***First Statement***

Based out of Montreal, *First Statement* was a modernist ‘little magazine’ published between August 1942 and July 1945 for a total of thirty-three issues. John Sutherland, who was the magazine’s managing editor, founded it with the support of his sister Betty, Audrey Aikman (his future wife), R.G. Simpson, Keith MacLellan, and Mary Margaret Miller. Originally marketing itself as “A Magazine for Young Canadian Writers” and featuring poetry, fiction, editorials, and reviews, *First Statement* served as a forum for literary experimentation along modernist lines. Today, the magazine is remembered primarily for its polemical editorials and its poetry. However, many of the prominent Canadian poets who appeared in its pages (such as Louis Dudek, Raymond Souster, and P.K. Page) have been celebrated not for their contributions to *First Statement*, but for their later poetry. Nevertheless, there were exceptions to this general rule: Irving Layton’s “The Swimmer” (issue 2.10) and A.M. Klein’s “Portrait of the Poet as Nobody” (issue 3.1), for example, have both been lauded by critics and frequently anthologized. As well, Sutherland helped acquire a printing press in 1943 and establish First Statement Press, which released several notable collections of poetry, including Miriam Waddington’s *Green World* (1945).

In 1945, *First Statement* merged with another ‘little magazine,’ *Preview*, to form *Northern Review*. This merger has been the subject of much critical discussion, as has *First Statement*’s supposed rivalry with *Preview*—a largely one-sided fight which Dudek’s combative polemics in *First Statement* (e.g. ‘Academic Literature’ and ‘Poets of Revolt … or Reaction?’) or Sutherland’s pointed critiques of Patrick Anderson (*Preview*’s editor) and others seem deliberately crafted to instigate. *First Statement*’s most vocal contributors used their editorials and reviews as quasi-manifestos in which they self-identified as visceral, nationalist, proletarian poets opposed to what they saw as the disengaged, ‘cosmopolitan,’ and bourgeois verse of the *Preview* group. This apparent conflict between the ‘native’ *First Statement* poets and the ‘cosmopolitan’ *Preview* poets has persisted in literary-critical narratives; however, recent critics have demonstrated that many such distinctions between the two ‘rival’ magazines either have been highly exaggerated, or were patently false from the start. Similarly, critics have begun to shift their attention away from such tensions, focusing instead on the actual literature that appeared in *First Statement* or on the important role that women played in the editing, publishing, and distribution of this and other ‘little magazines’ in Canada.

**References and Further Reading**

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