

LIVING LITERATURE



A Chronicle of Living Literature



June 1955

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JAMES BOYER MAY

TRACE

EDITOR

TRACE

No. 12

Living Literature

Essays & Articles · Poetry · Reviews

June 1955

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

Towards Print by the Editor of Trace	4
Editors Write	9
Bern Porter	13
Some Items Received by the Editor	14
Addenda	19
Information Blank to be used by small presses	21
The Window	23
House Style	24
Villiers Publications	25

TOWARDS PRINT BY THE EDITOR OF TRACE

But what eventuates after escape? Worthy of song though the exploits may have been—the scheming of the plans, the careful counting of the hours, the long concealments of the entrance to the slow-dug tunnel, the final daring exit and flight—why, then, has one achieved freedom? What banner raised, what forays for what cause, what threats to fortress of tradition?

All with regard to growing demands for evaluations of works in the smaller magazines and from the smaller presses in terms, not of the real or conjurable psychological needs of individual authors, nor merely weighted then in regard to other limited publications . . . but in terms of national and international developments and in relation to writings which at once (if later) achieve mass audiences.

An odd thing about the critical writings in most of the little magazines is their two-way limitation. That is—if they examine older writings or those of recognised figures in contemporary letters, they avoid mention of the (then) unworthy-of-note smaller figures, while if they deal with scarcely-known new writers, they treat them in cubby-holes of slight respect. This is excused on the latter hand by a specious attitude that all little-mag writings are limitedly-personal and rise peculiarly from the frustrations of the writers; whereas, in the former case, the articles are in the nature of rites or sacrifices, so to speak, made upon altars built to superior (because ‘recognised’) writers. But the basic truth, of course, is that these are just matters of exaggerated degrees, and that as much ‘importance’ may attach to a currently minor writer as to one generally acknowledged to be major. Also that the moving personal factors (in each and every artist’s life) are much the same for

the little-known as for the famous. The mental balance (so-called) realised by the famous is at every whit as precarious a price as that barely gained by the very humblest blessed through therapeutic benefits of self-expression. That is, if one sees all in larger perspective and realises how (atom bomb or no) the greatest names of the past several thousand years may fade into dim oblivion along with those of persons who perhaps never even reached the stage of trying to become known and praised or censured.

Nor is there logical explanation for these policies in terms of any exclusive considerations — for instance, in writing on philately or numismatics or any of hundreds of hobbies wherein the hobbyists are immersed in really distinct little worlds of interest. Conditions being what they unalterably must be — in re practical aspects of advance-guard writings — publishers of these magazines just will be indulging hobbies, a majority of the writers will continue to be amateurs, and most of those special readers so discriminatory as to be not undeserving coterie labels, whether or not coteries actually exist. However, there's an extremely important difference in the intentions of even the most 'arty' of persons active in this field — editors, contributors, subscribers. With rare exceptions, intentions are far from dilettante, but are earnest and far-ranging as those — say — of the prophets and disciples of a religion out to convert mankind. And besides their limitations (admitted) not being designed, the nature of the material (language) used has resulted in an already accumulated experience of later relationships of many of these writers in the given contemporary moment to pursue critical policies separating the products from other more 'accepted' writings. Why not appraise them consistently in the broadest relationships, allowing them to stand or fall on no less exacting judgments (wrong or right) than those applied to then-prominent writings?

Further, such a policy both will enliven this portion of littlemag contents as such and will gain better interest from those who at present have tendencies to regard little-mag critical discussions as precious. Whether in blame or defense, if the criteria or bases for the comparisons are the highest for the particular modes under examination, due notice at least will have been served that the purposes of the reviewer or critic are not precious.

And along with this, an end should be put to what are essentially apologies (too often) for contents of little magazines and what smaller presses publish. If any of this material deserves to be ignored, then it should be ignored entirely — and by such treatment, those items deserving of wider audiences would be better brought into focus. This does not mean that there need be or that there should be unanimity of judgments. At any rate, there could not be. The reference intended is to general attitudes of individual critics, who — however much they may differ — until now chiefly have had decided tendencies to treat their subjects in manners utterly different in this aspect from what would be their treatments of writers of international reputation. Such as pats-on-the-back here or there for these or those for having issued things which, while by no means really bad, surely would not stand up well if compared to the best professional attainments in the same categories. And if doing so will then result in failure of encouragement for some new writers — that so-frequent apology — may it not be that everyone, including themselves, will benefit by their not having been encouraged when not felt to be deserving, even by those critics mouthing weak compliments?

Nothing in the foregoing should be interpreted to apply to all literary quarterlies and little magazines, a few of which always have had broad critical policies. Nor, of course, should the comments with regard to amateur writings be applied to those which decidedly are not amateur (although

found in little magazines); nor, and especially not, to writings which are thus limited by reason of the unorthodoxies of thought (if not actual social protest) they contain. These hold, together with what the Editor would like to see as improved magazine 'workshops,' among them the chief values from the existences of such projects. And the several categories of such services are the elements which make it ridiculous to refer always and to all little magazines as 'junior grade' places of preparation for 'graduation' to commercial magazines.

And which leads back again to the important matter raised by the questions at the beginning of this article. All too many of these magazines indulge escapes (of their writers) for the mere sakes of escapes. No identifying banners of revolt raised, these are seen to be limited to alleviations of various personal frustrations—and so, not unexpectedly, the magazines which continue to exhibit broader justifications for their existences are comparatively few. That is, when evaluated in terms of larger developments or possibilities for development—or merely nay-sayings to things-as-they-are. Besides the few edited with secondary consideration for literary styles and with material primarily selected for intended messages one or another social phase, there are a few with very restricted literary theories, and still fewer publishing large diverse percentages of honest original experimentation/s and fulfilling in appreciable measure the traditional purposes of little magazines.

But this is not by way of sad commentary—rather, entirely the opposite, to help clarify the situation for a more optimistic view of today's little mags than could be deduced from recent comments about them in the large reviews. To make clear, in other words, what appears to be one of the chief reasons for this unfavorable publicity—viz., the limited and unfrank sorts of critical appraisals frequently appearing in these magazines, themselves. It would be beyond all

reasonable expectations that any large number of little magazines at any one given time should be of profound significance—and no wonder that investigators unfamiliar with the field fail to sort out the significant from among so many assuredly not . . . and the more, when some critical work in the best of these is quite limited.

EDITORS WRITE

Ed Schuster and Jack Lindeman: 'WHETSTONE has no pat policies. We're determined to publish a wide variety of material. We favor originality, experiment, and those who have something to say. We'll wave any flag provided its colours don't run.

'In prose we'd like solidity — prose with freshness, point, even impact, if we can find it. The sophisticated, let's-look-as-though-we-have-it type of prose published in most of the larger mags bores us. Even this early in our career, we've learned that polish is the easiest thing to come by. We'd like stories that move, not glitter.

'We are convinced that good poetry has been written in almost every form, consequently we favor 'no restrictions' in this category; however, we are always suspicious of the shallow trying to pass for experiment or originality. Great poetry is always sincere, and never, though sometimes difficult, meaningless. We are interested in writers who aim high, and not in those who are satisfied with merely being published.'

Evelyn P. Hamilton (AMATEUR NOTES AND QUOTES): 'You will please note that we are now paying in cash for the best in poetry and in fiction each month, with a contest running almost continually with cash prizes — mostly letters of criticism. True, our rates are small, but we have to have time.

'You might add that we review all books that come our way and anticipate carrying ads in the next few months — IF they come up to standard. I won't advertise things that are not legitimate. And I won't list agents, vanity publishers, and/or anthologies unless they meet specifications! Perhaps you noticed our 'Airing the Anthology' in the March issue? There are, I suppose, legitimate ones, but we were speaking

of the type that takes the writer financially! . . . We also have free clipping service.'

Lillian Everts (presently inactive as editor): 'Although the poet can bring up a child from birth to marriage in the short space of a sonnet, it is difficult for the abridged article writer to get far beyond the stage of cutting a first tooth. I therefore hope that this issue will be presented clearly enough to cover the subject; one of special interest to poets in particular.

Namely, the stipulation included in many of the contests being conducted, that "entries will not be returned." The judges of the contests, and through them their sponsors, claim it saves time when losing entries are destroyed or thrown into the waste basket, instead of returned to their respective owners. The claim may be a legitimate one, as far as judges' time is concerned. But what about the poet who creates the poem, works on it to perfect it to the point where he feels it is qualified for entry in the specific contest, and who has to send it out knowing his manuscript will be discarded as waste from which anyone can help himself to a free share of his talent, his originality, let alone the work and study that entered into it?

It seems to me that judges — if not judges, themselves, sponsors, editors, or others connected with the particular contest — can stretch the point of consideration by contributing a few additional seconds of their time to each manuscript submitted, by replacing the material in a self-addressed stamped envelope which the poet will be only too happy to provide with his entry.

'Although the poet resents the clause "entries will not be returned," he continues to enter his material in such contests, regardless. Unfortunately, there is a reason for it: the knowledge of the limited market for poetry; that the poem may never see daylight at all, unless entered for a winning chance in a contest.

‘At the same time, there are poets who sacrifice the promise of publicity through winning a prize, who forfeit the chance of publication which some of the contests offer, when the contest sheet with the clause “entries will not be returned” comes to them. They resent the injustice it imposes. And promise themselves, as poets, they must see to it that the practice of soliciting poetry with the inconsiderate provision included, will be done away with.

Perhaps the judges, sponsors, editors, or others, conducting contests of this nature, are unaware to what extent the little clause “entries will not be returned” is resented. Perhaps the default, as inconsideration, is unintentional. If so, all the better to call attention to it. The necessary change will have to be made in time. Why wait?’ (As originally appearing in MANHATTAN MEMO.)

John Forbis (experiment Magazine staff):

‘Somehow I resent your Ellen Edelman for her too-pat categories. The interesting quality of the little magazine as a phenomenon is that it (successfully) eludes generalisation. Mention “slicks,” “pulp,” Bookofthemoonth, or any of a dozen literary classifications and an immediate type and mood of writing comes to mind — not so with the little magazines. The only generalisation that applies is that they are simply that, “little.”’

‘Who needs the little magazine? Miss Edelman knows; but Miss Edelman won’t tell. Surely not the college student. The college student, of all intellectual groups, is the most self-sustained. College students receive stimulation from college professors, from other students . . . college students write because their environment requires and accepts self-expression. No doubt the little magazine represents additional stimulation, but a college student would write if his only outlet was a term report.

More to the point is Miss Edelman’s closing paragraph. Without little magazines, how many young writers would

grow into mature writers? “We need the sources of truth . . . in the non-commercial writer and . . . publication.” We need many non-commercial sources of truth — the little magazine is one of them. Therein lies the importance. We need little magazines for the same reason we need museums . . . because they are non-commercial, because they deal in the commodity, truth. God knows we need plenty of that. We need incubators for it, testing grounds for it, free exchanges for it — in these capacities, the little magazines serve. And, if they serve minutely, they also serve with patience and sincerity, which virtues alone add hugely to their contribution.’

ISSUE P. 13 · SCAN P. 13

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ISSUE P. 13 · SCAN P. 13

BERN PORTER, 1480 LARKIN ST., SAN FRANCISCO 9, CALIF., U.S.A.

SOME ITEMS RECEIVED BY THE EDITOR

In phenomena like THE LONDON BROADSHEET and OTHER VOICES, sprung into being in this huge both ancient and modern metropolis, we have the most radically relevant of all little-mag developments; for the revolts they express are both scientifically basic and philosophically realistic, in the least-abused and all-but-forgotten sense of that word. And this seeming contradiction actually isn't contradictory in the slightest, but a necessitous aloofness from the creation of which we're parts, for what all intelligent persons must consider the inevitable re-examination of it — unless we're not even to be comprised in its future change/s! Which leads to the observation that while these journals are extremely satirical and unavoidably pessimistic, they are not handbills of doom and damnation—they even contain a good deal of high humour, particularly the first-named. The second is more intent upon thwarted literary expression, as such and as the name indicates, and of less general scope, except in some of the individual pieces of creative writing offered.

Besides for bringing together for the first time anywhere an excellent selection of the older prose and poetry of Harry Hooton — whose residence in far Australia undoubtedly has had much to do with deficiency of his recognition as an outstanding seminal thinker—POWER OVER THINGS, the first U.S.A. book publication by this writer, deserves wide readership for one long newer essay, CREATIVE CIVILIZATION. Whether or not reading leads to accepting his theory/ies, it seems bound to stimulate every perceptive mind—and may set off entire series of exploratory thoughts about the problems on today's doorstep. (\$2, INFERNO PRESS.)

Just seen is a small book of poetry, *RATTLING ON*, privately printed last year by the hitherto-unknown-here Robert Epp, in Japan. Not astonishingly, the pieces reflect the writer's technical absorption with Japanese poetry; and most of them undertake modifications of concentrated Japanese techniques, in English. They're not unsuccessful; however, it remains doubtful that Mr Epp will achieve his own idiom by this route. He's overly selfconscious and chiefly unrelaxed. In other words, despite the frequent effective word, phrase, line, the work shows lack of spontaneity and in fact downright striving after effect, in not a few spots. It may be indicative that where the Japanese influence shows least and where theme has been generated from indignation, the writing becomes more integrated and genuine. And beyond the technical interest of the most seeming-contrived of these, much is to be observed (generally) about the interactions of the Japanese-American contact through postwar years. Also of interest, the book (physically) as such—that numbers of these books have been and are being produced by American soldiers (Mr Epp was there as teacher, not soldier) who otherwise might not gain publication at all. *RATTLING ON* sells for the miraculous low price of 50 cents. (From the author at 812 Brown St., Valparaiso, Ind., U.S.A.)

An extremely stimulating bit of reading is *SHAVIAN TRACT* No. 3 (available for 3/- or 50c. from The Shaw Society, 45 Steepleton Close, London N.18), *SHAW ON CENSORSHIP*, a reprint from the practically-unobtainable *BLUEBOOK* No. 214, with Shaw's 1909 testimony before a joint investigating committee of the Houses of Lords and Commons. Notable is the light cast on the peculiar predominating inconsistency of Shaw's thought, most generally noted with regard to his being both a fiery individualist and ardent socialist. For here we find him debating against the existent censorship of plays, while yet endeavouring to maintain that there should be a censorship; and further, basing his distinction between

desirable censorship and undesirable censorship as

between censorship based upon statutes defining what might not be shown on the stage and mere personal censorship based upon the insights, tastes, and opinions of individuals! And so it had been in all his long arguments for socialism — he always assumed that somehow regulations could be made to function without actually being used by their administrators . . . and advocating always what would allow freedom for individual difference and changing customs, while theorising in terms of bureaucratic controls.

An uncommon quantity of informational data, relevant both to current phases of an old old social problem and to general problems confronting founders of small independent periodicals (whether or not special in scope) is to be found in the tightly-packed, late-appearing February issue of ONE, 'The Homosexual Magazine.' Featured is a study of the magazine's own history from the first preliminary meetings; and the contents as a whole are such as to make it of unusual value both for understanding this particular publication in an immediate sense and for purposes of future reference.

Also late was the first 1955 issue of AMERICAN POETRY MAGAZINE, containing an emphatically erroneous statement in an inserted leaflet appealing for financial aid — that 'poetry magazines and all little magazines are finding it more and more difficult to survive.' Exactly the opposite has been the case amongst both the experimental advance-guard types and the more conservative magazines, including some which are approximately the age of this one (35 years). Not said necessarily in adverse criticism of AMERICAN POETRY MAGAZINE — but it should be pointed out that the problem there may result from a late-years editorial policy which has produced issues of very mixed contents. As stated, adverse criticism is not intended — inasmuch as such a policy indubitably brings to print much worthy good work which

has difficulty finding placement with most editors—but to point out that this most inclusive type of eclecticism (comprising approval of works appearing then side-by-side for which no common standard exists beyond perhaps the original rudimentary poetic impulses in the authors) has a not-surprising effect of turning away readers. It also may cause a desirable prospective contributor to refrain from submitting mss.—fearing to be printed in unfortunate juxtaposition to some work which violates all his ideas about poetry. Eclecticism does have limits—and indications are that the magazines doing best in a practical way are those which at least are predominately either reactionary or forwardlooking, if not necessarily of some special modern school.

Though published in 1954, what appears to have been one of the first volumes of a young Philippine writer, Justo P. Tolentino, to arrive in U.S.A., recently reached this desk. Titled *WHY I CAME AND OTHER POEMS* (\$1.20 from the author, care of the Bureau of Census and Statistics in Manila) a second edition is contemplated, apparently contingent upon what attention these late-mailed review copies obtain abroad. The book has an indisputable documentary value with relation to the attitudes and experiences of a member of the underground fighting the Japanese through the years of the occupation; and amongst trite and mannered pieces, many ‘occasional’ in the worst sense, are a few poems of genuine merit. As might be expected, these have not to do with specific persons and events, but are concerned with the universal themes of poetry; and their merits are not limited merely to passing compliance with poetic standards, but have individuality of expression and a beginning-idiom it’s too bad Mr Tolentino couldn’t have utilised relaxedly in his other compositions. By this commentator’s count, there are seven shorter poems of unusual interest in this book.

THE HORIZONTAL LINE

My dear, if you are in love,
Choose the horizontal line . . .
That's between the earth and sky.
If you are the sky, I would not mind,
Though you may rain all day long
And thunder the whole night through.
If I am the sea, I will sing the song
And rock you to sleep and comfort.
And behold the line between us !
Disappearing, shall always return
Calm and horizontal.
As long as this line between us exists,
God and peace are with us still.'

The bare titles of the other six indicate much : LOOKING
FOR MISSING STAR, SONG OF A TRUE LOVER, SERENADE, SONG OF A
CHRISTIAN, FLOWERS, SONG OF A NATURALIST.

ADDENDA

The co-operation so far in response to the announcement of a little-presses Directory for October has been very disappointing. All readers are invited to send suggested names and addresses for mailing of specific queries, if contacts should not otherwise have been made. Almost none of the presses themselves have as yet voluntarily forwarded data; and those editors receiving this issue of TRACE are urged to make immediate returns on the blank which will be found on another page. The Directory will be on a free-entry basis and will provide a reference not before available; and the undoubted value of this to all concerned ought to have stimulated more than the straggling few letters of approval received to date. And perhaps some of disapproval; or at least a few with constructive suggestions (too).

Amongst the many writers' conferences projected for Summer 1955 throughout the U.S.A., one is of special interest because of the international extent of the poetry activities on that campus—that being held June 25th to August 5th at San Francisco State College, where THE POETRY CENTER readings are being continued on the basis of long extended plans.

With this issue of TRACE, comments upon new publications no longer appear under ADDENDA, but those mentioned later may be reviewed in the new feature, SOME ITEMS RECEIVED. Announcements for the former and review copies for the latter are invited.

Two booklets previously missed have been the first two under the imprint EMBLEM BOOKS, 147 Bloor St., West, Toronto 7, Ontario, Canada: O EARTH RETURN by Jay MacPherson, and FIVE POEMS by Daryl Hine (50c. each). . . . From MOTIVE BOOK SHOP, Lock Box 1-B, Ranches of Taos, New Mexico, U.S.A., recently came THE ANATOMY OF

PROSERPINE (\$1) by Judson Crews. . . . Available from here also is INDIAN TALES by Jaime de Angulo (\$3.75). . . . Now just published is the new poetry collection of James Schevill's, THE RIGHT TO GREET — from BERN PORTER BOOKS, 1480 Larkin St., San Francisco 9, Calif., U.S.A. (\$3.50).

. . . A new anthology, NEW AGE ANTHOLOGY OF POETRY, edited by Glen Coffield, has been released — and may be obtained from the editor at Box 2386, East Portland Station, Portland 14, Oregon, U.S.A. (\$1).

A new informative tri-annual publication has appeared from the new (Alpine, Texas, U.S.A.) address of the DIFFERENT anthology and the FLAME poetry magazine — AVALON NEWS (25c.). Announcement has been made that this also will carry some very brief original verse, and contributions are invited.

Two prize contests closing on October 15th, 1955, are those sponsored by Albert Ralph Korn and the Friends of Ralph Cheyney. The former pays \$100 and is not limited in subject matter, though limited in length (32 lines). Poets anywhere in the world are eligible to compete, and other essential details may be obtained from Lane Van Hook, 154 Pearsall Drive, Mount Vernon, N.Y., U.S.A. The latter, paying \$50, is similarly unrestricted (though maximum length is fixed at 24 lines). Details should be obtained from: RALPH CHEYNEY MEMORIAL CONTEST, Box 2032, San Antonio 6, Texas, U.S.A.

INFORMATION BLANK TO BE USED BY SMALL PRESSES

Name (and imprint/s):

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Owner and/or editor:

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Address:

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Year of original publication:

.....

Concise (a dozen words) description of editorial policies
and preferences:

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Please state whether standard royalty contracts are
provided . . . whether cash-advance is paid, or whether
authors contribute part or all of the original investment:

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Please write any other information you consider essential
to prospective candidates for publication:

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(The filling of this form entails no obligation whatsoever,
but is solely to gather accurate information for a Directory of

presses to be published in the October TRACE. Where complete information is not supplied by the press, only the name and address will be listed. All listings are free.)

Please return to : James Boyer May Post Office Box 1068
Hollywood 28, California U.S.A.

THE WINDOW

An announcement

SINCE 1950 The Window has published poetry and occasional prose, applying an editorial standard, misguided or not, that so restricted acceptances as to make frequent publication impossible.

It has been decided to broaden the scope of the magazine (marking the change with a new format) by also publishing creative writing of a different character, including what could not be classified as literature in the normal sense. The assumption is that quality of mind alone is essential and that people may have things to say that are occasional, spontaneous, and evocative without having formal unity. One could include excerpts from correspondence or notebooks, and these might be written by painters or musicians as well as by writers.

There will not be any ordinary book reviews but either sort of Lawrentian journalism (if anyone can do it) would be welcome. There may be some line drawings. Manuscripts are needed right away (payment on acceptance) but we agree with George Braque, 'To write is not to describe.'

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HOUSE STYLE

The expansion of Villiers Publications as international printers of literary periodicals and books has reached the point when a statement of typographical style, together with specimens of 'house' typefaces, should be made available to editors and publishers.

A book is now in preparation for this purpose and a copy will be sent, free on application, to any editor or publisher. Prospective editors and others interested in printing or typography may also order copies at two shillings, or fifty cents, each, post free.

Twelve publishers in the United States and Canada are presently saving up to fifty per cent of their previous production costs by printing in London with Villiers. Other publishers are advised to send a specimen to Hollywood for quotation.

ISSUE P. 24 · SCAN P. 24

VILLIERS PUBLICATIONS

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