

## Editorial

IF YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF THE seventeenth-century clergyman Thomas Webbe, you're in for a treat. The first item in this issue is a copiously researched account of his career by Ute Dreher. But be prepared for surprises; Webb was not your average country parson, and Dreher is unafraid of telling us what made him different. I won't spoil the fun by giving you any more information than that.

You'll also find in these pages a subtle enquiry by Page Richards into the rhetoric of Whitman's prefaces to *Leaves of Grass*, and a review article by John E. Crowley which evaluates recent books about the self-image of the British Empire. You'll find fiction that tricks you into guilty compliance with some pretty questionable characters, and you'll find poetry that confesses exactly the secrets we most want to hide. I'm thinking here explicitly of "Not Your Personal Ashtray" by Mark Paterson and "Milk" by Crystal Hurdle, but I think the enticements of complicity and confession are available, perhaps less directly, in other narratives and other lyrics too. Paterson's story, by the way, is appearing simultaneously in his collection, *Other People's Showers*, published by Exile Editions Ltd.

On two previous occasions (78.2 and 81.2) we've published issues dedicated entirely to creative writing. The quantity and quality of creative work that arrives on my desk each week is a constant reminder that the art of writing is alive and well. It is also the reason why I'm obliged to send out numerous rejection notices to authors who are in fact doing very good work. In response to these circumstances we're planning another Fiction and Poetry issue for Spring 2004 (84.1). Contributions of short fiction or poetry for this issue should reach me by 30 January 2004.

R.H.