

EDITORIAL

I was recently commissioned to report on and review a little magazine that describes itself as a “radical poetry magazine”. Its editors define the magazine’s policy as anti-war, left-wing / socialist, anti-imperialist (particularly against US and British imperialism in Iraq), anti-establishment, and anti-royalist. Although one may have sympathies as regards at least some of these antipathies, the subversiveness and radicalism of the poetry published in this magazine is usually restricted to the socio-political attitudes and does not, sadly, extend to form and experiment with language. I agree with Rod Tolchock, that “by resisting the destruction of language, poets can give a real alternative to US imperialism”. It would indeed be refreshing to read more poems that actually do so, for instance applying experimental techniques by way of Victor Shklovsky’s “defamiliarization process”. Many of the political poems that we receive, with their thematic head-on approach and sardonic wit (often overdone), seem to be either preaching to the converted or are straightforwardly didactic. I believe that editors should not merely evaluate the thematic radicalism of a poem but should exercise critical judgement more with regard to the potential technical radicalism of its form and language. Poets for their part ought to try to attract and educate a readership by making, to have recourse to Shklovsky once again, “objects ‘unfamiliar’, [...] forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged.” This approach is, unfortunately, seldom found in the poems submitted to *Poetry Salzburg Review*.

In this context I would like to draw our readers’ attention to the South African poet Ingrid de Kok. She is the author of, among other works, *Seasonal Fires: New and Selected Poems* (2006) and a collection of essays, *Spring Is Rebellious: Arguments about Cultural Freedom* (1990). Instead of waxing eloquent and luminous about her, I shall limit myself to quoting another critic who is so already. Simon Lewis wrote about her work in 2002: “There is still lyric poetry after Auschwitz, and on the cusp of a new century, facing backwards to the barbarism of South Africa’s recent apartheid past while eyeing the ongoing catastrophe of the AIDS epidemic, Ingrid de Kok’s flawless lines and un-illusioned observation suggest that without such stubborn hope the terrible

beauty of tragic events is lost and we are left with meaningless, inexplicable calamity”. In free as well as formal verse and by using simple diction, de Kok offers, in the words of Robert Pinsky, “a vision of her country through the lens of poetry”. In an essay entitled “A Sort of Difference”(1989), de Kok summarizes her poetical credo: “There is, I think, enormous scope for a poetry to develop which investigates and honours those women who have been and continue to be resistant and creative, and those women who’ve told stories and made history, and which can re-evaluate existing political, social and philosophical values.” In her four collections of poetry de Kok has made an enormous and invaluable contribution to establishing such a poetry in South Africa. In this issue we have the pleasure and privilege of introducing our readers to some of her new poems.

On another matter: we have recently received submissions of reviews, although we have always stressed – both in our policy statements on our website and in previous editorials – that we prefer to commission our reviews. We select books for review from the huge pile of review copies that we gratefully receive from international poetry publishers. But we also scan the websites of poetry presses and request additional review copies from their publicity officers. Once we have selected collections for review, we offer them to potential reviewers. Due to our positive reviews policy reviewers may return books they do not like. We believe in publishing in-depth review-essays usually covering 3-4 collections. Although reviewers are offered enough space to develop their ideas and criticism, it is nonetheless not possible for them to quote extensively from poems. Thus we have decided to introduce a new feature with this issue: we have invited reviewed poets to submit new poems which are, if selected, published alongside the review-essay that focuses on their collection. We hope that our readers find pleasure in this new addition to the magazine.

Wolfgang Görtschacher