

Editorial

'*Stand* is produced communally...'. Jon Silkin wrote this in 1971 as part of his Introduction to *Poetry of the Committed Individual*, the anthology of poetry from *Stand* published by Gollancz and Penguin in 1973. His claim was partly about the editors and how they decided what should appear: did they take majority votes? No, they relied heavily on individual feelings. But it was also, surely, about the sense that the magazine enables poetry to be part of a process of 'social communicativeness and usefulness'. To be a committed writer was to be caught up in the demands of the post Second World War world. They were demands made on society as a whole, but crucially also, on the individual. As writers and readers in the 60s and 70s we were part of a moving, potentially catastrophic society. And the movements and catastrophes were largely defined by 1914–1918 and 1939–1945. To understand the continuing threats, and to guard against the worst, required active involvement against overwhelming odds. The world of art and literature was part of the political process; '...perhaps society would be even more cruel were it not for these minimal restraints and exempla that art has made'. *Stand*, in this very broad sense, was part of a communal activity. In a sense, as writers and readers, we were all still in the wars – part of their causes and effects. Surely, we could do *something*. This was what Jon Silkin felt and it was a commitment that many shared.

In 2002 where is *Stand* now? We would like to think that it will

continue to see itself as a means of use and of communication. We would like to think that the work that appears in its pages will, in some sense, reflect a commitment to the importance of speech, articulation and questioning. It will see the individual in a social context that makes new and often terrifying demands.

In an interesting recent survey of contemporary journals, Michael Schmidt expressed the hope that *Stand* will 'find its feet and its committed readers again'. How interesting it is that the crucial link he sees between poetry and criticism – as it has been evident in his own work in *PNR*, as well as in *Stand* – seems so lacking in the other journals he mentions. He notes the apathy that perhaps surrounds contemporary literary culture in Britain. It is hard to understand this apathy in the post-11th September world, when conflict in the Middle East is growing and when all 'advanced' countries are buying new stocks of small-pox vaccine in case the disease should be used as a weapon of mass destruction. It is an unexpected and strange context in which to locate a debate about the role of literature and the literary magazine. However, perhaps the destruction of the World Trade Centre and the American focus on terrorism highlights anew the individual conscience and consciousness. If the 'committed *individual*' seemed anomalous in the Cold War world of blocks and party lines in 1971 perhaps we need to re-examine the concept in 2002. We hope that *Stand* will help.

We are pleased that this issue, published after a long interval, contains writing by people who have never appeared in *Stand* before, as well as poetry and prose by established figures for whom *Stand* has been an important means of communication in the past.

Ken Smith and Rodney Pybus have both edited the magazine. And we are very pleased to publish translations by John Heath-Stubbs, the first Gregory Fellow in Poetry at the University of Leeds. We are proud to publish work that has been sent, unsolicited, by young and new writers from Britain, America and Europe, as well as work by established writers such as Fergus Allen. We hope to maintain *Stand's* historic sense of commitment in our complex and threatening society, and a sense of open-ness – to new writers and new writing.

The long interval since the last issue needs a brief explanation. The 'New Series' made a gallant start but, we discovered, many readers felt that it was no longer an accessible purchase for student or subscriber. Individual issues were of book length. There was much good writing but, we fear, the costs were unsustainable. So, we have been spending some time in thinking through what we want *Stand* to be. We are very happy that it should function in part for and through education. The links with the University of Leeds will become more active; this was one of Jon Silkin's hopes for the magazine before he died. But, crucially, we want to re-establish it as an approachable location for important writing. This year we hope to make up for lost time by shortening the period between each issue, and we will be keeping to about 64 pages in the 'old' format in order to give each issue a particular identity. Individual future issues will highlight new writers, work by Michael Hamburger, Geoffrey Hill and Jeffrey Wainwright, and work that reflects, and reflects on, the world after 11th September. Our new editors will bring a particular approach to each issue. We want

Stand to be worth your while; for you to be part of the community that produces it and needs it; for the world to be less cruel, perhaps, because it is here. We also hope that, to use another word that Jon Silkin used about working with *Stand*, it will give us a 'joyful time'.

***Stand* 1952–2002: our 50th anniversary**

Stand first appeared in London in February 1952. There were twelve issues before it closed for lack of funds with the winter issue of 1956–57. It was re-started in Leeds with issue Vol. 4 No. 1 in early 1960. Between 1965 and 1999 it was edited in Newcastle on Tyne and then moved back to Leeds in that year. Including the 8 issues of the New Series there have been 170 since it started. With this issue, numbered Vol. 3 No. 2 / Vol. 3 No. 3 (171), we celebrate the magazine's Fiftieth Anniversary. We hope that each issue in 2002 will acknowledge something of *Stand's* strengths – our association with particular new and established writers – and our exploration of some of our themes and values. By the time our second (172) and third (173) issues appear we hope that readers and writers will have found that *Stand* has become something special, and that writers and readers will be 'committed' to it. We welcome new readers and new contributors. We hope that you, the reader, will take out a subscription (see the details on the editorial page), and that you will let us know what you think about *Stand* and its future.