

Gaelic Language Judge's Report

RO-RÀDH

Bu mhath leam taing a thoirt do na bàird a chur na dàin aca a-steach dhan cho-fharpais seo am-bliadhna. Tha e gu math follaiseach gu bheil bàrdachd Ghàidhlig ann an deagh chor.

Chaidh na dàin thairis air sreath de chuspairean, nam measg galar 's bàs, poileataigs 's tachartasan eachdraidheil, gàirnealachd, eilthreachd, 's mar a bhios dùil, gaol. Bha caochladh stoidhlean a' nochdadh cuideachd, agus ged a bha iad uile ann an "free verse," bha mi a' faicinn, no a' faireachdainn, ruitheam agus co-fhuaim neo-fhoirmeil anns a' chuid as motha de na dàin.

HIGHLY COMMENDED: Galar

Chan eil e na iongnadh gun do nochd dàin a tha ceangailte ris a' phandemic anns a' cho-fharpais am-bliadhna. Anns an dàn, "Galar," 's iad na "fir lachdann" – fir a bhios a' cruinneachadh aig dorsan nan taighean-seinnse ann an Glashchu – a tha fo chomhair na bana-bhàird, agus i a' meòrachadh air na thachair dhaibh uile anns na mìosan fada dhen ghlasadh-sluaigh. Tha corra ìomhaigh chruthachail, dhrùidhteach, a' nochdadh anns an dàn, gus dealbh a thoirt air beatha nam fir sin, 's iad sgapte, no cailte nan aonarachd, gun "an aon laimhrig bha gan cumail air bhog."

DARNA ÀITE: Ròs Geal

Is e "mar chuimhneachan air Jo Cox" a th' anns an dàn seo, a rèir an òs-sgrìobhadh air an dàn. Ach chan eil iomradh idir air Jo Cox gus an dàrna rann mu dheireadh. Roimhe sin, le sreath de ìomhaighean cumhachdach, àlainn, tha am bàrd a' dol do chridhe a' bhaile far an robh Cox air a marbhadh. Chì sinn am baile mar a bhios e air latha cumanta – bhan an èisg, nighean-sgoile air a' chabhsair, sealladh nan cnoc 's nan dàlaichean bho uinneag na sgoile. Tha a h-uile càil sìtheil, misneachail, sunndach, anns an àite agus anns an dàn mar an ceudna, gus an còigeamh rann, nuair thachras am murt, cha mhòr gun fhios gun faireachdainn, mar a thachair e ann an dha-rìreabh air an latha ud ann an 2016.

'S e dàn ioma-fillte a th' anns an dàn seo, a' gabhail a-steach chuspairean cudromach, duilich. Tha e soilleir, cuideachd, gu bheil faireachdainn làidir aig a' bhàrd, 's e làn gaoil airson an àite, agus làn feirge dhùrachdach ris na thachair an sin.

CHIAD ÀITE: Gàirnealachd

Tha an dàn seo a' tòiseachadh le tuairisgeul de dhuine "air a ghlùinean" ann an gàrradh. Bho thùs, tha e soilleir gur e gàirnealachd annasach a th' innte, 's an duine "a' cruinneachadh ùir mar ùrnaigh na làmhan." Tha iomadh ìomhaigh dhiadhaidh a' nochdadh anns an dàn seo – ùrnaigh, altachadh, aiseirigh 's baisteadh nam measg. Tha iomraidhean sònraichte air Eden agus Gethsemane, dà ghàrradh ainmeil, agus iad nan gàrraidhean ainmeil airson a' chron a rinneadh annta – an tuiteam o ghràs ann an Eden, agus brath Ìosa ann an Gethsemane. Còmhla ris na h-ìomhaighean diadhaidh, tha am bàrd a' toirt dhuinn ìomhaighean nas saoghalta: fionnarachd ann an oisean a' ghàrraidh, gathan grèin na òr-spruilleag, smùir agus fallas a ghnùis. Agus ged a tha coltas ann gur e dàn cràbhach a th' ann, tha am bàrd a' moladh a' ghàrraidh agus obair a' ghàirneileir, seach a bhith a' moladh Dhè.

Tha aonachd choileanta anns an dàn gu lèir, eadar brìgh 's ciall, ìomhaigheachd agus briathrachas, 's a h-uile càil ceangailte ri chèile gu grinn, gu cuimir. Gu h-àraidh, 's i a' Ghàidhlig fhèin, 's mar a chleachdas am bàrd i, a mholainn gu mòr, agus i na Gàidhlig shiùbhlach, nàdarrach, ùghdarrail.

FOREWORD:

I would like to thank all the poets who sent in their work to this competition this year. It was a pleasure to read every poem, and I was impressed by the overall quality of the entries. The poems cover a wide number of topics, including death and disease, politics and historical events, gardening, emigration, and, of course, love. All were written in "free verse" although I had a clear sense of both rhythm and rhyme in most of the poems.

HIGHLY COMMENDED: Galar

I was expecting a poem or two about, or relating to, the pandemic. "Galar" approaches the topic through a side-door, or more specifically, from outside the doors of the pubs in Glasgow, where the "fir lachdann" – the habitual drinkers, sallow and sickly – gather on the pavements, bent over the doorstep, smoking and coughing and slugging back pints. The poet asks what has happened to these men during the lockdown, imagining their lonely existence with imagery that is evocative and original.

SECOND PLACE: Ròs Geal

According to the poet's epigram, "Ròs Geal" is written for the memory of Jo Cox. Yet there is no mention of Cox herself until the penultimate verse. Before then, the poet takes us to the heart of the town where Cox was murdered, in

images that capture the essence of every-day life – the fish van going about, the children on their way to school, the hills and dales stretching out beyond the windows of the school. All is peaceful, inspiring, pleasant – until, in the last three verses, there is tragedy, the body of a woman, lying in the street, killed by the bullet of a gun.

This poem is complex in meaning and in construction, with its change of tone, half-way through, heightening the horror of Cox's death. It is clear that the poet has both a great love for the place of which s/he writes, and also a great anger and sadness for what has happened there.

FIRST PLACE: Gàirnealachd

This poem begins with a description of a man “on his knees” in a garden. Right away it is clear that the man is engaged in a slightly unusual way of gardening, “gathering earth like a prayer in his hands.” Various religious words and images are used throughout the poem – prayer, communion, resurrection, and baptism among them. There are references to Eden and Gethsemane, two gardens from the bible – both of which, as it happens, are associated with harmful events, the “fall from grace” in Eden, and the betrayal of Christ at Gethsemane. Along with the religious imagery, the poet gives us more secular images – a cool corner of the garden, the golden drops of sunlight, dust and sweat. And, although the poem might appear to be religious, the poet is praising the garden itself, and the work done in it, rather than a God of any kind.

I find an elegant unity in this poem, a unity of meaning and spirit, of imagery and vocabulary, all seamlessly linked together. In particular it is the Gaelic itself which makes this poem stand out from the others, Gaelic which is natural, flowing, and authentic.

Deborah Moffatt