

## TRANS-PACIFIC GREETINGS

### *Meanjin's 100th Issue*

ENDURANCE IS A RARE QUALITY among purely literary magazines, and there is none in Canada which has stood the course for the past twenty-five years. We have all, therefore, to acknowledge the superior staying power of the leading Australian literary review, *Meanjin Quarterly*, which has just completed its first quarter-century of existence and published its hundredth issue.

It is an acknowledgment which, as editor of *Canadian Literature*, I make with particular personal pleasure. I remember clearly the first issue of *Meanjin Papers*, as it was called in the early years, because it appeared in the same year as I brought out the first issue of my own first magazine, *Now*. I established contact (or vice versa) with Clem Christesen, the editor of *Meanjin*, and the acquaintance has continued, over several thousands of miles and somewhat intermittently, ever since. Our magazines at that time had one thing in common; both were coterie publications, since *Now* was mainly the mouthpiece of a group of libertarian writers including Herbert Read, Alex Comfort, Julian Symons and D. S. Savage, while *Meanjin* was limited in a more regional sense, being, in the beginning at least, the organ of a group of Queensland poets.

*Now* went the way of all coterie magazines; it disappeared in 1947, in the great freeze which, in the Age of Austerity, killed off most of the literary journals that had flourished in wartime London. *Meanjin* expanded its field of vision and, largely because of the single-minded efforts of its editor, survived. In that same year of 1947 it moved from Brisbane to Melbourne, where it became for a long period the sole literary magazine of real standing in the whole of Australia. There were inevitably times of crisis, and eventually Christesen had to give up at least

a portion of *Meanjin's* treasured independence by accepting the support of the University of Melbourne, a decision which, as I know, he reached only after much heart-searching. In the event, *Meanjin* has only benefitted. Now it is larger, handsomer than ever—an enviable 144 pages—and there is no sign of any diminution of its real liberty of approach.

Still under the editorship of Clem Christesen, *Meanjin* continues to comment on writing and the world in its slightly flat-voiced manner, and it is still the journal to which one automatically turns first of all for an idea of what is going on in the Australian literary world, which, like its Canadian counterpart, is a diffuse and thinly spread community. At the same time, there has never been anything narrowly regionalist about Christesen's editing. He has been conscious of the need to maintain the links between the various English-speaking literatures, and his lists of contributors are peppered with English, Irish, American and South African names. Christesen has the kind of dry Australian honesty which has made him always ready to admit that much of what he publishes is second-rate, as is the case with the best of magazines. But he has created and kept going over the years an adequate and continuing expression of the local literary heritage of Australia, and this in the long run has become an invaluable aid to the writer and the scholar alike, and not merely within Australia.

G. W.

