

“AS THE DELUGE SUBSIDES AND THE WATERS FALL SHORT WE SEE THE DREARY STEEPLES” (EDITORIAL)

Back when I was hosting *The Interpreter's House*, editorials were always something I looked forward to writing; coming, as they did, at the end of a lengthy process of reading and selecting submissions – whittling them down through the Yes/No and Maybe piles – sending out acceptances and encouraging rejections, chatting with my Deputy-Editor, liaising with Jenn Shaw over the cover image and sorting out launch readings at venues that stretched from Brighton to Shetland. Editorials give one the chance to kick back and leverage a few hard-earned opinions into a, hopefully, entertaining curtain-raiser to the writing within. They also provide a platform to get stuff off your chest, like the Festivus scaffolding pole from *Seinfeld*: “I got a lotta problems with you people. Now, you’re gonna hear about ‘em.” Ah, the sweet airing of grievances, without which the poetry world would probably fail to turn; reason being, as Seamus Heaney once famously observed, because the stakes are so low. However, I’m not the sheriff of this town, so confess to feeling slight trepidation towards this my first welcome to you all.

What I can promise here, is a very fine issue of poetry and critical prose that mixes well-known names with those perhaps less familiar but no less deserving of their inclusion. As well as fine poetry, from the likes of Sean O’Brien and W. D. Jackson, Issue 41 boasts a fascinating selection of longer prose pieces. The excellent Glyn Pursglove supplies two, the first of which focuses on Isobel Williams’s *Switch: The Complete Catullus* (Carcenet), the other on W. D. Jackson’s *Opus 1* (Shoestring Press). Sean Howard reviews four titles from the Oskana Poetry & Poetics series, published by University of Regina Press. Jeff Gundy critiques new collections by John Greening, Sean O’Brien, Graham Fulton, and David Kinloch. As befits an English-language magazine published in Salzburg, we have, then, a truly transnational and generously peopled issue. Perhaps, it is the very internationalism of PSR, which provides us with *my* issue here, so gather round the pole and listen up.

The absurd post-Brexit practicalities of producing an English-language literary magazine intended for a largely UK readership from a base in Europe, is, perhaps, not the sort of minutiae that occupied voters’ minds back in 2016 when they put their ‘X’ in the box marked: ‘Leave’. After all, scant regard was paid – even within government – for much bigger ticket items, like the effects of Leave upon the peace process in

Northern Ireland, to conjure up just one example local to myself. The whole Brexit episode was, after all, a sloppily written Kiplingesque poem, crying out for a decent editor. The ensuing division and culture wars of England's green unpleasant land is not, however, what I am here about. I simply ask the reader to consider the nuts-and-bolt ramifications of Brexit upon this small acre and humbly offer up its synecdoche. Print media in general, and literary magazines in particular, are gasping for air, right now. The past few years have seen the disappearance of many – even well-established ones like *AMBIT* – or the migrating of some, like *The Interpreter's House*, to an online environment. Even back in pre-Brexit days, postage costs outside of the UK were eye-watering; with the result that, for every sale or contributor copy leaving home waters, the publication lost money from its coffers, ear-marked for future issues. Gradually, the law of diminishing returns kicks in and a magazine is slowly strangled by its own noble ambition to provide a global platform for good writing and new voices. Should that magazine also try to remain affordable or lack wealthy patrons, then Heaney's low stakes start to sizzle.

Consider, then, the plight of the very journal you hold in your hands: produced in Europe for mail-out to a mainly UK-based readership. Before Brexit, the UK had free movement of goods between EU countries, meaning that no duties applied when shipping poetry from the EU to the UK or the other way round. The Brexit agreement meant not only leaving the EU but also that all associated benefits are no longer applicable. All of which means that *Poetry Salzburg Review* is a budding casualty, among the many, resulting from that largely mythic taking back of control. Postage costs of sending the journal from Austria to the UK have spiralled and Parnassus now comes at an even higher price. Unfortunately, poets are not known for the size of their disposable incomes and poetry readers who do not, themselves, write, tend to occupy endangered species lists alongside the likes of the pangolin and pygmy hippo.

These are, admittedly, prosaic considerations for a poetry magazine, but, lest you retain some sense of glamour in this game, they are crucial to our existence as a platform for new writing. Help is at hand, but in a way so random, it ought to double-down on one's sense of absurdity: my recent move to Donegal means we can now ship within the EU and I then parcel up your copies of *PSR* before slipping across the border to Derry to post them out at UK rates. But, should there ever be a border poll, Englander, watch out.

Martin Malone