

## **Editorial**

Welcome to *Language, Culture, Environment*. We are very pleased to be able to bring this volume to you from our offices at KIMEP University, Kazakhstan. It is an honour to be hosting one of the greatest contributors of our time to modern poetry, Professor Michael Schmidt, OBE.

Michael spent his early life in Mexico before studying at Harvard and then Wadham College, Oxford, where his potential as a writer and editor was quickly realized. His formation of the Carcanet Press in 1973 was to prove a crucially important step in the careers of many poets who subsequently enjoyed international recognition and success.

It was as the Professor of Poetry at the University of Manchester that I first became acquainted with Michael Schmidt. His manner of teaching was rather different from that of many of the other Professors who stuck rigidly to the Oxford English syllabus. Michael was relaxed, for one thing, and seemed to be permanently smiling. He would wander into his Poetry seminar, usually already in conversation with a student who had collared him in the corridor, relax in his chair, smile, of course, take a pinch of snuff, and begin his introduction. Whether he was before a group of students or interviewing a visiting poet, Michael emitted an aura of happy relaxation that immediately made everyone feel at ease. In his Creative Writing seminars, I witnessed first-hand how carefully he managed the heart-felt outpourings of emerging poets. No doubt, it was owing to these personal qualities as much as to his vast knowledge of poetry that he was to become one of the great guiding lights in the world contemporary poetry.

Inspired by him to research the Carcanet archives at the John Rylands Library for a possible Ph.D. project, I reflect upon how different my life would have been if I had not stumbled into the Keeper of Early Printed Books, on one of his more gregarious days. He insisted on setting out a selection of sixteenth-century Bibles for me to play with – much to the audible consternation of the Head Librarian. However, it is from these few weeks in the Carcanet

## *Editorial*

archives that I understood the enormous role that Michael Schmidt played in the lives of the poets about whom he subsequently wrote his seminal work.

Honoured with an OBE by the Queen for his contributions to poetry, Michael creates, teaches and writes about poetry while managing the Carcanet Press. Here, at his headquarters in Manchester, I recently had the honour of interviewing him about his own life as a poet, a transcript of which appears here.

Michael has selected the poems in this volume and has written short commentaries to create useful contexts for our readers. I asked Michael to name his favourite poem from among those he has chosen. Professor Adil Valikhanov, who is the Head of the Department of Translation at KIMEP University, has translated it into Russian. May it be the first of many.

It only remains for me to thank all of our contributors, international reviewers, associate editors and the CHE *LCE* journal team. We welcome thoughtful contributions to our progress on the planet and look forward to fruitful collaborations.