

# Charles de Gaulle and *The Wormwood Review*

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FOR MOST OF ITS LIFE *The Wormwood Review* has been a one-man magazine, and as such reflects the strengths and weaknesses of its editor as well as his current and past moods. This is a desirable state for a true "little mag." since an effective little magazine should have a recognizable character, a flavor or a tone. In this commentary, therefore, the words "editor" and "Wormwood" are nearly synonymous.

Wormwood has just issued its 38th consecutive issue making it one of the longest-lived magazines on the scene. Every three years an index has been published as part of an issue; and at this time, the editor takes stock of who has been published, the viability of what has been published, the indications as to whether or not the magazine is being read (as opposed to being merely collected), the current state of finances (the editor insists that Wormwood pay its own way so as to meet one of the American definitions of success), the current state of the editor's health, and the current degree of eagerness for new writers to appear in Wormwood. With the 36th issue, such stock-taking indicated that the editor would commit himself to continuing through the 48th issue—this is a sort of contract with both readers and contributors that will be honored. There is merit in this. It is nearly impossible for a mag that exists for one or two issues to make any sort of real editorial impression. Moreover, the unfulfilled subscription acts as a deterrent for the reader to experiment further and to subscribe to other little mags as their prospecti are mailed out. A consistent refunding of cash on unfulfilled subscriptions would probably do more to create an audience for experimental literature than any amount of subsidization of little presses by foundations or by the government. Even the most enthusiastic supporters of the little magazines rarely place subscription orders since they fear that the present in-hand issue may be the last one. Readers buy the little mags at bookstores or read them in university libraries. Since it is a rare bookstore that will pay up for little mags, Wormwood has concentrated on individual and library subscribers and exposing non-payment bookstores. Still our print order is for only 700 copies and 100 of those go to contributors and another 100 are distributed as exchange copies to other little magazines. However, our influence is all out of proportion considering the remaining 500 copies. This influence can be gauged by letters to the editor, number and quality of submissions, the number of copyright releases for reappearance of work in hard-bound books, and the number of times you are investigated by the FBI and others.

On July 17, 1967, Wormwood received one of the first grants awarded by the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines. The amount was \$415.00

which Wormwood added \$129.41) to purchase an electric typewriter. Our finances were so finely balanced at the time that the \$129.41 unexpected raise in the price of the desired machine meant that we must double-up on a bonus issue (WR:27/8) or release two skinny numbers. On July 9, 1970, a letter was received from the CCLM announcing a new \$500.00 grant. This amount is targeted for collating costs, thus allowing the editor more time for editing. Prior to issue 35, all magazines were collated by the editor(s) except for numbers 2 and 3. While this funding has been greatly appreciated, the money has been used to upgrade the format of the magazine and has never played any part in whether the mag would continue or not continue publication.

The first issue of Wormwood was released in the Fall of 1959 and was edited by Alexander (Sandy) Taylor. James Scully and Morton Felix. Sandy was then a high school teacher of English, while Scully and Felix were in graduate school at the University of Connecticut in English and psychology, respectively (see WR:26, pp. 11-12). The first issue was printed by letterpress in a barn on an antique machine operated by spinning the flywheel by hand. The hands in turn had to be fueled by gin since the barn was both cold and drafty. Consequently, the second issue went to a commercial printer and the operation wound up with an \$80.00 debt. The magazine officially folded. The present editor arrived in Storrs, Conn., in September of 1960 from New Mexico and shortly thereafter met Sandy. After comparing interests, they joined forces with Bob DeVoe as art editor for a third issue released in June of 1961. Since it was also commercially printed by offset, the debt increased to \$265.00. In order to survive, the magazine went back to sweat power and adopted paper-plate offset printing. Creditors were paid monthly contributions. The format of the magazine suffered as well as readers' eyesight, but the mag became financially independent and a beginning reputation was formed. After issue 5, other responsibilities took Sandy away from direct participation; and with issue 9, the present editor took full responsibility. In the centerfold of that issue was stapled a mimeographed personal manifesto originally printed in the November-December, 1962 issues of *Mainstream* ("Little Magazines in America—A Symposium" edited by Walter Lowenfels). A more recent editorial stand may be found in WR:32 (p. 36), but there have not been many changes in attitude with time. A present-day statement of policy could run as follows below.

Wormwood tries to achieve a special tone without being characterized as a sewing circle, vanity, academic, daisy chain, vested purpose or political magazine. Wormwood cannot conceive of there ever being a good pro-Republican-poetry magazine or a pro-Democrat-poetry magazine—or of a pro-Communist, pro-Communist-, pro-Catholic-, pro-Jewish-, pro-Protestant-, pro-White-, pro-Black-, pro-Male-, pro-Female-poetry magazine. Wormwood is anti-ostrich and pro-human and pro-art since the arts represent the best of the animal called man. Wormwood cannot find clear lines separating art, literature and music and so uses the generic term of art for all such endeavours. Wormwood is also pro-crafts—crafts being necessary constructs well done with imagination and being unnecessary constructs well done with imagination. Wormwood