

EDITORIAL

Although we do not run a Letters-to-the-Editor section, we certainly read the ones that we receive, however hurtful to our self-esteem they might be, with great interest and take them seriously. This is especially the case when it comes from a long-term subscriber and an author who knew *Poetry Salzburg Review's* forerunner magazine *The Poet's Voice* and has had a collection published by our press. In early December last year we received his letter in which he pointed out his reasons why he felt unable to renew his subscription to *PSR*: “Unlike *The Poet's Voice*, *PSR* has become very elitist. Some of the poetry published has been totally incomprehensible (e.g. Maggie O’Sullivan in the last issue) and the interviews purporting to explain it are equally obscure. Much of the mag seems to consist of academics writing for other academics. The interests of the non-academic mainstream poetry-lover have been left behind.”

I agree that probably some of the poetry that we publish might be incomprehensible to some readers, some of it may even be incomprehensible to me. When poems are suggested by a member of the editorial board, even if I have problems appreciating their quality, I will still print them, simply because I respect the judgement of my editorial colleagues and do not rely exclusively on my own. Although the magazine first set out based upon my own ideas as regards policy and editorial structure, these ideas have been constantly revised and redefined in the past four years by the editorial board as well as by our contributors and readers. I still hold, as I did in the first editorial, that it is the heterogeneity of an editorial board and, I have to add, the work of its contributors, that makes for the vitality and catholicity of a magazine.

When I look at the table of contents of *PSR* 6 – the issue that finally triggered off these critical remarks – and try to list the authors whose work we also published in *The Poet's Voice*, it is quite long: Wendy Saloman, David Grubb, Jennifer Johnson, William Oxley, Anne Born, James Kirkup, Jeffrey Carson, Anne MacLeod, Lynne Wycherly, and Chris Bendon. Of the other authors that we included in *PSR* 6, I am sure there are many that do not belong to what some critics call linguistically innovative poetry, a term that is, in my view, not just a misnomer but also a misdemeanour, because I think that every good poem is (linguistically) innovative in its own way. Poems that are likely to be printed in *PSR* explore the parameters which

determine at present both what is individual and aesthetic. Without trying to be elitist, such poems are based on a poetics whose aim is best expressed in the poets' desire to reach uncharted territory in their work. Such an attitude is founded on a dynamic which involves both striding forward and looking back, as well as a perpetual examination of the results.

The interviews have never been published with the intention of explaining the poems printed alongside them; they are meant to deepen and expand the reader's awareness of the poet's personality and his oeuvre as a whole. I jumped at the opportunity of printing half-a-dozen interviews of 'British Linguistically Innovative Poets', conducted by Scott Thurston as part of an academic enterprise, because of their illuminative quality and their focusing on central issues of contemporary verse. They served as a valuable adjunct and extension of the work of the poets involved and if their work was difficult there is no reason why it should not be. Difficulty, in fact, has been a defining aspect of modernity for over a hundred years. If the business of a poet was to make himself understandable, it has been well said, he would not need to write a poem. That said, I cannot however desist from pointing out that we have faithfully reflected the whole spectrum of contemporary poetry by publishing the perfectly comprehensible poetry of writers like Donal McLaughlin and Tessa Ransford and interviews with them that cannot be regarded as unintelligible either. An issue of *The Poet's Voice* had only 104 pages. Now we publish more than 200 pages per issue, that is to say, we have doubled the size of the output and still charge the same price, an aspect that we hope our readers will appreciate when they have to decide whether or not to renew their own subscriptions.

The current issue is dedicated to Holger Klein, long-term Head of the Department of English at the University of Salzburg; this, not as a further manifestation of our academic bias, but in token of appreciation of his support of the magazine over the years as well as his active interest in contemporary poetry and poets, testified to by the memorable, indeed legendary, 1996 Salzburg Poetry Conference that he organized. Holger retired from academic office at the end of the summer term 2004 but we hope and assume that his support and interest will continue. We also wish him a happy and scholarly retirement.

Wolfgang Görtschacher