

# The Things that Make for Peace



It's been a busy Autumn, as various social groups have returned from their long hibernations and diaries are once more filling up. Spoken word poetry in particular has been making a comeback, with the welcome return of *The Thing Itself*, a Fermanagh victory in Poetry Slam Ulster Final, and the debut at FLive of Stephen Murphy's hour-long poem/play *Misty Morning on a Fermanagh Farm*. Robert Elliott is only the latest member of Fermanagh Writers to bring out a poetry collection, and there are more in the offing.

As for myself, I was busy editing the final part of Pheme Glass's historical trilogy *The Blossom and the Bole*, and I travelled to Belfast to read a short story of mine that is included in the University of Ulster's new SF and Fantasy anthology *New Worlds, New Voices*.

Then, over the past few weeks, just when I was preparing to bring out this issue of *Corncrake*, I have had my own personal encounter with Covid. It has not been serious, but for many days I could do nothing more creative than eat the food kind neighbours brought and watch endless spaghetti westerns. As Tuco says in *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*, if you work to live, why kill yourself working?

So this is perhaps a thinner issue than normal, with only one article that might be called a review- *Artistry Laid Bare* – and that of an event in the Canary Islands. Both that and John Kelly's poem *A Poor Vintage* reference Keats and his famous dictum about Truth and Beauty. Others question that: is Truth and Beauty to be found in the apparent barrenness of the Galway Burren that gave rise to Lila Stuart's *Burren Litany*, in Kate Ennal's *Endless White Lines* or in the haunting loneliness of Maeve McKenna's *Walking Home*?

Yet there is a connection with more obviously peaceful subjects such as Patrick Devaney's *Evening at Coole*, Dermot Maguire's *Well Being* or my own *Song of the Scythe*.

We already know the things that make for Peace. As Lorna Flanagan says, they are *In Our Hands*. But, though we may celebrate the devotion of John Hume, as

Anthony Doogan does in *Larghissimo*, we know that the path is long and hard. Some, like John James in *Horse and Train*, are unsure how best to follow it.

Truth and Beauty do not always coincide, but neither are they rivals. Those who claim that 'facts don't care about your feelings' are often blind to how their own feelings determine what they accept as fact. All of us love the ideas, the people and things that seem beautiful to us – that make us feel good when we think about them. Perhaps we take it for granted that it is so, but when we think about it, we realise that our love cannot be compelled. We cannot decide for ourselves who or what we will love, but we know it when we see it.

It is easy to mistake Beauty for Truth – to believe that everyone should love what we love, or that everyone hates or covets what we love and seeks to separate us from it. Yet, if you love to live, why kill yourself loving?

All we can do is to pay attention to the things that we already love so that they may flourish, but do not consume them, or let them consume us. Rejoice that it is possible to find love and Beauty – and even Truth – elsewhere.

In the words of Go Slowly:

Take small steps.  
Be patient with the world,  
It knows the way.

You are just passing by.

**Jenny Brien**

Image: *Peaceable Kingdom* by Edward Hicks 1848