

BACK AT ISSUE TEN OR 11, I ALWAYS THOUGHT Issue 21 would be a good number at which to put the Horse out to grass. As this plainly is not going to happen—those of us involved with the magazine are having too much *fun*—it might be worth both a little retrospection and projection.

I've always been clear that the Horse did not exist merely to buttress what may be thought of, in however minor a way, as a poetry "mainstream". I would see little point in its simply repeating the predictable *laudationes* of most of the broadsheets, for instance. I see poetry not only as fundamental but, along with its criticism and reviewing, as an affair, to some degree, of good-natured contrariety. A bit of non-programmatic and unpredictable dissension, free of personal animus and as realist in nature as a genuine poet thinking of the faults and strengths of his or her own work, is good. It helps stir up the central culture. So the Horse aims to take little for granted and, as importantly, to highlight work of value which may well be overlooked by the easy simplicities of hype and literary advertising. Credit where credit seems due, of course. It would be idiotic to deny real achievement, generally acknowledged as such, in the interests of a *programmatic* opposition. It's passionate engagement I'm interested in, not simple-minded advocacy. Anything less is mere cap-tipping.

A note of clarification about the magazine's "Scottish-American" subtitle seems due. Some folk have queried recently whether the subtitle indicates that the Horse only publishes material from America and Scotland, or by poets who are either "Scottish" or "American". The answer, as anyone familiar with the magazine will guess, is no. I intend the subtitle, in the first instance, geographically—that is, to indicate that a magazine of heft and quality does not need to be based in a literary centre such as London. In this sense, the subtitle is entirely in keeping with the journal's character. Of course, we do have a broad interest in Scottish and American poetry, but there is nothing exclusionist about this. We have always published work by authors irrespective of their geography, nationality, or anything else. Our only criterion is quality, as we perceive it.

Since the Horse was founded in 1995 much has changed in small press publishing, not least the new prevalence of the internet and the ubiquitousness of email. The latter is now indispensable in typesetting and producing the magazine. While the Horse does have a substantial web presence, it is in no danger of becoming exclusively web-based. I am a child of print culture, and regard the print magazine as the centre of the Horse's activities. When I was in America last summer there was considerable talk about "the death of the book". A senior editor at Macmillan's headquarters in New York even expressed the opinion that the internet was the ideal medium for poetry—an opinion I thought remarkable, discounting, as it had to, the sheer physicality of well-set text on a page. This "little" magazine, at least, will be unaffected by such opinions. I regard the Horse as a—hopefully beautiful—physical object as much as, let us say, a spirit container and a forum for animated conversation about poets and poetry. So here is to the next ten years. Or something like that.