

EDOUARD RODITI (1910-1992)

In his unpublished autobiography, *The Age of Improvidence*, Edouard Roditi recounts that he was born in Paris with a silver spoon in his mouth, but that because of the "improvidence" of his parents he had to earn a livelihood. That was a blessing in disguise, at least for the admirers of his numerous writings and translations. Roditi's father and grandfather, Sefardic Jews from Istanbul, had settled in Paris and become naturalized Americans while his mother had come from Bradford, England. Roditi writes that he grew up in luxury amidst diverse languages, cultures and places, unprepared to become "the somewhat marginal human being that I may appear to be today." Nothing in his childhood had led him to suspect that "as an adult I might turn out to be a writer, a homosexual or an American citizen, or that my frequent losses of consciousness would ultimately be diagnosed when I was already about to reach the age of fifty, as a form of congenital epilepsy. Nor was I ever allowed to suspect that I was, though not by upbringing, education or religion, still a Jew in the eyes of most anti-Semites... I gradually learned to be self-supporting, to come to terms with being a homosexual and a Jew, and to be an American." In the process Roditi published the first edition of Breton's *Surrealist Manifestos* (1928), lived and worked with Breton, Isherwood and Auden between London, Paris and Berlin (1929-37), studied at the Universities of Chicago and California (1937-38), worked in broadcasting for the Office of War Information in New York, as an interpreter for the Department of State (1940-45), and at the San Francisco Conference drafting the UN Charter and at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials (1945-46) – before plunging into a lifetime of writing, translating, teaching and editing, while constantly on the move between the States, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa.

Edouard Roditi inspired and wrote for many small magazines, including our own. (See "Homage to Roditi at 75" in Frank, n°4, 1985.) He left an enormous number of friends and admirers of his work, some of whom contributed to this dossier. Thanks to Alain Bosquet you will find Roditi's delightful unedited prose poems, with translations into French. The artists Topor and Arslan, the photographer Jellel Gasteli, and the poets Ammiel Alcalay and Ira Cohen, all join us here to pay tribute to Roditi's generosity, erudition, and talent.