



Interviewee: John F Deane, Poet And Founder of Poetry Ireland

Interviewer: Angela Maye-Banbury

Location: Poetry Ireland Dublin

Date: 6th Jan 2020

Running time: 0:03:59

Reading: John F Deane reads 'Slievemore - The Abandoned Village.'

Angela: I don't what (poem to read) you want to choose. Whatever one.

John: There is one I do like that's travelled round the world a fair bit in an exhibition. There's an exhibition of Irish Famine artefacts that went all over the place. And I was lucky enough to have my 'Slievemore The Abandoned Village.' And that had a drawing with it by a very fine woman. And that exhibition has been travelling round the world. So it's called 'Slievemore - The Abandoned Village.'

(Recital begins)

You park your car on a low slope
under the graveyard wall. Always

there is a mound of fresh-turned earth, flowers
in pottery vases. There is light, from the sea and the wide
western sky, the Atlantic's
soft-shoe nonchalance, whistle
of kestrels from the lifting mists, furze-scents, ferns, shiverings –
till suddenly you are aware

you have come from an inland drift of dailiness to this shock
of island, the hugeness of its beauty
dismaying you again to consciousness. Here
is the wind-swept, ravenous

mountainside of grief; this is the long tilted valley where famine
came like an old and infamous flood
from the afflicting hand of God. Beyond all
understanding. Inarticulate. And pleading.
Deserted. Of all but the wall-stones and grasses,
humped field-rocks and lazy-beds; what was commerce and family
become passive and inert, space
for the study of the metaphysics of humanness. You climb

grudgingly, aware of the gnawing hungers,
how the light leans affably, the way an urchin once might have watched
from a doorway;
you are no more than a dust-mote on the mountainside,

allowing God his spaces; you are
watercress and sorrel, one with the praying of villagers,
one with their silence, your hands
clenched in overcoat pockets, standing between one world

and another. It has been easier to kneel
among the artefacts in the island graveyard, this harnessing of craft
to contain our griefs;
here, among these wind-swept, ravenous acres

where we abandon our acceptably deceased to the mountain earth.

In grace. In trustfulness.

This, too, the afflicting hand of God. Beyond all
understanding. Inarticulate. Though in praise.

(Recital ends)

Angela: That's really just beautiful. Very powerful.

John: Thank you. It's a nice poem. I like it, actually, myself.

Angela: As you were talking then, I was transporting myself back to the Deserted Village picturing myself walking in the steps of the people who had occupied the village.

John: It's fantastic, fabulous place.

Angela: Very, very special. John, thanks so much for your time with me today. That was just absolutely wonderful.

John: Thank you, Angela

Angela: Thank you very, very much indeed. I really appreciate your time.

Ends.

