

TAG-LINE

MUSINGS?

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SINCE Sappho's INAUGURATION ONE YEAR AND A HALF ago five issues of the magazine have been released. The circulation was limited, as in the case of all non-profit magazines, and an approximate 100-125 copies of the first three issues were published. Perhaps not too oddly, the magazine was for the most part ignored, with a possible eight or ten letters being received on each issue. Of these eight or ten, an average of four readers commented on the text in such a manner as to show that they comprehended, not to say appreciated or enjoyed, the contents.

As the upshoot of this ignorance, or miscomprehension rather, it is only natural that the editors should endeavor to explain, not apologise for, our aims and—inappropriate word!—ideals. All of our readers have shown evidence that they frankly do not believe even we know these aims and ideals. 'What,' they ask, 'is the purpose of such a n unorthodox magazine?' Some become quite personal, even to the banal point of reflecting upon superfluous personalities and characteristics. However, they may be disregarded.

Not only has the quality of our verse been criticised, but also such entirely unclassifiable signatures such as sincerity, technique, and poetical content. One reader, Raymond Washington, an adolescent residing in Florida, when confronted with the large quantities of free verse which comprise almost the entire text of SAPPHO, had the following witticism to voice: 'Free verse is easier to write than the regular kind /metrical, we presume/ and is frightfully, frightfully modern and sophisticated; but these facts do not necessarily render it good.'

In saying this, Mr Washington implies that sophistication is a poor, perhaps

somewhat excessive quality, detracting from the text that assisting it, and implies too that his own poetry lacks the aforementioned quality. Nevertheless, we know that Mr Washington would be quick to deny this accusation, thereby neutralizing his criticism.

James Lynn Kepner, insistent perpetuator of the 'poetry is beautiful thought, beautifully expressed' theme, and author of two slim volumes which rehash this definition again and again, asserted: 'Your passion for what you conceive to be modern verse has seemingly led you to the conclusion that only the novel form is to be accepted. It is no great accomplishment to search a dictionary for its most obscure words and then string them meaninglessly into a loose metric form.'

It is evident here, obviously, that Mr Kepner is attempting an analysis of the poet, rather than the poet's work. As psychology, it is in a sense correct, or rather was a number of years ago when he was closely associated with our group. Since that time, however, he fails to realize that we have broadened our views considerably, while he has more or less retained the same level. The accepted level. He is attempting to judge modern theme and modern motivation from the classicist angle, an entirely impossible feat. Either he must simply say that he does not care for modern themes, or else he must temporarily climb over to our side of the fence and judge from there. Perhaps his opinion might still be the same, but nevertheless he would be able to offer some sort of foundation for his arguments, which he fails miserably to do now.

Then, our chubby friend T Bruce Yorke refers to individual pieces as 'word salads' while acknowledging that 'criticism in surrealist poetry is perhaps the hardest field of battle that the self-styled critic will ever find himself performing on.'

'/They are/ tag-line musings' cries

Bruce, 'I will dash one off myself without three minutes thought on it.'

There followed twelve unrhymed lines, which, we were bound to admit, were in the same style as those we had been publishing. So much so as to result in their immediate acceptance. The aforementioned lines appeared in the next issue and were quite widely acclaimed.

What Mr Yerke here infers is that poetry, to be poetry, must be labored over, revised, and then carefully typed for submission. The fact that his own verse Solar Perplexum, was dashed off in a few moments—unless Mr Yerke pulls our editorial leg—and was then voted as being good, damn good, is proof enough that this premise as applied to our case is all wet.

Others contented themselves with shorter criticisms: 'They sound good, but I don't understand them;'... 'Conglomeration of words without meaning or distinct thought;'... 'Pretty words;'... 'False realism;' and so forth.

Not that we've lacked praise. As a matter of fact, compliments and criticisms just about balance in the case of SAPPHO. The former we enjoy and appreciate—the latter we think stems basically from misconception and lack not only understanding but also that precious quality, imagination.

Banks Mebane puts it this way: 'I imagine that few of the readers will enjoy much of the verse /in SAPPHO/ unless they are extremely familiar with the type and have attempted to write it themselves. The person with only casual contact with poetry will probably not care for the majority of the poems. Most of them are mood pieces stripped to the barest framework and requiring active rather than passive participation by the reader.'

And, friends, that just about sums up the situation. To fully enjoy the odd little 'tag-line musings' in SAPPHO you have to

strain a brain cell o r three, wherein the fundamental difference between ours and the average types of poetry. Poetry, for the most part, is written for the reader's enjoyment and relaxation. And, by god, you can't completely relax when you've got to think a little, paint your own images, instead o f having them painlessly presented as M r Houseman o f Mr Lovecraft do.

Then again, some of our poets may be similiar to those whom Singleton mentioned in NEPENTHE: 'I suspect that the vast majority of the true poets write for themselves personally; and while each of them would probably be pleased if someday someone should like his work, he would undoubtodly refuse to change a line of i t because of /their/ opinions.'

And still another facet in this unending swirl, this time from T B again: 'I would suggest to all of your poets that you get a hold of the one monumental fan poetry publication so far to appear. I refer t o NEPENTHE...a truly great collection o f the field's cream...NEPENTHE contains meaty poetry, both in classic forms and in the free verse style which your own group of authors are attempting to emulate...NEPENTHE...is a worthy bible for the scientifiictionist fan poet.'

It so happens that of the various people who write for SAPPHO only the editors are familiar with the contents of the aforementioned magazine, and without bragging we can say that we have digosted ~~it~~ thoroughly. However, when Bruce says we ar attempting to emulate this excellent publication, he is slightly off his noggin. While the editors have sincere admiration for several of the poems contained in NEPE, they signify to us examples of types of verse that had been adopted twenty years previous.

We have times without number been compared with NEPENTHE, advised to heed its policies, views, verse forms, and even format. Well kiddies,

NEPENTHE was a good zine, but we've got a poetry magazine of our own. And we're running it to suit our own ideas. Comprenez-vous ?

We hope we have made our position clear. Not only in regard to our contents, but to our aims and policies. We do have policies, honest; we do have ideals, but most important of all we have a poetry magazine, and we intend to keep publishing it so long as we have material of a sort we like.

Carry on, dear reader, study the magazine, devote a little thought to its contents—horrors !—and after you get used to it you might even begin to like it, or at least develop the capacity to tolerate the damn thing.

That's all...

George Eby & Willie Watson
editors of SAPPHO

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