

EDITORIAL

When Wolfgang Görtschacher approached me about writing the editorial for this issue, I was suddenly faced with an uncharacteristic sense of resistance against commentary. Writing nearly constantly on literature, film and cultural subjects is one thing, but when I turn to *my* specific creative realm, poetry, I attempt to keep the critic at bay – at least the self-critic who would not prevent or alter the intuitive visions and voices that are at work. Providing a setting for others is by no means a new experience for me. In Los Angeles in the late 1980s, I co-founded and edited what became a maverick literary journal, *Robwedder*, and I led the charge of the poets and writers into the pages, rooms and galleries in which they would offer their creations to an audience that welcomed my contextualization. Nevertheless, I have lately found myself shrinking from providing such tour guiding. Is it me or the current discount of words and thoughts? As one comic has lately retaliated: “Words *are* cheap. I use them every day.” Do I value poetry as some last bastion of honesty above other literary forms? Wolfgang has battled the manipulative “spinning” found in literary publication by approaching commentary in *PSR* with what I would see as the Talmudic-style side notes Walter Benjamin suggested as the appropriate method for such observations; to build on rather than to “overlay” original text. Wolfgang has also stated (*PSR* 7) that interviews “have never been published with the intention of explaining the poems printed alongside them.” I have also been a translator, which, as most translators know, means attempting to stay loyal to the original at all costs, and as most literary analysts know, means nothing less than a new collaborative work. Understanding these dualities and contradictions, what is then the basis of my crisis, one not about the word, as so many poets have had, but about the frame, the setting, the co-word – something as simple as a preface? Perhaps it is caused by the nature of our slippery hypermodern/postmodern setting. If everything is morphable and moving towards the virtual, how am I to lead the reader into words that must stay untouched and solid until individual eyes and minds rebirth them, lest they become someone’s propaganda? If I am the first lens, then the issues of impossible objectivity and the questionable existence of a non-narrative film (even in strict documentaries that have no intentionally fictional structure) provides me metaphoric illumination. I turn to Wolfgang’s editorial comments from *PSR* 4, in which he discusses the Iraq war’s effect on poets,

editors, and editorials. He refers to Jeff Nuttall's argument from the 1960s that art should be placed in the center of society, and adds that "while I have no intention of offering this magazine as a platform for agit-prop poetry, I do not see why our priorities should have changed since then." By its very quality, poetry has the unique ability to be agit-prop for itself, that is to say it requires and maintains an immediate multifaceted interpretability that is becoming undesired and nearly impossible in much of mass culture, at least from where I currently write. Such reductionism serves to silence or even worse, creates a culture that simply expects – an answer *before* the question. The very nature of poetry is utterly opposed to that anti-intellectual, anti-individualist construction.

Being able to introduce poets and critics that understand this so clearly buoys me. Michael Hamburger, the eminent literary scholar and *thrice* Schlegel-Tieck Award winning translator, whom I once asked to write a foreword to my translations of Austrian poet Hans Raimund (he declined due to immense prior commitments, but I like to bathe in the conceit that I find a reflection of my own resistance to poetry preambles in a much admired literary great), gives us work of neo-impressionistic lyricism that obliterates any notion of monolinear perception. Similarly, our selection of Anne Beresford's work asks questions shaded in an emotional chiaroscuro, questions which are perhaps only answered by their very possibility. The nature of poetic interpretation is approached in our section on linguistically innovative British poets, curated by Scott Thurston, who in this issue presents German-British artist/performer/writer/publisher Ulli Freer and his work. Whenever possible, *PSR* features works by a writer whose new publication is being reviewed in the issue. Our offering for this number is Australian poet Laurie Duggan, whose latest books are discussed by Leah Fritz. Selected poetry by one of Holland's best known poets, Toon Telegen, the late Russian-British artist and sculptor Oleg Prokofiev, Austrian arts commentator and poet Peter Pessl, and German poet and academic Monika Rinck receive their first English translations in these pages. There are long poems by Stephen Watts, Paul Perry, Christopher Gutkind and Hsien Min Toh, and the issue is filled with widely reaching English language voices from the U.S., Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, Bosnia, Switzerland, Croatia, Greece, Singapore, Poland, Serbia, Italy, a few generalized regions and even a *terra incognita* or two.

Robert Dassanowsky