

## EDITORIAL

Prizes have become a normal part of any moderately successful literary career. Writer's handbooks usually list more than 200 prizes for Great Britain and Ireland, the majority of them being awarded for new novels. Just around ten per cent of the literary prizes are awarded in the field of poetry. As a non-UK publisher, even considering the idea of submitting new collections for such prizes, quickly ends in complete disillusion. The guidelines defining the rules and conditions of entry usually contain the stereotype requirement "first published in the UK or the Republic of Ireland". The Poetry Society administering the T. S. Eliot Prize, famously described by Andrew Motion as "the prize most poets want to win", concedes simultaneous publication in another country within one year. The Forward Arts Foundation defines the eligibility of entries for their three poetry categories in almost identical terms. The Costa Book Awards, which also have a poetry category, differ from the previously mentioned awards only in that the author must have been resident in the UK or Ireland for at least six months per year in the preceding three years. Even the recently established Michael Marks Awards for poetry pamphlets confines entry to UK publications. By recognizing the enormous contribution that small presses and little magazines make to the poetry world, this award is very welcome. Previous winners – among them The Crater Press, Oystercatcher Press, Happenstance Press, Smith/Doorstop Press, Flarestack Poets, and Rack Press – have more than deserved the award. We often receive review copies of their latest publications and we try to support our fellow publishers by commissioning reviews of their pamphlets and collections whenever space permits us to do so. However, I have never understood the parochial policy of the institutions administering these awards.

The majority of the Irish poetry awards contrasts pleasantly with their British counterparts. The Patrick Kavanagh Award, one of the most prestigious poetry prizes in Ireland, is confined to poets born in Ireland, or of Irish nationality, or long-term residents of Ireland. Similarly, the Poetry Now Award is presented for the best single volume of poetry by an Irish poet. Two prestigious poetry prizes are awarded annually at the Mountains to Sea Book Festival and administered by the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council – the *Irish Times* Poetry

Now Award and the Shine/Strong Poetry Award. The latter is presented annually to the author of the best first collection of poems published by an Irish poet in the previous year. As we had published Jim Maguire's first collection *Music Field* in June 2013, we contacted the administrators as to our eligibility. In their Publishers Guidelines it is not specified whether or not a publisher has to be operative in the Republic. We were positively surprised, when we received a reply the very next day confirming that the sole condition was that the author had to be an Irish citizen or resident in Ireland for the past five years. Jim's collection was shortlisted and he was invited, together with four other shortlisted poets, to give a reading in the new Central Library and Cultural Centre in Dún Laoghaire. Although Jim did not win the award, it was, in his own words, "a thrill" for him to participate in such a prize reading. As his publisher we are very grateful to Jim for representing Poetry Salzburg so well before an audience that included a number of fine poets, such as Sinead Morrissey and Vona Groarke.

As an Austrian publisher our publications are not eligible for the great majority of literary prizes in the UK. It is high time their administrators changed their policy. It would be interesting to find out whether this policy is in compliance with EU terms. The Irish stipulations for eligibility could easily be transferred to English practice.

On 5 August Poetry Salzburg's inaugural UK reading, the first joint reading by five of our poets, took place at the Poetry Library in London and was entitled "The View from Salzburg". From among 25 submissions for 5 slots for the months July-December 2015, Director Chris McCabe and his staff selected our application, which had been initiated and submitted by Simon Rees. Simon was joined by Alyson Hallett, Christopher Jackson, Frances-Anne King, and Robert Peake, who magnificently presented their work and did their publisher proud. The introductory poem was read by William Oxley, the first British poet to be associated with Salzburg in the early 1980s. Despite the tube strike that started on the very evening, we had a full audience, some of them contacting us after the event to say how much they had enjoyed the evening. To me as publisher and master of ceremonies, it felt like a dream come true. I sincerely hope that our first Poetry Salzburg reading will lead to further events of a similar kind.

Wolfgang Görtschacher