

The Urgency of Identity: Contemporary English-Language Poetry from Wales



This anthology of poems and interviews is a double revelation for readers, presenting the important English-language Welsh poets of the 1980s and 1990s, and illuminating the complexity, constant flux, and political implications of the poets sense of inherited culture. These poems have been rigorously selected to showcase the Welsh poets skill and seriousness, and the sensuous density of their language, which, like that of contemporary Irish poets, offers the reader a striking depiction of the landscape and society. The featured poets practise their craft amid a sharp cultural and political debate: although the number of Welsh citizens who do not speak Welsh has grown substantially in recent decades, cultural nationalists view English as the language of oppression whose dominance erodes the richness and depth of local custom and history. Thus, like Latino writers working in English in the US, the English-language Welsh poets create a divided art. Included in the anthology are John Davies, Gillian Clarke, and R.S. Thomas, among others. A collection of fascinating interviews with the poets rounds out this exploration of the Welsh-English cultural divide. David Lloyd has written a lucid introduction that provides the historical background of the cultural debate over language, and alerts the reader to the virtues of each poet.

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