

TRACE

A CHRONICLE OF LIVING LITERATURE

A Smaller Presses Directory

No. 14

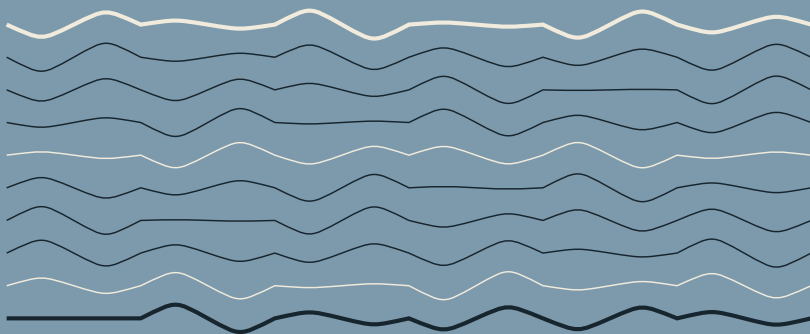
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JAMES BOYER MAY / EDITOR



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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.

CONTENTS

Poetry in Canada—magazines	4
Towards Print by the Editor of Trace	9
Editors Write	13
Addenda	16

POETRY IN CANADA—MAGAZINES

by Fred Cogswell

There are few distinguished and lucrative magazine outlets for poetry in Canada. Slick magazines like THE CANADIAN HOME JOURNAL, CHATELAINE, THE MONTREALER, and SATURDAY NIGHT publish a few short poems as fillers and prefer those which fit the other contents of the magazines. Only two academic quarterlies, THE DALHOUSIE REVIEW and QUEEN'S QUARTERLY, print poetry and these seldom more than eight pages in the course of a year. About an equal annual amount is printed by THE CANADIAN FORUM, an independent monthly. Canadian poets, moreover, are forced to compete for this limited space with British and American poets. As a result, those established poets in Canada who are not content to hoard their poems until they are ready to be published in book form submit them to the little magazines. This gives the little magazine in Canada more prestige than its counterpart in the United States or Britain; it contains work by more poets who are 'names' as the result of prior book publication and inclusion in anthologies.

Little magazines in Canada can be classified naturally into three groups: independent publications, subsidised publications, and undergraduate publications. The first group at the moment contains three widely differing magazines: NORTHERN REVIEW, CIV/n, and THE FIDDLEDHEAD.

At present, NORTHERN REVIEW is a sixty-page quarterly published in Toronto. It contains short stories, critical articles, reviews, and about ten pages of poems per issue. In its content this magazine has always reflected the ideology of its editor, John Sutherland, whose singleminded devotion to literature has kept it going for many years. An intense idealist, Sutherland has moved from an extreme left-wing

position to become a devout Roman Catholic, and his magazine has moved with him. To have survived the turn-over of subscribers and contributors which such a change has made inevitable is no mean feat. Only in format does the NORTHERN REVIEW of today resemble that of seven years ago. Within the limits of his particular interests at a given time, Sutherland's taste is sound, and his magazine has published — and continues to publish — much good poetry. The controversial CIV/n (short for 'Civilization') centres around Montreal and features a group of poets — Louis Dudek, Raymond Souster, Irving Layton, Phyllis Webb, Gael Turnbull, Eli Mandell, and Robert Currie — whose work departs from Canadian tradition in going to American rather than to British models. CIV/n is the liveliest little magazine in Canada and, as long as its present poets support it, will continue to publish the best poetry of any Canadian magazine. I doubt, however, that it will last. Its members, although devoted to poetry, are intense individualists, too prone to criticise other movements and at the same time too sensitive to criticism of their own. And unfortunately those in charge of the magazine appear too personally interested in creating its contents to give the mechanics of marketing the careful attention which they deserve. But the very limitations of the interests of the editors of NORTHERN REVIEW and CIV/n give those magazines a character that is lacking in the more efficiently operated and eclectic THE FIDDLEHEAD. By the homogeneity of their contents, both NORTHERN REVIEW and CIV/n achieve upon reading a cumulative effect in which the magazines become more than the sum of their contents. Each issue of THE FIDDLEHEAD remains merely a collection of good poems of various kinds. The editors of THE FIDDLEHEAD realise this defect in their magazine, but they believe with Kipling that '... There are nine and ninety ways of inditing tribal lays and every blessed one is right' and hence are loath to omit any good work from publication on the grounds that

it is avant-garde, traditional, or any of the things which may be regarded by some groups as objectionable in a poem. They also entertain a wistful hope that poets and readers of various schools of poetry, seeing good poems of other schools in juxtaposition to their own, may come to appreciate one another's merits and grow more tolerant.

The second group of little magazines in Canada consists of those either sponsored or financed by the Canadian Authors' Association or its provincial chapters: THE CANADIAN POETRY MAGAZINE, THE ALBERTA POETRY YEAR BOOK, THE SASKATCHEWAN POETRY YEAR BOOK, and THE NOVA SCOTIA POETRY YEAR BOOK. Although to a certain extent these magazines exist as guaranteed outlets for the work of the societies which form them, they are more than mere vanity productions, and I have never seen in them work of as inferior quality as I have seen in some United States little magazines that prey upon the vanity of would-be poetasters. These productions, which favour traditional poetry but are by no means free from experimentation, contain much work characterised by a high degree of polish and keen observation. Unfortunately, too many of the authors who appear in their pages treat poetry as a genteel hobby, a sort of moral embroidery or word decoration, rather than as an occupation demanding the energies of the whole man. Pleasing and charming as the work of these dilettante poets can be, it seldom repays more than one reading.

Less creative but serving a useful purpose are the two reference periodicals: CANADIANA [a quarterly which now, however, carries on with semi-popular traditional creative work and is open to all types of contributions from anywhere — note by Editor of TRACE]; and THE CANADIAN INDEX TO PERIODICALS AND DOCUMENTARY FILMS, published by the Canadian Library Association.

The most encouraging factor of the post-war decade in Canadian poetry has been the growth in numbers and rise in

quality of undergraduate publications. Universities and colleges like McGill, Bishop's, McMaster, Mount Allison, Loyola, and Assumption now have little magazines featuring student short stories and poetry. Although evidences are all too obvious of either the influences of fashionable contemporary poets or the predilections of professors of creative writing, nevertheless, in many poems an honest — and sometimes successful — attempt is made to deal with genuine experience in terms of the author's personality. Quite apart from quality, as vehicles for learning the mechanics of expression these magazines are most useful, and the next generation of Canadian poets will indubitably owe much to them.

This completes the magazine outlets for poets in Canada. It is pitifully small in proportion to the directory of little magazines in the English-speaking world as compiled by TRACE. It is pitifully small, too, compared to the number now writing poetry in Canada. During the last two years, for instance, THE FIDDLEHEAD has received mss. from over 150 different Canadian poets, although the magazine was not nationally advertised nor had achieved a national reputation.

This discrepancy between production and sources of outlet presents other problems. When a good poet sends several poems to a magazine, he leaves his editor with three embarrassing choices: either to publish the poems in dribblets, sometimes over a period of years; to return some of them although they are good enough to publish; or to publish them all, thereby depriving other writers equally good of space for their poems. In fact, the most amazing thing about Canadian poetry is the evenness of quality present in the work of so many writers. Encouraged no doubt by the fierceness of competition, our poetry has developed into a healthy democracy. There have been many casualties by the way — poets who have lost interest in writing after the first 100 rejection slips — but those who

have had the stamina to persevere have arrived at a point of competence where they need not fear the competition of American and British poets. (For example, *THE FIDDLEHEAD* now receives approximately forty per cent of its mss. from Britain and the U.S.A., and sixty per cent from Canada. Despite this, more than eight per cent of its published work is by Canadian poets, although at the time the poems were chosen the editors knew neither the names nor the nationalities of the authors.)

There is a great need in Canada — particularly on the West Coast — for more little magazines. Unfortunately, most Canadians capable of editing such magazines are poets themselves and do not wish to take from their own work the time and energy that a little magazine asks. Money is at the moment no barrier to the success of a little magazine in Canada, nor is getting material to publish. A surprising number of Canadians will buy good poetry once they have been made aware of its existence, and there are an astonishing number of them actually writing it.

TOWARDS PRINT BY THE EDITOR OF TRACE

The therapeutic potentialities of little-magazine activities of one sort or another — if not participation in writing, editing, or publication, why then simply subscribing and reading — not only have been under-estimated, they've actually been ignored by a majority of those intelligent enough to utilise this method of counteracting the injurious modern nervous milieu. Chief explanation is the partly-fallacious idea that respite from tensions best can be afforded either by physical play or by light (if not childish) mental diversions. But, while not putting forward any comprehensive claim that every individual may find even occasional fundamental help in thoughtful writings, it's easily demonstrated that well-developed minds may become bored, if not maddeningly annoyed, by trying to relax with the playthings and activities commonly suggested by most physicians and psychiatrists.

Plus which — and following naturally thereafter — the fact that the better of the little magazines are not only both outlets of expression for individuals otherwise to remain frustrated, and important to a society based upon individual freedom rather than regimentation, but also serve in the growth of literature, as such, often seems to prevent recognition of their entertainment values.

And the entire attitude is more hard to modify, because of the lack of avenues for reaching those not already in contact with some of these magazines. For that matter, this very article will address mainly habitual little-magazine readers, if not persons actually connected with or contributing to them. Among the exceptions, happily, will be students and teachers and librarians who may or may not be themselves 'fans.' Therefore, to exhort this minority both with regard to 'proselytising' them and hoping to persuade them to refer

frequently to anything they've liked (or even disliked) in these magazines.

Thinking is not necessarily nor always tiringly difficult. The unfamiliar concept or idea, while inevitably disturbing in one way or another, isn't always therefrom unpleasant. Nor ineluctably so when one may be unwilling to approve or to wish to adopt it. Frequently, with expenditure of a modicum of effort in thought, the reward is at least relaxing amusement. The outstanding characteristic of better little-magazine contents admittedly lies in their demanding some concentration, whether upon what is stated or the untrite manners of statements, or both. And that is why they never actually can become popular. But the point is that there still are thousands of people bored by banalities of popular writings and who would find helpful diversion in at least a few of the little magazines, and who yet are unfamiliar with any of them and remain under the impression they're either precious or offering only unrewarding toils.

The better poetry, appearing both in their pages and in books, larger literary magazines, women's sophisticated American fashion periodicals, and recently in paperbacks achieving wide circulations, has provided an unexpected bridge for introductions, just the last few years. Enough of the same writers have been current in both that more than have been should have been introduced. Again, failure to have been informed—and again, need for better co-operation along these lines.

Which leads to side-remarks about the rarity of references to any of the little magazines in larger media — and including reviews, columns, and book-sections of newspapers. Surely, these are not grudging occasional space because it's feared they ever might become commercial competition? Nor should the newspapers, reckoning upon the non-commercial nature of little magazines and their consequent inability to contribute advertisements, ignore that (publishing

conditions being what they are today) no inclusive, let alone determinative, assertions may be made concerning literature in our time without giving some account to what's printed in some very small magazines.

But, back to subjective considerations (within readers and those who should be readers), and to remark that much little-magazine prose may perform therapeutic services similar to those performed by unhackneyed poetry. These, by stimulating presentations (in themselves) at least; and frequently by original juxtapositions of ideas as well as of words and phrases—for most of the prose, unlike most of the poetry, is basically conceptual, and the similarities between the commoner poetry and the typical prose are on the surface and no more in their fashions of construction than in the decidedly different mental states of their authors.

The reason for stressing these factors is from recognition that, while poetry readers easily may pass from other magazines to these, few poetry readers (comparatively speaking) exist. This is quite another, though related, problem; and thousands may swell the audiences for little magazines of general contents, without undertaking also to become educated to appreciate modern poetry. In fact it later might prove easier to enlarge the audience for poetry, if less stress usually were placed on this.

Evidence to support the foregoing has been found in actual statistics and studies of little-mag-reader preferences. For instance, the 1953 TRACE survey showed how in this field, all-poetry publications are most successful and that larger percentages of poetry in those with all types of writings increased popularities. Other patent indications from correspondence files and subscription lists are that by far the majority of regular patrons of these magazines are students of poetry, if not undertaking to produce it themselves.

Not to minimise the desirability of helping the cause of poetry by whatever means, it yet should be made clearer than seems to have been that scores of better little magazines are much else, in addition to being (most of them) vehicles for poetry. They contain unique and informative articles and lively essays filled with ideas applicable to contemporary problems, to say nothing of stories and criticisms and reviews, which many feel occupy too much space in quarterlies under school sponsorships in the U.S.A.

In this connection, an exceptional and even surprising thing happened recently when nearly an entire column from an essay on creative art versus certain types of criticism of same was reprinted in THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW. This was from a piece by Jay Pell in Summer, 1955, WHETSTONE—and on the same page appeared a Whitmanesque poem by Wendell B. Anderson, from that issue. If such ‘breaks’ occurred oftener, these magazines soon could achieve maximum (if still small) audiences.... Be it recorded that THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT (London) is the only such medium in the world giving even fairly-frequent mentions to small reviews and poetry magazines.

EDITORS WRITE

C. R. Hensman (13 Macleod Rd., Colombo 4, Ceylon) : 'We have found the response from America most encouraging. We would be happy if we could send copies of COMMUNITY to all who would care to read it critically and appreciatively, for what writers and editors need most is a public. But costs are high and subscribers are required. 'Unconventional, lively, and serious articles from Americans will be read with great interest. Why don't more Americans write for COMMUNITY? I think that you personally will appreciate this point : there are many Asians who are not interested in American wealth and American guns and American preaching, of which there are too much here.

'We have been trying to supply what we feel is lacking. How do you and others in America feel about it?

'Your listing of COMMUNITY in TRACE has helped put us in touch with little magazines elsewhere. Could you please announce that a few free specimen copies are available for those who want to see what COMMUNITY is like ; and that permission to re-publish material from COMMUNITY will not be difficult to obtain.'

Barbara Fry (HARLEQUIN) : 'We are accepting the best in contemporary poetry, drama, and unusual fiction. By "unusual" we mean fiction with impact. We are also accepting articles, subjects from art to zymurgy, and are building a reserve of sophisticated cartoons. We are interested in the beginner as well as the established writer, but we definitely do not want to hear from the frustrated writers who take their writing as they might take a game of checkers! We want to hear from the writers who must write.

'All contributions receive considerate attention, a few will receive publication, and most will receive intelligent criticism. We do not, by the way, use the whip of editorial

immunity to flagellate authors with sarcasm and discouragement. We have no respect for editors who mutilate mss. with red pencil and scribble demonic, school-teacherish comments in margins.

'Please note that HARLEQUIN is paying 3c. per word for fiction, and slightly higher for articles and exceptional personality features. We cannot at this time offer payment for poetry, but publication in a discriminating slick magazine. It is our aim to make HARLEQUIN the literary magazine for the layman as well as for the specialist.'

Eric Ratcliffe (ORE) : 'Policy is fixed, but may deepen considerably to a type of Celticism, not I hope, as my dictionary says, to "Celtomania." Religion in a wide sense may figure, but no interest will be given to Christianity over and above the much distorted word "paganism" and all its context of meaning. Whenever possible, culture will be viewed through spectacles of the past. Here to encourage me is the wonder of the culture connoted in the Mithraic temple finds, an interesting pre-Christian era when perhaps Man was more himself with his nature myths than he was ever for the persecutions of a one-point-of-view religion which was so cruel in initial stages. Man's faith lies in no church. It is possible he might have developed a real spiritual outlook by now left to himself, instead of a mild hypocrisy which is the result of inflicted religion. Pantheism and our dying village rites are healing things. Out of these, if nurtured and not persecuted, would have come by now a new spirituality and a natural religion which would have needed no name, for it would have been so truly bound with the very beginnings of Man that it would have been its own Genesis.... Somehow those that have any measure of clear-sightedness today must try by all means to combat ... sheer material power. This is not stationary, it is increasing ever rapidly. And the way ... is the new attitude, the true spiritual attitude, the naturalism that Man could attain were he not so overburdened with his

own power systems.

ADDENDA

Publishing activities in poetry continue lively, and sales of many limited editions from small presses indicate that some will become collector-items instead of remaining available as dusty remainders. In the face of this — and of course because of prior poor sales experiences — the numbers of copies being manufactured average considerably less than numbers of comparable books and booklets published in the late Forties. Which enhances probabilities of future scarcities, and no doubt will lead to editions of several hundred once more, instead of these of one and two hundred.

Please note that where the notes below do not specify addresses, they quickly may be found in the Directory in this issue of TRACE.

Among anthologies in prospect, one projected by Justo P. Tolentino, of the Philippine Islands, will be unusual in containing work in three languages, English, Spanish, and French. Published poems are asked (from anywhere in the world) and should be mailed, together with data on authors and serial publications, to Mr Tolentino at Castaneda Residence, Imus, Cavite, P.I. . . . In contrast, THE CAMAS PRESS has two anthologies of local limited character in preparation. These are WRITERS' RENDEZVOUS ANTHOLOGY and POETS OF THE PACIFIC ANTHOLOGY.

POCKET BOOKS, Inc., announces that the DISCOVERY Series has concluded with Issue No. 6 (September), and a second series appears to remain in doubt. . . . The French-Canadian Series (address of CONTACT PRESS) not only has proven popular, but expenses of production and mailing now have made essential a nominal charge of 25c. per pamphlet. Latest of these contains work of Gille Hénault.

Among books not actually yet available, but in process of manufacture, is *THE SIMON PASSION*, by Henry Birnbaum. The forepart was published in *OLIVANT QUARTERLY*, and delays and uncertainties of magazine appearances have led to decision not to wait on serial publication of the remainder. Queries may be addressed as per. . . . About to be released by *THE PEREGRINE PRESS* is a new work by Jack Curtis, *COOL OF A KANSAS* (\$5)—and by the same, a Kenneth Rexroth translation of *FOURTEEN POEMS*, by O. V. de L.-Milosz, including original French text and etchings by Edward Hagedorn (\$15.)

Having retired from editorship of *THE CANADIAN POETRY MAGAZINE*, Arthur S. Bourinot is devoting himself to his own work. *TEN NARRATIVE POEMS* and *THE QUICK AND THE DEAD* may be obtained, for \$1 each, direct from him at: 158 Carleton Road, Rockcliffe Park, Ottawa, Ont., Can. Another book of more than immediate new interest is a collection of works of the late Edwin Rolfe, available in a limited edition (*THE CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY*, \$3.12 postpaid).

Among notices and review copies just received are: *SONNETS IN TWO KEYS*, by G. S. Oddy (*MITRE PRESS*, 5/-); *GRAIN FIELDS AND SWALLOWS*, by Seymour Gresser (*INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE AND ART CO.*, \$1); and *LOVE IN FOUR KEYS*, by Robert A. Davies (*THE WILLIAM-FREDERICK PRESS*, \$1).

Editors anywhere, as well as readers residing in Los Angeles County, Calif., may wish to contact Dr Gustav Kaldegg, 685 S. Witmer St., Los Angeles 17, with regard to his program of aiding what he considers the better small-circulation magazines. Besides promoting sales of these at bookstands, he states he is undertaking to initiate reading-discussion groups.

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