

editorial

TO OTHER EDITORS

TEN YEARS would once have seemed an extraordinarily long life for a Canadian literary magazine. As late as the early 1950's, lack of patrons, lack of public interest translated into subscriptions, and even lack of writers and material made the existence of any magazine in this country precarious in the extreme. *Here and Now* vanished after a few quixotically elaborate issues; *Contemporary Verse* and *Northern Review* lived longer, but expired in the mid-50's from publishing difficulties as well as from personal circumstances in their editors' lives. *Tamarack Review* was founded to take their place, and the broad list of its first editors showed the wide feeling in Canadian literary circles ten years ago of the need for a magazine to fill the almost complete vacuum left by the expiry of *Northern Review*; they included not only a central core of Toronto writers and publishers, but also an "advisory" circle of writers outside Toronto consisting of Alan Crawley, James Reaney, F. R. Scott, A. J. M. Smith and myself. Later the advisory editors were dropped (my own experience is that such positions are rarely more than titular in any case) and Robert Weaver became the editor with a local board of associates. In this form — and with a tendency to become Toronto-oriented as well as Toronto-based, the magazine has steered through most of the decade which it has finally completed and which it now celebrates with its tenth anniversary issue.

The issue is large, as befits a celebration, and astonishingly good value for \$1.25. A touch of nostalgia has gone into the selection of contributions. Obviously the editors have been gathering material over a long period for this occasion; and a good moiety of the important figures in Canadian poetry and fiction over the past decade are represented. There are unpublished works by poets now dead,

such as Anne Wilkinson and E. J. Pratt, slices of interesting works in progress by Kildare Dobbs, Brian Moore and Mordecai Richler, an amusing fragment of a journalist's journal by Robert Fulford. Only one item in the issue is so pointless as to tempt one to accuse the editors of burning incense to an author's vanity; rather than spoil a festive occasion I refrain from naming the writer. I can only wish *Tamarack*, with the warmth of one who was in at the beginning, another decade as long and successful as that which it has already enjoyed. More I do not wish, since twenty years is probably as long as any magazine can maintain its vitality; Cyril Connolly, perhaps over-precipitately, closed down *Horizon* after ten.

Writing recently in *Le Devoir*, Jean-Guy Pilon (editor of *Liberté*) remarked that of the three best English-Canadian literary magazines, two are published in Vancouver. The three magazines he listed were *Tamarack*, *Canadian Literature* and *Prism*. If one is to accept this flattering judgment, it can only be, from the beginning of 1967, with a hesitation prompted by the appearance in Victoria of a magazine which, from its first issue, looks as if it will make the trio into a quartet. *The Malahat Review*, appearing just after *Tamarack*'s tenth anniversary, is published by the University of Victoria (with funds whose rumoured lavishness has stirred the envy of rival magazines throughout Canada) and is edited by John Peter and Robin Skelton, both of them contributors to *Canadian Literature*.

The Malahat Review is announced in an introductory circular issued by the editors as "Canada's first thoroughly international quarterly of life and letters". If one can judge from the first issue, its claims to this title are formidable, since only one of the contributors appears to be a Canadian by birth; and the general scope of its contents resembles that of such cosmopolitan magazines as *Partisan Review* or *Encounter*. The editing is imaginative and professional, the design is conservatively pleasant, and the production is that of Charles Morriss at his best. The contributors include William Plomer with an autobiographical essay, Maria Kuncewicz with a nostalgic sketch of Seville, and Ruthven Todd with "a reminiscence" of Miro which is characteristically mostly about Todd; the poems by eight non-Canadians and one Canadian (David Summers) are a remarkably good selection; there is a group of hitherto unpublished letters from D. H. Lawrence to S. S. Kotlianski. If such a standard is maintained, *The Malahat Review* should be publishing its own decennial issue in 1977.

The claims of *The Malahat Review* rather boldly affront those of *Prism*, which in recent issues has been calling itself *Prism International*, and which has certainly been broadening its field to include more translations and more American

contributions than in the past. *Prism* has also been going through another kind of transition. Until recently it was one of Canada's best amateur magazines — amateur in the sense that it was run *con amore* by literary non-professionals. Its editors usually knew a good thing when they saw it, though they did not always have the same facility in detecting a bad thing; they took chances, which quite often came off, and encouraged a respectable quota of emergent writers. Now *Prism* is changing status from the amateur to the apprentice; it has become a house organ of the Department of Creative Writing at The University of British Columbia, linked to that peculiar academic-literary between-world, the writers' workshop circuit. This is likely to be a narrowing influence countering the broadening effect of internationalism. Of the contributors to the most recent issue, no less than four are involved as teachers or students in creative writing programmes at the Universities of Iowa and British Columbia, and even those who are not so involved produce too often the kind of campus-obsessed writing which has become an American cliché during the past twenty years. In the current issue one story begins: "Registration was less than twenty-four hours off and the campus was coming to life." Another begins: "It was around six when Tom got home from the university and he was tired mentally and physically, as he almost always was after a faculty meeting." Both stories are as dull and parochial as they promise.

Prism is also publishing good material — a Montreal story by Hugh Hood and a translation of a story by the French Canadian author André Major are outstanding in this issue — but its new editors should beware of the constricting vision which often makes writers immured in universities forget that most of real life and even of real education still go on outside the campus gates.

G.W.