

TRACE

A CHRONICLE OF LIVING LITERATURE

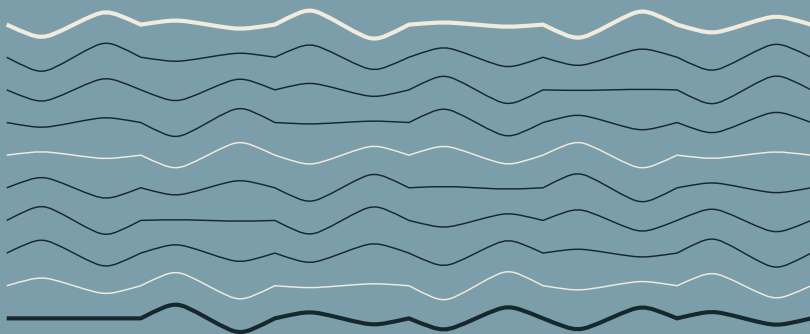
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TRACE

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Living Literature

Essays & Articles · Poetry · Reviews

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Edited by James Boyer May

A READING EDITION

ABOUT THIS EDITION

This reading edition preserves the issue's poetry, fiction, essays, correspondence, reviews, and other literary writing in their printed order. Advertising, subscription matter, mastheads, the magazine's own contents pages, annual indexes, address lists, and the running trade directory are omitted as reference apparatus.

The text was checked against newly rendered source pages. Poetry lineation, stanza spacing, shaped indents, and hanging continuations for long lines are retained; prose continuations are joined without false paragraph indents. Conjectural readings are enclosed in square brackets, while original spelling and punctuation are otherwise kept.

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TOWARDS PRINT

by the Editor of Trace

Rather than primarily addressing writers, exhorting librarians and all buyers of contemporary writings. . . . An adequate library no longer can be maintained through book purchases only; nor do the standard reviews prove adequate guides to all the significant trends. Experimentation — especially concerning prose fiction — almost exclusively appears in little magazines. This long has been substantiated by the acquisitions of complete files of obscure periodicals by many large universities and public libraries; and the increasing importance attached to these further is established by the fact that conservative British colleges now accept from doctoral candidates papers analysing the influences of little magazines on contemporary literature.

Perhaps complementary to a revival of religious speculation throughout the fabric of world-spreading Western civilisation, has been a turning-away from so-called objective realisms, some of whose practitioners appear even to be falling under suspicion of mere journalistic virtuosity after all. Yet, the canonical critics scarcely have noted this, except with reference to rarely-considered poetry of various post-imagist persuasions, many of which are not following in the better-publicised ‘shocker’ mode most non-literary persons associate with modernity. Meanwhile, little magazines long have published prose suggesting possibly that the psychiatric nightmares, still emphatically identified with the modern manner, were superseded before their horrors were between covers — that the path establishing what another century may look back upon as the main route of tradition may be quite another.

Few much-read writers about writers understand little-magazine writings; and their misconceived counsels betray this. The counsels may be compared to advices of

Freudians puzzling to 'cure' introspective minds by effecting releases of sensual repressions, which — accepted theory notwithstanding — are just superficial symptoms of deeper conflict between the essentially unchangeable basic 'set' of such personalities and a world which to them always must lie 'outside'. Critics perfunctorily con a little magazine or two, then shape their remarks to what they conceive may be the benefit of the contributors they believe may sprout into authors of different genera. They assume these simply are proving grounds for extroverts who later may contribute to big periodicals and deliberately produce semi-popular books. Fact is that few who nurse such objective ambitions appear in little magazines, whose editors sift for creativities otherwise motivated. There's less in common between authors consciously fabricating for even somewhat-select readers and these than between an indisputable hack and a Joyce Cary or a Henry Green.

Between better popular novelists and the genuine spontaneous type barely achieving circulations large as those of good poets (no matter how imaginative may be the conscious conformities of the first) stretch fogged distances. Nonconforming reverists attempt neither to 'see' objectively nor to reproduce common actualities — a distinction beyond kind. These others spin upon joyful social assent (plus invention, to be sure, joined in the talented with undenied intuitive insights) mainly intellectualised. Typical little magazine writers project unique worlds of self-exposition, their special intricacies of dream, not simulative interpretations of shared dreams.

This obvious qualification of so-called coterie writers goes unstressed, a major reason for unfrankness being that many, themselves, posture like lunatic-asylum patients protesting sanity. Self-conscious about what they feel is their own strangeness and fearful of the 'arty' label, they deny their methods. This error is particularly prejudicial to them

during the current vogue of contempt for artists who reject compromise (usually in vain, anyway) to expand their audiences.

So — the manifest difficulties of the conscientious librarian. And how often the private individual fails to track down significance! The latter typically buys well-published moderns who have had attention for two or three decades (probably Nobel winners). An alert librarian fortunately will be bolder in requisitioning unestablished magazines, the lower costs of which (compared with books) mitigate pressures toward conservatism.

And still, in subscribing to other than older (usually school-sponsored) magazines offering fair percentages of experimentations, wariness is justified. Not only because many are unrealistically projected as re financing (though some single issues prove worth entire subscription prices), but because the worthwhile cannot be selected without study.

For instance, those which seem surely will have substance — by reason of the editorial board or well-meaning endorsers — often turn out to be more of the perennial efforts to reach larger discerning audiences than exist. These typically undertake compromise between honesty and superficiality, resulting in semi-popular and/or topical contents relying on shock and outré plot twists, instead of the imaginative originalities of the distinctive uses of language. Such is the new *Chance*, with an Elizabeth Bowen foreword presaging the unusual. After her valid subtleties, what a disappointment that all but one or two authors in the first issue are mere facile pasters-of-phrases, off-trail only in choosing situations and problems! Though treatments are somewhat unconventional, most No. 1 *Chance* stories might with slight alterations have landed in any of a dozen popular periodicals.

So — the need to sample. Beginning publishers accept single-copy orders (in fact solicit them, as does Charles Gulick of the new U.S.A. Idiom), and frequently older publishers supply unspecified back issues for mailing costs.

There's been a large net increase in the number of these magazines, in spite of a record in suspensions; but rather than discussing chiefly new (several initial numbers unavailable at the writing), to discuss a few of many recent magazines in non-English countries with all- or part-English contents. Also, some printing young writers in far parts of the Commonwealth.

Though indicating other than mere propagandising intent, the Ford Foundation-financed Perspectives USA (\$1.50 per no.) offers firmly-established authors. This one cannot be classified a little magazine; however, the announced purposes are relevantly symptomatic (because offered — pretexts or no — for an ambitious international enterprise) . . . while James Laughlin (of New Directions, lately chided for turning in old directions) at the helm predicates mistrust over future policy-serving endeavors to mould an instrument of doubtful democratisation, actually perhaps simply to provide the reading tables of European bourgeoisie with snob-appeal décor.

To heighten the contrast (literary quality being admittedly inferior) between this sort of grand enterprise and true little-magazine intention, turn to M. Gaston-Henry Aufrère's Marches de France, with not mere asserted purpose of promoting the brotherhood of man, but with offerings themselves comprising sincere direction, if chosen with less approven taste (in the meaning of those concerned with smartness).

Which isn't to intimate that a little-magazine editor may not be discriminating enough to achieve better on the premise of an individual taste. For Sindbad Vail of Points has done such, not to speak of the editor of Botteghe Oscure —

the latter, which, despite pretentiousness in proclamations of Marguerite Caetani, belongs in this category. And even amongst magazines where school traditions post heavy guard and/or semi-provincial prejudices narrow the range — as *The Dalhousie Review*, under faculty editorship — occasionally appears advanced experimentation.

On the borderline — as re distinction between *Transitions USA* and those to which *Trace* is dedicated, maybe will hover *The Paris Review* . . . though the No. 1 printing limited to 5,000 copies assuredly identifies it as a little magazine by circulation definition. This one is staffed by international names and announces practically none but the already-famous among future contributors. Advisory editors comprise members of *La Table Ronde*, of which François Mauriac is chief editor.

Also in Europe, Merlin's ensuing issues have shown broadening editorial attitudes, without resort to the sort of self-conscious cosmopolitanism of some editors who act convinced that international appeal is obtainable through any variety, instead of undertaking the difficult labor of discovering items with universal appeal by reason of intrinsic merit. Then, also quite different from Merlin's, there are those well-intentioned editors who conceive that an international publication should be moulded out of a 'good' ethic as re broader human problems . . . and to the not-unexpected neglect of literary considerations. With such seem to fall *Avante*, understandably concerned over Pan-American relations. Miss Cristina V. Martinez undeniably is sincere — but frequently naive both in what she remarks about writing and in her selections of writings.

A sounder attitude (for achieving relatively-enduring significance and in the end exerting more influence too) is that of R. C. Gupta of *Aesthetics*, where a philosophical flavour is being diluted for those who disagree with the mingling of the intellectual with the creative, by more

attention to graphic and plastic arts, with a special international arts number featuring reproduction of work of living artists of most principal countries.

An undertaking to bring 'New Yorker' sophistication to South Africa is the Johannesburg Corner — editor, Maurice Levin. In Australia, a somewhat parallel effort is indicated for Direction. All of these distant projects — and including City on one side of the world and Intersection on the other — are more comprehensive in portended scopes than such as the new British Chanticleer or those mainly devoted to poetry, as Poetry Periodical.

EDITORS WRITE

Will Tullos: "We seek to give an outlet for really talented new poets of the English-speaking world. We have our own press and don't compromise with less than the best mss we can get. Most of our poets are young . . . but we are not basically interested in youth, but in talent. Our poets are atheists, Catholics, mystics, socialists, anarchists, Negroes, Chinese, Nordics, English, Irish, Americans. . . . We bar nothing but racialism and its sponsor and parent, fascism" (Epos).

Joint statement by Editors, under auspices of Literary Arts Association: "We find plenty of good modern poetry available, enough criticism for our limited needs, but a dearth of really fine short-story writing. The high cockalorum stench pervading the American literary scene distresses us. Most of the stuff appearing in the commercial journals is as close to arts (not 'artiness') as the drawings on the walls of public toilets." (Intersection, published by above nonprofit association.) Frank Alberts: "We simply wanted a magazine of — not about — art, and we knew where to find the material. Since publication, we have been besieged by the lunatic fringe of the avant garde, whom it would seem just can't find a place to publish. Little of this material is valuable, or, for that matter, even enjoyable. These people can't seem to realize that entertainment, however much we despise it, is the drawing card of art. Instruction, obvious artifice, fictionalized psychology, and the seership of sociology come long after the initial impact of the work. But this is apparent to anyone for whom language, line, and color have meaning." (2 1/2)

ADDENDA

by the Editor

Exciting winter news, in the numerous (never one with so many!) small books and pamphlets from presses of little-magazine editors. Besides Villiers' own initial book, introducing *Eight American Poets* (4/6 and \$1) to British readers, have appeared: first of a series of first collections from *Imagi* — that of Marvin Solomon (\$1.75); second of *Intro's Round Quarter Series*, Chris Bjerknes' *Orpheus Gone to Hell* etc.; another first from *Golden Goose* — *Le Fou* (\$1) by Robert Creeley; from *Contact*, Louis Dudek's new *Twenty-Four Poems*, and the impressive anthological selection, *Canadian Poetry 1850-1952*; from *Inferno*, Robert Beum's *Thirty Poems*; John Hoffman's *A Scroll of Stars* (4/-); from *We Offer*. . . . Another mocking issue of *Gargoyle* last autumn gurgled into streets of modern letters more sky-dirtied water off its roof-seat of ironical observation — and 'conscience money' for yet a fourth (else 'Messages of condolence and floral tributes') should be mailed Keneth Nobes, *Pandaemonium*, near The Blue Circle Club, West End Road, Ruislip, Middlesex. . . . Another gratis distribution of literary interest was revived *Stepladder* (see list), and regular future numbers may be obtained by simple request. . . . Also in U.S.A., an attempt to reach a mass audience with what appears part-related to little-mag endeavour, by Signet Books — a low-priced pocket anthology in drug stores, with short modern treatments and articles (though chiefly 'names') and comprising a magazine directory of sorts. . . . And on wireless, at music hall and art museum recitals, through actual stage presentations of experimental plays — new impetus towards obtaining the little magazines their possible maximum readership. . . . Example of play-staging, a New York 'off-Broadway' presentation of Gil Orlovitz' *Noone* (again, *Intro*). . . . Galley is reviving in same general format

and plan as the last issue before 1951 suspension, under Elva Meline, who also was then associated with the Proof enterprise. . . . A noteworthy statement, both summary and critique of many factors in this field of publishing (overlong, but essentially sound) found print in the first anniversary issue of *The California Quarterly*, late last year. . . . Alan Swallow's Denver project of indexes goes forward — with *Index to Little Magazines*, 1951, just ready (\$2.50). At same price, those of 1948, 1949, and 1950 have been made available (1948 temporarily out of print), and progress has been made on years 1946 and 1947.