

Southerly: A journal that moves in the right direction

***Southerly* is Australia's oldest surviving literary magazine. The first issue appeared in September 1939, edited by R.G. Howarth, and priced at one shilling and sixpence. It contained articles by A.J.A. Waldock, A.D. Hope and H.M. Green, short stories by Kylie Tennant and Dal Stevens, poems by James McAuley and Harold Stewart — and on page 30 two poems which one might not have expected, by Enoch Powell not at that time an expert in race relations, but the University's Professor of Greek, writing in the style of Housman).**

The oldest *surviving* literary magazine — in the early years the emphasis was very much on survival. You must not believe *The Macquarie Book of Events* when it says that *Southerly* was 'initially financed by Angus & Robertson'. It would have had an easier life if it had been. Although 1939 was not the best year to launch a magazine, it appeared regularly until 1943 (with A.G. Mitchell now editor), but No. 2 of 1943 carried an announcement that there were no funds for further issues.

Twenty-five guineas . . . and *Southerly* could continue

The Chairman of the Committee declared that he had one guinea, and that if twenty-five others had the same amount, the journal could continue. The third issue did appear, jointly edited by W. Milgate and C.J.H. O'Brien. Before it had gone through the press, Milgate had been transferred to Leeton and O'Brien to Mullumbimby. *Southerly* No. 3 of 1943 is the only issue of the journal to be edited from the Intermediate High School, Leeton and the Intermediate High School, Mullumbimby. The names of the two frontiersmen are given on the inside cover, and at the bottom are listed our representatives on what has since been called the Parent Body of the English Association in England, of which we were then the Sydney Branch):

Representatives on the General Committee of the Central Association:

The Right Honourable Henry William Baron Forster, P.C., G.C.M.G.

The Right Honourable the Earl of Harrowby.

Professor J.W. Mackail, LL.D., F.B.A., F.R.S.L.

Professor W.J. Sedgfield, M.A., Litt.D.

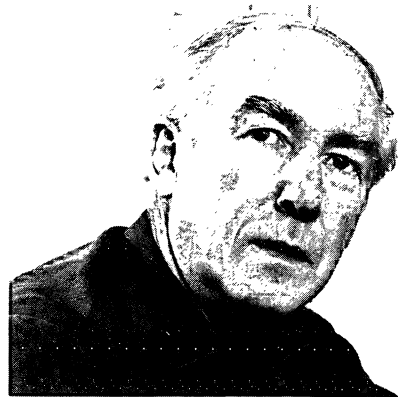
London to Leeton and Mullumbimby — what range for any magazine in 1943!

In 1944 Angus & Robertson assumed the financial risk for *Southerly* and R.G. Howarth resumed the editorship, and the price went up to two shillings. 1946 saw the larger format, and the first appearance of the puffing herub, Auster, who still graces the title-page.

The first support from the Commonwealth Literary Fund was in 1951 and has been sustained to the present by the Literature Board of the Australia Council. This has guaranteed the continuity of the magazine, and also made it possible to pay the contributors!

R.G. Howarth moved to a Chair in South Africa in 1956, and was succeeded as editor by Kenneth Slessor. In his first issue Slessor recruited as a contributor one R.G. Menzies, who rewrote the trial scene in *The Merchant of Venice* to make it legally valid. (Slessor later devoted a special issue to Lennie Lower, indicating his catholicity of taste.) During Slessor's editorship the *Southerly* acquired the sub-title 'A Review of Australian Literature', recognising the character that Howarth had given it, and setting it on a course which it has maintained.

Difficulties seem to have arisen in 1959, when John Thompson became assistant editor to help Slessor along, and in 1960 the journal did not appear at all. It did resume in 1961, still with Slessor as editor, but in the next year his other commitments meant that Slessor was



A.D. Hope, whose four-letter words caused cancellations in the 1970s.

succeeded by Walter Stone, who in 1963 was followed by myself. (I had already been a kind of acting editor in 1951, during Howarth's overseas leave.)

Martin Boyd told solicitors to sue for £500

One thing that editors of *Southerly* have in common is that they have all had full-time jobs doing something else, so that they edit the magazine as an extra commitment. This has its disadvantages, but there is also one compensation — that you don't have much time to worry. When Martin Boyd wrote to me in 1967 and said that he had instructed his solicitors to sue *Southerly* for £500 because one contributor had made the remark that "Boyd cannot write", although I was naturally concerned, I did not have time to worry. I wrote explaining that I was myself an admirer of Martin Boyd's work, but could not as editor tell any contributor what to think. The eventual outcome was the Martin Boyd number of *Southerly* to

which Boyd contributed himself. That was the beginning of the Writers in Profile series which eventually came to number twelve (with Sumner Locke Elliott) and was then followed by Poets in Profile, including such figures as Gwen Harwood and Bruce Dawe.

Some time after this Angus & Robertson suffered one of its takeovers, and the new management did not wish to sponsor a magazine.

Four-letter words caused cancellations

At the beginning of 1972 the English Association itself assumed the financial risk for *Southerly*, and in that year I would have been worried (if I had had the time) by some subscribers who wrote in cancelling their subscriptions because of a four-letter word in a poem by A.D. Hope. Later in the same year there appeared a story by Michael Wilding which caused some more cancellations.

It may have been these events which led the English Association, in revising its constitution some time after, to drop the purity clause. One of the objectives of the Association from the beginning had been expressed in terms of 'maintaining the purity of the English Language'. In the revised constitution 'purity' gave way to 'effectiveness', and one clause was inserted which I have always admired as exemplifying this. It says 'The editor of *Southerly* shall be appointed by the Committee and may be removed by it'. Could anything be more effectively put?

More references to *Southerly* than for any other journal

Southerly has been described as the most academic of the literary journals, but it has not especially sought that reputation. It is true that if one looks through the bibliography of the *Oxford History of Australian Literature*, or of the *Pelican Literature of Australia*, more references to *Southerly* will be found than for any other journal, so that the critical article which lasts may be a special *Southerly* feature. The policy of the magazine, nonetheless, is to preserve a balance of critical and creative writing. If one looks at the most recent anthology of Australian short stories, Frank Moorhouse's Penguin volume *The State of the Art*, more stories will be found reprinted from *Southerly* than from any other journal. A further principle of editorial policy is that each issue should include at least one writer who is being published for the first time. The Association itself sponsors the Butterley-Earle Hooper award for the best contribution each year by a writer who is not yet established.

Subscriptions to *Southerly* cost \$18.50 per annum and orders should be directed to The Wentworth Press, 26 Harriett Street Marrickville 2204.

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