

POETRY AWARDS

The Literary Award (Adult Prose and Poetry) is adjudicated by Mr Fergus Mulligan, publisher and writer. Fergus is from Ballinamore, now living in Dublin where he runs a publishing company, www.publishing.ie. He is married with three grown up children.

FIRST PRIZE *Slant-light*, Monica Corish

Absolutely beautiful poem about learning to appreciate the things we have, when seen through the eyes of people living overseas. Simply constructed with a fine economy of language, this poet has real talent.

SLANT-LIGHT

Monica Corish

In Turkana, the women questioned me about my country:
Are there scorpions there, and camel spiders?
They had heard tell that there are countries on God's earth
that are free of camel spiders.

No camel spiders, I told them, nor scorpions, nor snakes,
and rain all year round,
and always green,
and rivers that never run dry.

God, they said,
must love your country very much.

*

What I noticed, coming home,
was the light, the way it slants.

The Liffey with her quays and buildings,
the mountains above Lough Melvin,
the rain falling in veils over Inishmurray and Slieve League,
everywhere lit by braided light, shot through with subtle shadow.

You can live your whole life and not know
that you are surrounded by a rare and generous beauty;
you can be a swimmer in the waters of the everyday
and not know that you are blessed.

SECOND PRIZE *As if*, Kevin Patrick

Powerful poem with great resonance, rooted in a clever play on Kipling's poem, criticising xenophobia, austerity and intolerance and those who profit politically and financially from them. This is a challenging topic for everyone but especially for us Leitrim people right now.

AS IF

Kevin Patrick

If you can close your borders when all about you
Are opening theirs - to let all through.
If you distrust those 'South of Calais'
But take allowances - and their money too.
If you can wait and keep 'em waiting
To be lied about and tried
Or stir all up to make them hated
With Daily Papers full of lies;

If you can dream - by making dreams your master;
If you can shrink - all budgets without blame.
If you can meet ambition with disaster
And treat all opposition with disdain.
If you can seek to hide the truth plain spoken
With Brexit lies for Brexit fools.
Or blame the poor, whose lives are broken
By your policies (that bending) break the rules;

If you can make the best of privileged beginnings
To risk public money at private loss.
And write it off to start another innings
In your Tax Haven. Like a Boss.
If you can force all hearts and nerve to win you
Another term - though all is gone
With your, 'seats thinning' and so continue
With empty lies that say "Hold on!"

If you can talk at crowds yet keep the curfew
On privacy and human rights.
If neither foes nor foreigners can hurt you
As you restrict all EU flights.
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
These sixty years your Empire's gone
Yours is worse than ever was all in it
And - you've become - your country's con!

THIRD PRIZE *The return of the prodigal son,*
Nora McGillen

An excellent, nostalgic poem on the theme of the returning emigrant who is too old to be the prodigal son but late in life rejoices in the beauty of his home- stead while lamenting things he has lost forever.

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON
Nora McGillen

He looks different from the painting.
He is old now, one eye is without sight.
He carries a blackthorn stick,
And can no longer kneel.
His father waits no more.
Today he has taken the boat from Holyhead,
And driven all the way home on weeping roads.
There are no neighbours to greet him.
The wild flowers still bloom miraculous
Along the roadside in wild bursts of red.
Long ago he let go of the commandments,
But the prayers are coming back to him in gushes,
Like the water breaking against the side of the boat -
Great round repentant circles.
The salt taste is raw on his lips
As on the day he left.

**THE TIME FOR BEDTIME
STORIES IS OVER**

Monica Corish

i

Once upon a time
the great white bear
swallowed the village whole.
Once upon a same time
the big-tooth wolf
swallowed the grandmother whole.

Then the hero came with his long blade.
The wolf died, the leopard, the lion,
the great white bear,
and civilisation flourished -
libraries, roads, engines, hospitals, iPhones,
troll wars, water wars, combat drones -

ii

The time for bedtime stories is over,
the once-upon-a-time of the hero,
wolf-slayer, bear-baiter,
god of boom and bust,
the once-upon-a-time of the blade.

And who will stop the hero's race -
dead wolves, dead bees,
the melting ice,
the drowning great white bear?
It's time to take the hero's place.



*Fr Kevin O'Rourke and his
brother, Michael*

FR KEVIN O'ROURKE
celebrates Diamond Anniversary

The Leitrim Guardian Committee joins with his family and friends in celebrating the Diamond Anniversary of the Ordination of Fr Kevin O'Rourke. A native of Drumshangore in Carrigallen parish, Fr Kevin spent many years on the Mission Fields in Africa, spreading the Gospel. Following his retirement and return to Ireland, Fr Kevin has been of great assistance in the Carrigallen and Drumreilly parishes, as well as in Manorhamilton, saying masses and performing other priestly duties, to be of help to the local clergy. His kind demeanour and effervescent personality has endeared him to everyone, particularly to older people, who cherish his company and consoling words.

*Among those who travelled to Ireland especially for the Diamond Jubilee celebrations, were his brother, Michael O'Rourke, former resident of *The Leitrim Society of New York*, of which he is still a very active member. Michael joined with his sister in law, Mrs Pauline O'Rourke, Drumshangore and with the O'Rourke, Gilligan and Feehily families, extended families, nephews, nieces, grand nephew s and grand nieces, other relations and a very wide circle of friends and neighbours, all extending congratulations to Fr Kevin.*