

FOREWORD

Magazines devoted, not to current events in the overt life of the community but to the more permanent aspects of its inner life, have since the eighteenth century played a useful, indeed, a necessary, role in the development of an appreciation of the place of literature in the life of the community. There being no pressure of news value upon the writer, they afford him the opportunity to reflect on events and to form conclusions on the permanence or transience of their significance. They offer him an opening for the refined use of language which the rolling of the press denies the journalist.

In Australia such magazines — most of them have been literary magazines — have existed from convict days. Tegg's, the Australian Magazine — how many have carried this title! — Cosmos speak to us across a century of time. In our own day there have been scores of them: Vision, the Austrovert, and, of those which have latterly impressed themselves on the community, Poetry Magazine, Meanjin Quarterly, Southerly, and Australian Literary Studies. Some that have pursued a peculiar theory of philosophy of literature have not survived the rigours of finance, which depends either on the acquisition of a large circulation or on some kind of subsidy.

Acquiring a large circle of readers is no small task. The restriction of the content of a magazine to literary matters necessarily means that the many who have no time or sympathy for the fine expression of thought and feeling are not interested. So it is that some of the editors have opened their pages to political and social articles having no pretensions to style. Too often, it is clear, this grasping for a large circulation persuades editors to admit articles of doubtful merit. Indeed, there have been, among some magazines enjoying and sheltered by subsidy, instances in which editors have endeavoured to compensate for a dearth of good writing by the inclusion of material of a pornographic nature. Its aim has been to draw attention by shocking readers; it generally ends by disgusting them.

There is no substitute for good writing that deals with those challenges and problems which have been with man since first he began to write, and which are constantly recurring in new and puzzling forms. It is fitting that these challenges and problems should be faced and discussed by the University community. This has been part of the function of universities since their prototypes arose in the Middle Ages. As part of this function, University magazines have been cultivated in Australian universities since the latter decades of the nineteenth century, generally on the initiative and under the editorship of undergraduates. Such magazines fall usually into two types, one interesting itself in a journalistic way with the day-to-day affairs of the university community, the other concerning itself with the impact on that community of a particular discipline, and its inquiries.

It is natural that those members of the community who are concerned

with literature, with the use of language for the best purpose and with the greatest skill to record the richest achievements of man, should feel the urge to share their passion for the best with the whole University community — indeed, with the whole community. That the editors have the whole community in mind emerges from a glance at the Contents page of this first number of the latest venture in a University literary magazine. Literary theory, poetry, the short story, criticism — these are the staple of this number, and there can scarcely be anyone with any pretension to an intelligent interest in the realities of life who would not find something in these contributions to strike him.

Accordingly, the editors have gone beyond the University walls in search of contributions. It is good to see here a poem by Judith Wright — harbinger, I am sure, of contributions from other notable writers.

I commend this publication to all members of the community. May it be bought by a large circle of readers and go on to earn a high reputation among its fellows throughout Australia.

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