

INTER-OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

911
P+P
CREATIVE WRITING

FROM: BRC

DATE: February 21, 1964

TO:

GF		
BXC	Separate copy	
<i>at - gen'l ltr file</i>		

COMMENTS: Literature Memo

SUBJECT: Questions and Issues

QUESTIONS

A. Creativity:

1. Have fellowships made any essential difference in the careers of especially creative writers of fiction and poetry?
2. Is anything important contributed besides time, i.e., recognition?
3. Can creative talent be encouraged by means other than simple patronage, i.e., by providing broadening experiences in travel, study or participation in other fields? *not the way we do it*
- * // 4. Could the RF benefit directly from supporting studies about creativity, as Carnegie has? Would we know better what to do? *what are they?*
5. Does a real problem exist in getting excellent fiction and poetry into print? There are already such reams of it. *? ask publishers*
6. It seems clear that the experience of translating foreign verse has contributed much to the development of American poets in the last fifteen years. Should the translation of foreign fiction be encouraged as a contribution to the writer's stylistic development?

B. Dissemination:

1. In view of the social and educational revolution, is there a large potential audience for some literature magazines? Could worthy magazines be helped to tap this emerging group of readers? If ALMA is an unwieldy device - being much too representative - what devices could we discover to help the best magazines get read?
2. The Ford circuit of theatres has been helped immeasurably by the services of one whizz at subscription development, provided through TCG. Could something similar be done for a dozen little magazines?

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3. Should priorities be given to the publication of well edited and annotated editions of American classics?

4. Should we keep in mind Gunther Schuller's comments about the dissemination of music in Germany, i.e., there may be altogether too much? An argument could be made that Americans have plenty of literature available and that a foundation would be silly to increase the flow.

don't think so

C. Use of Literature:

1. Without getting bogged down in endless argument, let's at least consider why we want more good writing to get to more people. For their enjoyment? Education? Edification?
2. Can criticism - in the broadest sense - help readers use literature to better effect in their lives? Or should we ignore criticism in this context and take an interest in criticism as a specialized form of literature? For example, the New York Book Review is notable, at least for me, as a collection of excellent essays, and only secondly as an aid to my reading of the books reviewed.
3. Isn't the real problem, under this rubric, the development of reading skill and taste in the school years? Might we not attack all of the problems listed above best by working toward the literature curriculum in junior and senior high schools, as has been done in math and physics?

*eyes eyes maybe**both**pt. but should feel for RF*

ISSUES

*the writing is**don't see it*

Literature is strikingly different from our other two fields. It is a private experience, and it is very difficult to assess or appreciate what goes on quietly between printed page and mind. It seems natural and easy to support the gregarious and immediate arts - drama and music - and perhaps we swim against psychological currents in attending to an art which stresses reflection, self-discipline, and aloneness. For this reason it is even difficult to take seriously the number of good books read, and we might well concentrate less on multiple reading experiences than on their intensification in various ways. It is so easy to be impressed by the pertinences of cultural activity, but very difficult to find the true issues involved in trying to increase a really civilized kind of literateness in the country.

I suspect that we may in fact do well to concentrate on "literateness" rather than "creativity" in this field. Our mass education system has worked to produce an immense body of writing in all forms. I don't see how we can increase the volume and I don't yet see how we can deal reasonably with the quality, without deciding on particular currents to support, i.e., writing of a certain style or on certain themes. In the latter case, I think that three forms are particularly interesting in America today: poetry in general, verse drama, and the essay - the first because it is strong and may get stronger, the second because it has exciting prospects, and the third because it needs such attention. I doubt, however, that our present outlook we would want to make critical choices among fields.

*good idea**agree with it**why not?*