

EDITORIAL

Welcome to *Poetry Salzburg Review* 36. We live in strange times. The word ‘unprecedented’ has been used in unprecedented quantities, ditto ‘uncertain’. Wherever you live, the chances are you have experienced some form of ‘lock-down’ over the past few months, and maybe there are more to come. Here in Halifax, England, we are in and out of local lockdowns and there may be another national one.

What does all this mean for poetry? Well, there seems to be an ‘unprecedented’ number of poets writing about Coronavirus. Many websites have been launched encouraging this activity. There is a pandemic of pandemic-poems. Despite the seriousness of the current situation, I suppose anything that gets people writing is, to some extent, to be welcomed. (Please don’t misunderstand me, I’m not welcoming COVID!).

But however many poems are written, I still wonder how many people read them. Poetry is a minority sport. Jeremy Paxman (the BBC journalist and perhaps something of a polymath) once commented that, these days, the ‘poetry community’ only speaks to itself. This might sound a bit harsh, but I think there is a certain amount of truth in it. Poetry is changing from a literary form that many general readers once enjoyed, to a more restricted activity where others’ poems are only read by other poets. Maybe, to some extent, this was always the case, but I think the situation has become more acute.

Identity politics/poetry is the big thing now, and a lot of poems tend to focus on this. No bad thing, again, but what I like about the submissions we receive at *Poetry Salzburg Review* is their eclectic span. We want that to continue. We do not want to become a sort of poetic echo-chamber which publishes only what appeals to and feeds any current zeitgeist.

I think we have achieved this in our latest issue. If the current parlous state of many nations’ health has engendered a poetry boost, that is great – maybe, as the saying goes, it’s an ill wind that blows nobody any good! But I hope that issue-led poetry (whatever the issue) does not discourage people from writing (and reading) a whole breadth of good poetry, whatever the political, social, ethnic or gender take or basis of those poems..

We need to get back to a time (welcoming all the much-needed enlightened thinking of today) where the ‘general public’ see poetry as an essential literary engagement and facility, like the best novels. Here at *Poetry Salzburg Review* we strive to publish the best poems we can, whatever the subject matter. Very best wishes to you all, and good health.

Keith Hutson