

How Immaculate was my Contraption?

WORKERS OF THE WORD, UNITE! was the motto of the Welsh Union of Writers at its formation. John Osmond of HTV, writer and former editor of *Arcade*, reported on its conference at Coleg Harlech in September 1984 in *Radical Wales*, No. 5 (Winter 1984). Now, he has edited the Union's first *Register*, devoted largely to that conference, under the title *Future of the Word* (contact Nigel Jenkins, 124 Overland Road, Mumbles, Swansea SA3 4EU).

Its style is what is called 'professional', a term customarily employed with an accompanying sniff, particularly in Wales, with its eisteddfodic and workerist tradition of amateurism, where the Welsh Arts Council pays out money to writers to make sure they preserve their amateur status, in curious parallel to Welsh Rugby.

The cover, designed by David Pearl, features a terrifying mask, with gaping mouth, contributed by David Kemp from his exhibition *Immaculate Contraptions*, which opened the Glyn Vivian sculpture park at Swansea.

The words the mouth utters are less alien. John Osmond's own preface is dominated, understandably, by the Welsh Arts Council, the new *Planet* edited by Ned Thomas and his own experience of *Arcade*. Ned Thomas, in the first number of that *Planet*, manages to mention *Rebecca* as well. We are sure readers of *Radical Wales* will be hard pressed to think of any other English-language magazine in Wales.

John Morgan, novelist, opera librettist, former deputy editor of the *New Statesman* (circulation in Wales: 180, i.e. one-twentieth of *Radical Wales's*) *Panorama* man and co-founder of HTV, is the Union's Chairman (a somewhat whimsical title for a union which numbers 48 women among its 198 members). He contributes a characteristically genial essay. He confesses himself surprised by the eloquence of the Union's first and futile submission to the Arts Council . . . 'a qual-

ity old prose often acquires, like verdigris.'

It is not verdigris but vertigo which readers are likely to acquire from the essays here by John Arden the playwright and Owen Dudley Edwards the pan-Celtic polymath, who weave arabesques around The Concept of The Word: the bold, curvilinear artistry of the Celtic Tradition, no doubt. We are brought closer to earth by Dafydd Elis Thomas on 'Who controls the word?' and have our faces rammed into it by Duncan Bush on censorship (an anticipation of the Union's September conference at Dyffryn House, Cardiff, where Kim Howells of the NUM will speak).

The human atmosphere of the conference (whose assets seem to have been distinctly

liquid) is abundantly illustrated by John Tripp on form and best of all, perhaps, are eleven fine poems from seven poets presented by Robert Minhinnick. Two of them, we are happy to report, have already appeared in *Radical Wales*.

There are some intriguing photographs, not least of the two secretaries in sceptical, possibly even bilious mood: Janet Dubé, who has graced our pages with her challenging verse and Nigel Jenkins, whose Triads march across the pages of this issue (our readers might also be interested to see what Nigel looks like with his clothes on).

Inevitably, the shadow of the Arts Council and of *Planet* falls across this production. All the more intriguing to note that, of the twelve advisors of *Planet*, five are stalwarts of the Writers' Union; so, of course is the editor himself. Any wonder that literary-political quarrels in Wales often assume the

foetid ferocity of a family row? Robin Reeves in this anthology gives a precise account of the relations between both *Arcade* and the Union and the Arts Council. We are sure Emyr Price of *Y Faner* would have something to say. So, no doubt, would Meic Stephens and Walford Davies! We will have something to say as well.

We have something to say to our readers, too. Many of you will also be writers. You should support both the Writers Union and *Planet* — provided you put your best stuff into *Radical Wales* first.

John Morgan, in his piece here, acknowledges that the work of a writer is lonely, and gloomy with it. He concludes that what the Welsh Union of Writers needs is . . . 'about one hundred more lonely, gloomy figures and especially one who would care to be Chairman (sic).'

Come on, give them a hand.

our remnant of

Triads of the Isle of Britain

THESE triads of the twentieth century, part of a longer sequence, take off from Iolo Morganwg's eighteenth century compilation *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* which purports to be a compendium of ancient British history and legend, some of which may be ascribed to the early bards and much of which may be the fruit of Iolo's famously elaborative genius. The most accessible translation appears in *The Triads of Britain* edited by Malcolm Smith (Wildwood House, London, 1977).

The oral Celtic societies, of the Irish and Welsh in particular, relied heavily on triadic forms for the transmission of history and traditions as well as for the cataloguing of a wide range of information. The form, as shown in *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*, is that of a triple grouping according to theme — "The three disloyal tribes of the Isle of Britain" — rather than period or cycle as in a modern history; they are often presented in contrasting pairs, the three "beneficial assassinations" being followed by the three "infamous assassinations". Some are brief and to the point — merely, it seems, a record; but many more are wildly inventive satires or burlesques on a pre-Saxon 'heroic age', with a language to match.

My triads attempt to echo, in contemporary terms, something of the spirit of the earlier ones.

Nigel Jenkins

There are given three names
to this our remnant
of the Isle of Britain, of
Honey Isle, the Sea-girt Green:
Cymru she is called
by those who share bread
in her first and last tongue;
Wales she is called
by those who share bread
in her second that was first
the invader's tongue;
and England is she called
by certain Taffs abroad
who share no bread
and wish for us nothing
but stranger-ness and silence.

Teatr Osmeo Dnia: From Poland to Wales

DURING September 1985 Cwmni Theatr Brith Gof is privileged to welcome to Wales four members of the renowned Polish theatre group Osmeo Dnia (Eight Day). They come to present *Auto Da Fe* a performance of great power and emotion which closely reflects the contemporary Polish experience. Meanwhile their four colleagues remain in Poland unable to perform publicly nor to obtain visas to travel abroad. Osmeo Dnia are subject to personal persecution not only because of their work but also their known support of 'democratic opposition'.

Brith Gof is eager that as many as possible should have an opportunity to see and meet Osmeo Dnia and is thus organising a programme of performances, seminars and meetings. If you would like to know more please write to the address below. And if you think you could organise a performance or offer hospitality to the group in any way please contact Brith Gof.

It is essential that Polish authorities witness an irresistible swell of support for the group. Only then will they be able to continue their remarkable work.

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