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Towards Poetic Unity

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RICHARD B. HAUCK

TOWARDS POETIC UNITY

A Critical Analysis

There has emerged in the field of amateur poetry (or perhaps such a thing has always existed) a style of extremely free verse. The poets of this school do not follow any patterns of rhyme, meter, or stanza. Sometimes they do not even use punctuation. Sometimes the words and lines form a special shape (such as e e cummings' spider) but more often, they form no shape at all. Whether or not the school is directly influenced by poets such as Cummings, or is the result of the amateur's usual lack of craftsmanship is a matter for research and speculation.

It is my contention that a writer is entirely free to use *any* devices, images, or words, that communicate the sense or feeling of his work. However, a work of art should approach completeness if it is going to possess those qualities which make it an enduring pleasure. That is, all its devices, images, and words should contribute to its total worth. The more of its parts that are indispensable to its purpose, the worthier the poem. This is to say that a work's length has nothing to do with its worth, as long as there is nothing in the work which does not belong, and all that the work needs to achieve a valuable purpose is present. This is ideal, but the striving for the ideal is perhaps more rewarding than the fulfillment, just as the quest for happiness must be as fine as happiness, which is the end.

Poetry is not limited by words. I have chosen to discuss a poem which I consider to have merit, but which does not depend entirely on words to achieve its purposes. I will attempt to justify some of the devices, images, and words by analyzing as an integrity Max Steele's poem, "Just You and I Against the World." (From CALLIOPE, Spring, 1957)