

EDITORIAL

This issue is dedicated to a poet who has been crucial to my development – and also to that of my co-editor Andreas Schachermayr – as a reader and critic of poetry: Seamus Heaney.

I was at the ESSE Board Meeting in Cluj when I was informed about Heaney's death. On my train journey back to Salzburg I had plenty of time to reminisce about my first encounter with his poems in 1988 in the notorious Morrison & Motion anthology *Contemporary British Poetry*. Heaney's *New Selected Poems 1966-1987* I have often re-read and recommended to my students. It was Peter Verdonk's magnificent analytical reading of "Punishment" which quite often provided my students with their first critical experience of contemporary English poetry and, I hope, served to beget in them an enthusiasm for English poetry generally speaking. I still remember with undiminished delight and admiration attending an artwork performance at an industrial site in Upper Austria in the mid-1990s, choreographed by one of my former students. The performance was based on and inspired by "Punishment", combining dance, film, music, and Heaney's own recitation of the poem. On another occasion I accompanied Andreas to Munich when he studied Heaney's correspondence with Michael Krüger of Hanser Press, Heaney's German publisher, at the Hanser Press archive. Unfortunately, Hanser have still not got around to publishing Heaney's last collection *Human Chain* (2010) in German translation. It is rumoured that the reason for this is Faber's overpriced charge for German translation rights which Hanser is not prepared to pay. Certainly there is no lack of translations of the volume; there is at least one excellent translation available for publication. So it does seem as if the main reason for Hanser's failure so far is to be sought in Faber's strict economic policy. The fact is that while Heaney's sales constitute the largest chunk of Faber's income, his sales in the German countries have not achieved the degree of development they are capable of. It is sad that a short-sighted policy should curtail the spread of Heaney's reputation in the German world and that German readers are to be thus deprived of an acquaintance with the last volume produced by one of the great lyrical voices of international poetry, the Nobel Laureate of 1995.

In his Nobel Prize Lecture Heaney defined the credit of poetry as "the power to persuade that vulnerable part of our consciousness of

its rightness in spite of the evidence of wrongness all around it". I became conscious of what Heaney meant by the wrongness all around us in a particularly new context when Ira Lightman told me in mid-February about Christian Ward and the plagiarism his poetry has been charged with in a number of instances. Teaching at a university and serving as Director of Studies implies, at least nowadays, unfortunately, an almost day-to-day confrontation with the issue of plagiarism. However, until then it had never occurred to me that a poet could have plagiarised a colleague's poem. Ira listed in his email more than a dozen cases of plagiarism, among others from Sandra Beasley, Michael Donaghy, Helen Mort, Grace Nichols, Matthew Olzmann, Paisley Rekdal, and Owen Sheers. These were entered in poetry competitions and published in magazines such as *Decanto*, *Envoi*, *Iota*, and *Poetry Wales*. Ira suggested I compared "At Last, Fire Seen as a Psychotic Break" by the late Sarah Hannah with "Fire as a Metaphor for Psychosis" that we had published under Ward's name in No. 16 (Autumn 2009). Comparing the two texts was admittedly an upsetting experience, as I arrived at the conclusion that 85-90 per cent of Ward's poem was copied from Hannah's work. Beasley mentions our case in an article on Ward's multiple plagiarisms that was published in *The New York Times* two months later. This was certainly not how I wanted the magazine to enter the pages of one of America's foremost newspapers. Only a month later Ira informed me of another plagiarist, David R. Morgan; we had printed two poems under his name in No. 19 (Spring 2011). As responsible editors we certainly sat back and searched our souls asking ourselves whether or not we could have avoided these, to put it mildly, unpleasant experiences. At the end of the day editors have to admit that despite their own expertise as experienced readers of poetry and even with the help of the Internet they will not be able to exorcise plagiarism completely. Poetry publishing works on the basis of trust between publisher and poets that the poems the latter submit are their own. If the practice were to continue unchanged and we arrived, inevitably, at the conclusion that we had to mistrust our poets and check every line of a poem accepted for publication, we would have to rethink our responsibilities as editors and whether we could even come close to fulfilling them by continuing to publish *Poetry Salzburg Review*.

Wolfgang Görtschacher