the other, or neither, maybe. I might think Howard Moss is the greatest poet in America.

BA: *What kind of door do you think would have led you to someone like Howard Moss?*

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AH: I don't think that door, well Eliot, if I had really gotten hung up . . . I mean I read Eliot's political writings soon after I read his poems and they basically turned me off. I mean, I could see; and that was a time when I was confronted with a very important book, 'D.H. Lawrence's Studies in Classic American Literature. I think that saved me. I mean, it did save me. I could see how one could get into, it's a very pluralistic view of things, but I see how you could, how one could get enticed by . . . it's like Moorish architecture or something, that is pure, almost senseless form. But then I love that. I love that in music. And I love Moorish architecture, I think the Alcazar, and Granada, are beautiful, and I love Mozart. I do, but not in, somehow, the wrenching of language, when language in itself has such, you know, endless potential, like say from Creeley's early short line to Ginsberg's rhapsodic or Robert Duncan's vatic line or Jack Spicer's incredible hairpin turns of language, you know, or Ted Berrigan's lovely leaps of the mind. You know, there's so much there and I'm not, I'm not even saying, I don't even know that there is an absolute ethic attached to this, really, except that I do think it has something to do with the "inner sea" that Jung spoke of, and Olson. You know, Olson said in his later years, I live more and more in that vast inner sea, which is literally my organs, my body. You know, that awareness of your own physiology, and what it means, and when you recognize that in someone whose physiology may be very different from your own. Maybe, in fact, that, then is a new light. To see that . . .

BA: *When they put it in their poems?*

AH: When they're able to turn it into art. And in a sense turn themselves inside out. You know, that somehow, there's something, there's a difference between embroidery and Mozart, let's say, you know, it simply does exist, and I find that the embroidery or garden view of things You know, I don't think art, I mean art has a hard time, because ever since its divorce from science, art has had a very hard time, I think. We're now working on trying to get them back together again somehow.

BA: *Who is?*

AH: Well, there's a thing called the Center for New Performing Arts in Iowa City, for instance, which is foundation and university money, and is obviously trying to tackle that thing head-on. Like lit-

erally saying hey you guys, would you like to work with a few laser beams or stuff, you know . . .

BA: *Hey you poets, you mean?*

AH: Hey you poets or painters or whatever, you know. Or hey you poets, they would say, how about using electronics, how about using distortion, how about using all this stuff we have here. And I mean that's a little too simple, I suppose, but one day someone will come along. Again, there have been workers in the field, like Jackson MacLow, for a long time; or John Cage, who's a writer as much as he is a composer. And we have been doing some pretty damn nice things in the Center, too. Anyway, the arts in our time, where do they exist? Like, what is a painter, you know; and who gets the paintings? A museum, right, or a rich patron. Is that worth it, no. I mean that's not who he does it for. He'll have to do it for his own, and his fellow artists' enjoyment and appreciation and understanding. I mean there has to be--it gets very esoteric and very hard at the same time, and as far as poetry goes, the great delight is to be able to do something that is quite esoteric and quite hard, and yet you can say it, or read it, to someone, even a group of people who have never seen you before. And they get something, they get a buzz off it. They may want to check it out on the page. I think that's the value of readings or tapes; that is, to go back there to see, what did the guy read?

BA: *It is pretty hard to get everything you might want to get out of it just on a first hearing. Do you think of your poems as visual objects on a page rather than words in the air?*

AH: Not visual objects on the page at all. As objects in the mind, and in the heart, or whatever, in the soul. Made out of words, made out of the elements of speech, and capable of being replayed, and you're getting different things each time, as far as possible.

BA: *Replayed in your own mind.*

AH: And in the readers'.

BA: *Turning to some of your individual poems, say the one called "that old sauna high," is the reference to Herodotus just incidental, or do you, thinking of yourself as a 'traveling man,' have any strong interest in his sense of history?*

AH: I read Herodotus before, but Olson was really the one to point out to me the difference--like when he says when you move from Herodotus to Tacitus it's like, you know, being kicked out into the cold or something. I mean, you've been in this lovely place where the guy tells you great stories and stuff . . .

BA: *About his personal experiences.*

AH: About his personal experiences, or what he has heard. Like Navaho refrains: "So we have heard." Tacitus is the first Western attempt to be objective, to be factual, to be accurate about history and thereby that whole thing enters, which is a danger, which is dangerous, the value of the story is to us, I mean what it has to do with us, what it has to do with people. If not, we don't give a shit about dates or accuracy or anything like that.

BA: *So you're quoting Herodotus.*

AH: I am, literally. It is a straight quote, it's a straight lift from Herodotus, and I was delighted to find it.

BA: *I like that phrase "they howl with pleasure."*

AH: It's interesting because, well, the sauna is associated with the Finns, but the sauna and uses made of it such as the one indicated in the poem are known all the way from Finland across Russia to Siberia to North America. So that's like me. I think it may have, this was before I came across Gary Snyder's explicit reference to the 'trans-Siberian culture,' which has nothing to do with race or language, but literally is a transference of culture from one tribe to another.

BA: *By migration?*

AH: Migration, contact, close contact. Exchange of information; I mean, that's Snyder's hope, that culture could be preserved or rejuvenated possibly even through such an exchange. He likes to refer to a certain sector of the young people as Indians, which is lovely and Utopian. More power to him.

BA: *Does the poem "trober: to find" bear any relation to the poems of Robert Kelly, Jerome Rothenberg, Armand Schwerner, and others concerned with finding deep images?*

AH: I remember Tom Clark once saying he really liked that as an aural experience, as something to be heard. So I don't think the image there--frankly, the images are very simple; there's a lady, it's, like, very traditional . . .

BA: *Except you circle around.*

AH: Out of the Provencal; there's a few twists in there, right, and circling.

BA: *That's what Rothenberg would do in a poem like "Invincible Flowers," where the flowers would be the deep image in the poem. In your*

poem the deep image could be the moon.

AH: It is moon. But moon is very traditional, and 'trobar' is obviously a title, and the whole Provencal feel. In fact, the page arose out of my delight, the realization that 'trobar,' which was to make poetry, in Provencal means "to find." To find things. That's one stage, and the next stage is to put things together. You find them and then you put them together.

BA: *There's one poem that also seems to be somewhat related to Provencal work, a poem called "the claim." It's a lot different from the other poems in Maya. I'm wondering whether you wrote that after looking at Pound's workings with Provencal material. It's almost a Poundian poem.*

AH: It's an 'erratic' work; I remember Jonathan Williams saying that was his favorite work of mine.

BA: *I like it too.*

AH: I like it, I still like it. It holds up. I mean, I think my personal interest in that was basically to, apart from whatever personal reasons there were for writing it, which are obvious in it, but to find out that there is a whole great literature of comparable quality to the Provencal in Germany, in early Middle High German. The Minnesingers.

BA: *Pound likes Vogelweide too.*

AH: Pound is the one who said there was nothing between Vogelweide and Heine; a slight exaggeration, I would say. But Vogelweide is very beautiful, and von Johansdorf whose quotes are built into the poem I think was fine too. Heinrich von Morungen was another one. I mean, there was a whole body. At the time I was toying with the idea of doing an anthology, like doing a Blackburn on the Minnesingers, but haven't really pursued it. But to get back to that question about the 'deep image'--like Lorca's "duende", like "soul" and all its synonyms, it was a way of talking about emotional resonance, I think, and certain forms of it that seemed largely absent from poetry written in English--at the time. Anyone interested I would refer to Rothenberg's and Robert Creeley's exchange of letters in back issues of KULCHUR magazine; and obviously, Robert Bly's writing on it in his magazine, FIFTIES--SIXTIES--SEVENTIES . . . You see, poetry in English, especially the island and garden varieties, has such a great tradition in the direction of metaphysics and wit; and there are certain very Judeo-Christian notions of 'manliness' involved in that, too--like "an intellectually tough poetry", like they say. But, finally, I don't see that Blake, and Shakespeare before him, and Whitman after, that poets like them

have not produced interior landscapes just as amazing and varied and 'deep', as, say, Lorca or Neruda or Andre Breton . . . As Pound said, long ago: it's an unprecedented age, it's ALL available to us now. Yet it is always a matter what we can use, what hits the spot, in each particular instance, person, place: the color of theorizing is grey, as Goethe pointed out!

BA: *You were talking about parts and putting things together. What kind of coherence are you interested in poems like "the coherences" and "gales and showers?"*

AH: Yeah, "the coherences," the title poem of the book before Maya. It's really hard to explain. It's very hard to say.

BA: *In "gales and showers" you seem to be talking about the poem right here: "bits slamming around inside" your head. You try to put it together. And this opens with a bit from Tom Raworth's son.*

AH: Right. Exactly, young Ben, at that time, when he was two years old. Ok: then he says, let's stop trying to sound as coherent as we aren't. I guess "breath goes in there now, why worry about it" could be read on one level as a commentary on any obsessive concern with breath units, etc.; why worry about it, it will go in and out, it will keep on going. And also I think Philip Whalen--this was written before I really got into him, but finally, Whalen was the man who really opened up my head to that.

BA: *To what?*

AH: To "now let us all of us stop trying to sound as coherent as we aren't!"

BA: *Just sound like you are.*

AH: Exactly. I mean, "the graph of the mind moving," as he says, and, like, don't worry about that either. I mean, you can take that too. We are all thinking it all the time. But there is some sense in which it might be more interesting to be not too worried about it, you know, whether this page or whatever it is you're writing, or number of pages . . . I'm a little hung up on the page as a unit, I mean that's a hang-up I'm trying to break through. But for me it's always been a page, one way or the other. Whether it really ends up being a coherent statement or a monument to myself, you know, I'm not really interested in that. Whalen isn't, at all. And therefore, see--it's like finding that level of art that is not, that is beyond the journal, or journalistic, and yet does not lose the energy that you get in a journal. We love biography and autobiography; those are the bestsellers, those are what people love to read. Ok, now, if you're engaged in art, you engage in something else. You're not really that interested in telling people

the story of your life. But, how do we tame some of that interest and energy? I think Whalen does it beautifully, Whalen comes wing-in' in and tells us, you know, that we do not have to be programmatic, that we do not have to worry too much about systems, those coherences, as Olson would.

BA: *Olson was more systematic.*

AH: You know, he was, and yet, as he himself went on, like that last page in the second volume, where he says "now I set out in a box upon the sea." Jesus, I mean, that is a paean, a hymn to exactly, say, fuck all that, you know. Like, I'm setting out in this box upon the sea, and let's see what happens.

BA: *That'll be the third volume?*

AH: That is the third volume, that's what happened to America. I mean all these little people setting out in boxes on the sea. Way before the Vikings even. Cyrus Gordon tells us, and like I even see it on the t.v. now, I mean, they say aha, the Japanese seem to have been here 1500 B.C.

BA: *I didn't know that.*

AH: Oh yeah. It was on this t.v. program two days ago. I always used to think that they were still treating Cyrus H. Gordon as a crank, but like hell they are. They're agreeing with him. That's another thing with Charles: he was right. Whalen is someone that I've been teaching a lot to younger poets in Iowa--Whalen and Olson, in a curious sense. There's Whalen and O'Hara too, but they're closer to each other. Berrigan again I see as really coming, as totally contemporary, you know; we're six months apart in terms of age, although Ted has obviously been part of the American scene much longer, in a very natural sense, than I have. But he is really coming in with all that in his head, with all, you know, Olson, Whalen, O'Hara, Ashbery, he has a fix on all those guys. And is able to handle them.

BA: *Make something out of them?*

AH: Make something new, and of his own. Oh yeah. And yeah, as far as me, I'm in this freakish place, in a way. I mean, to what extent am I an American poet? or an English poet? or whatever the hell I am. A Finnish poet writing in English. It doesn't finally worry me too much. I mean, I'm basically someone who loves to write. And loves fooling around with words, and making things out of words.

BA: *When you say "making" things out of words and you talk about your early childhood, does that somehow involve taking found things,*

taking things from books and things of your own creation and putting them together? You quote a lot, from unacknowledged sources, say in poems like "two after Reverdy," "hidden creation," and "the wreck." The reader doesn't have much sense of who is being quoted. How is one to react to that, or what are you doing?

AH: Well that's a question of the use of quotation marks; there's two ways of looking at it. I mean, there's that Olson line "How long can a quote get, he said," and he's basically saying you can get as long as you want to make it. I mean a quote is something you, if you can build it in there, it's yours, you know. It would depend. There's no way of telling how long a quote can be, because you've got to prove it before and after, you know, whether you can really appropriate it. Well, that would be the straight quote, right. Something that you find and want to have in there. Then there is the 'artificail' quote, as it were, you know--the one you make up yourself, and mostly I use single quotation marks there instead of double.

BA: *I see, single quotes for stuff that you . . .*

AH: Single quotes are stuff that I cannot quite bring myself possibly--or, the effect intended is that I cannot quite bring myself to say this, straight out. So it's a gestural thing: the single quotes indicate that I'm a little hesitant.

BA: *You don't want to say it in your own voice.*

AH: So one would have to imagine another voice, a more impersonal voice, perhaps, saying this thing. Harwood, in England, is a master of those things actually.

BA: *I was going to ask you about a prose poem, "rain." I wondered, did you invent that, is that a creature of your imagination? It doesn't seem to be found.*

AH: It is found, in a sense. The entire conversation about the quality and nature of rain, and you know, what rain has been doing, I think I found in, I'm pretty sure I found it in a magazine put out by the Northwestern Bell Telephone Company. Containing little items of interest on subjects such as rain, wind, you know, the eternal verities. Plus then--that's what happened then--that's the information in it--I added the information of the whole Romantic sense of rain as sad, I mean, Ernest Hemingway in the end of A Farewell to Arms, you know, when it's raining and he keeps on walking. Which hops right back to Verlaine, it rains on the city as it rains on my heart. Somehow Baudelaire came to mind; he never was quite that limp, you know; it seemed like a nice thing to do. And it comes across when I read it. I mean, it's like one trite thing about rain after another, but, the frame . . .

- BA: *There's this little blurb on the back by Ted Berrigan. How would you relate his sense of what your poems are about, specifically his remark "how to live in terms of doing so" with your sense of yourself as "a 'traveling man' yet a householder as well." "There is that polarity, and it gets into the poems, makes them spark." What poems in particular would you think reflect that?*
- AH: The origin of that was an introduction of Ted's that he wrote down for a reading that I gave in Iowa City. And I asked him then if I could use it on the cover of the book. I think what he had in mind, particularly, were works like "any news from alpha centauri," "the coherences," "the instances"--the one that's sort of like zapping in and out of the Odyssey and into my own life and then out again--those three come to mind right there. What he's saying is a very complicated thing, you know, like how to live in terms of doing so, how to write and live in terms of not having any exterior reference to worry about whether you'll get the National Book Award tomorrow or not.
- BA: *Whether you're completing a system . . .*
- AH: You know, like right, exactly. There's no system surrounding me, nor him, I think, that would have its rewards or punishments or anything like that; it really is our lives that we're living. And some transformation obviously; being affected there. I know that Ted may have had some difficulty getting into some of those works because of certain things like my using the third person, saying "he"--you know, where it's obviously me. You know, I mean, who is the hero here, he? Who is that, why don't you tell us? And he is very accurate on things like any kind of false, let's say, exaggeration or boosting of metaphor into something that it does not really reflect or justify. He has one of the keenest minds in the business. He has the "build-in shit detector" that Hemingway talked about. Not sacrificing emotion and real feeling and the power of metaphor, you know, when it comes, when it's there. I mean, he loves that, and he's an Irish-American poet in that sense, I think. Like the Providence poem, I don't know if he read that here?
- BA: *Yeah, he read that. With his mother, up late at night.*
- AH: It makes me cry. Jesus. I think it's a very heavy poem.
- BA: *Do you feel at home, then, in Alice Notley's magazine Chicago, where you are a 'regular'?*
- AH: I knew Alice before I ever met Ted, in person. I'd met him in New York, but like partying, and I only really met Ted and talked to him when he came to Iowa to teach for a year. But Alice had at that time been a student at the Iowa Writers' Workshop for two years. I think Alice's magazine is her own. She is trying to counteract

a tendency in many other semi-private magazines that we have and which I value greatly--I mean, it's like correspondence, it's what I get in the mail, you know--200 copies and I get one, I'm very pleased--it's a special kind of magazine, it's a magazine that's directed at a very special audience. And in those I find delight increases in direct proportion to the amount of poems, or works or pages by each poet, that I find in them. I find it very tedious to go through magazines, even some put out by well-meaning friends and ex-students, that have like 28 poets, one poem each.

BA: *You don't get a sense of the person or the work on anything.*

AH: No; the only sense I could get would possibly be "School," but then I could get that in 5 pages. Or a statement or manifesto could tell me that. The concrete people are right: you just write a manifesto, and there it is, you know. No, I like to see at least 5 pages by anybody, anywhere, and Alice has certainly extended that, she has ten pages. Between them, Alice and Ted are obviously putting Chicago right back on the map again!