

A NOTE ABOUT REJECTION. Of the tasks involved in producing the Horse, this is my least favourite—especially as I have been on the receiving end many a time myself. It is one major aspect of the magazine that can feel destructive, even if it is in the higher cause of producing each issue.

Many poets—they tend to be the most experienced—take rejection gracefully. Others do not. Sometimes they will gurn about not getting feedback on rejected work. There are at least two reasons for an editor's reticence. The first is that there simply isn't time—unless the editor can connect with what the poet seems to be attempting and wishes to encourage it. The second is that editors know from experience how even a casual remark in a rejection note, perhaps aimed at moderating the sharpness of a straight refusal, may have some poets worrying at it like a dog over a bone. The editor then receives a two page rebuttal of what the poet has decided is meant by his remark; or a week later a defaced copy of a previous issue thuds on the doormat, with all the poems in the issue which purportedly demonstrate the implied fault in the rejected poet's submission marked up for opprobrium. Then there are the slightly unsettling cover letters which imply that rejection of the poet's work will lead to the editor being found one day hanging from his or her shower rail with an electric drill bit embedded in the centre of their forehead. I admit to fatalism in these matters.

Jocularity aside, while it may be flattering to have one's opinion seem so important, it's also somewhat discomfiting to be regarded—unavoidably, at least as far as this magazine goes—as an arbiter of taste worth responding to in such a fashion. From the point of view both of editor and poet, however, such responses are a waste of time. If a poet really feels so passionately, and wishes to promulgate a view of poetry that their own work presumably embodies, they could found and edit a little magazine. (I am all for a culture of committed, partisan literary journals run by practising poets.) Failing that, they could find editors whose taste seems to resonate more with their own. There is always another little magazine. The field is huge.

Someone recently asked me, regarding selecting poems for the Horse, *but what do you look for?* To ask the hard question is simple. But I suppose one looks for, to name just a handful of examples, and only half-jokingly, the metrical virtuosity of a Milton, the rhythmical energy of a Jeffers, the radioactive despair of a Larkin, the cranky perfected individuality of a Crowe Ransom or Mackay Brown or Dickinson, the sheer accuracy of an Elizabeth Bishop, the unpredictable idiosyncrasy of a Norman MacCaig, the mysterious playfulness of a Frost, the grievous witnessing of a Zbigniew Herbert, the passion of a Sorley MacLean, or the exuberance and difficult optimism of an Edwin Morgan—ideally, of course. Yet not quite in the manner of these writers. One looks to be surprised by something beyond all of them, something as fresh and wholly itself as a particular light-struck tree, an arrangement of clouds, or a skanky old dog in a city backstreet. One looks for, as Marianne Moore pointed out, and insofar as one can recognise it, what is "genuine". But not just that.