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READING IRELAND

THE LITTLE MAGAZINE

Volume 3, Issue 2
Summer/Fall 2017

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Reading Ireland is published three times a year and is available to subscribers at a cost of \$40 for four issues. The aim of the magazine is to provide in-depth analysis of Irish Literature, past and present, along with opening a window onto the best of contemporary Irish poetry, prose, drama and culture.

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Introduction

Welcome to the 2017 *summer/fall* issue of *Reading Ireland*, which focuses on Irish-American writers. We dedicate this issue to the late Norm McClelland, an Arizona philanthropist whose leadership and generosity made possible the McClelland Library at the Irish Cultural Center in Phoenix, Arizona.

We have interpreted the category “Irish-American Writer” broadly, recognizing that for many writers, their artistic identity is defined by their cultural identification with Ireland, irrespective of whether they can claim a direct genealogical link to the country. The writers included in this issue draw on their ancestral heritage and their imaginative links to Ireland, and in doing so offer what Daniel Tobin terms “a vantage from which to inquire what it is to be Irish American.”ⁱ



The issue opens with an excerpt from Tobin’s book, *Awake in America: On Irish American Poetry*, wherein he expands on Thomas Kinsella’s concept of the Dual Tradition that Irish writers have inherited to include the further rupture in tradition with which Irish-American writers have to contend. Specifically, his analysis concentrates on three of the poets featured in this issue: Irish-born Eamonn Wall and Greg Delanty and the American poet Brendan Galvin. Other poets in this issue are Poetry Ireland founder John F. Deane, a writer-in-residence at Loyola University in Chicago during the fall of 2016. We are honored that Deane has contributed four new poems which were inspired by this recent sojourn in America. Gibbons Ruark’s sustained imaginative engagement with Ireland was triggered by his long friendship with the Irish novelist Benedict Kiely which is memorialized in Ruark’s prose recollection, “Afternoons in Donnybrook,” which we include along with the recent “Canal Farewell,” Ruark’s poem for Marie Heaney.ⁱⁱ Also included is Michael Longley’s reading of the late John Montague’s poem “Windharp,” along with photographs of both poets by the award-winning photographer Bobbie Hanvey.ⁱⁱⁱ The Brooklyn born and Ulster raised Montague is of central importance to the canon of Irish American poetry as themes of exile and hybrid identity permeate his work. Included in this section is Emmanuel Touhey’s review of Montague’s posthumous collection, *Second Child*, which was published on February 28th this year by The Gallery Press on what would have been the poet’s 88th birthday. Due to space considerations, we were unable to include any more poets; however, readers are encouraged to consult the recent issue 121 of *Poetry Ireland Review*, the first one edited by Eavan Boland, which includes her insightful profile of Brigit Pegeen Kelly along with several examples of Kelly’s work.

Turning to Irish American fiction, three writers from different generations are profiled: Maeve Brennan (1917- 1993), Pat Conway (1945-2016) and Alice McDermott (b. 1953). A long-time staff writer for the *New Yorker*, Brennan suffered from serious mental health issues in her later years and died impoverished and unknown. In recent decades, her short stories and essays have been republished, and her reputation has been restored, thanks to the pioneering work of

her biographer Angela Bourke.^{iv} We are delighted to include an essay on Brennan by Professor Bourke. The nonprofit Pat Conway Literary Center was established to honor author Pat Conroy in his adopted hometown of Beaufort, South Carolina. Conway, who achieved international success with his novels *The Great Santini* (1976) and *The Prince of Tides* (1986), was a tireless teacher, mentor and advocate for writers, and the Pat Conway Literary Center continues his legacy by hosting lectures, workshops and seminars. One of the most distinguished writers working in the United States today is National Book Award winner and Pulitzer Prize finalist Alice McDermott, who graciously agreed to be interviewed for this issue of *Reading Ireland*. McDermott is the author of seven exquisitely realized novels, many of which center on the lives of Irish-American families living in Brooklyn or Long Island. Her new novel, *The Ninth Hour*, will be published in the US on September 19 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

In the realm of non-fiction Dinty Moore, Professor of Creative Writing at Ohio University, contributes an elegiac essay on his Irish heritage and the origins of his unusual name. Two excellent books are reviewed in this issue. Professor Gregory Castle, a Joyce scholar, reviews *The Ulysses Trials: Beauty and Truth Meet the Law*, Joseph H. Hassett's book about the two U.S. obscenity trials involving Joyce's novel. A practicing attorney in Washington D.C., Hassett also has a degree in Anglo-Irish Literature from University College Dublin. He is thus uniquely qualified to analyze what Castle terms "the way literature and law intersect." My own review of James Roger's book *Irish American Autobiography: The Divided Hearts of Athletes, Priests, Pilgrims, and More* follows. The long-time editor of the Irish Studies journal, *New Hibernia Review*, Rogers draws on a wide variety of autobiographies to present a rich portrait of Irish-American identity and experience. In doing so he brings a fresh perspective to the Irish diaspora and to both Irish and American Studies. In addition, several important titles in Irish-American studies are also profiled in this issue.

The field of Irish-American drama is a vast area of inquiry, with perhaps Nobel laureate Eugene O' Neill the most well-known practitioner. A future drama issue of *Reading Ireland* will be devoted in part to this area of Irish-American artistic endeavor. Although neither Irish nor American, Tyrone Guthrie rightfully deserves a place in this issue of *Reading Ireland* due to his enormous impact on the artistic communities of both the United States and Ireland. We include a brief

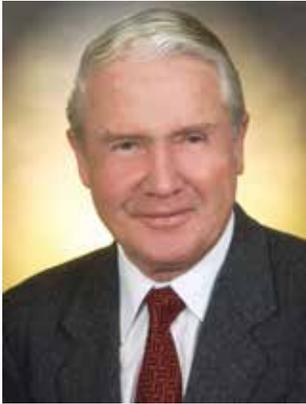
history of the Guthrie Theatre, which the director founded in Minneapolis in the early 1960s. Among the many playwrights influenced by Guthrie's directing style was Brian Friel, who spent several crucial months in Minneapolis in 1963 at the invitation of Guthrie observing rehearsals at the new theatre. This experience profoundly impacted the direction of Friel's subsequent work. Guthrie and his family had a family home in Annaghmakerrig, County Monaghan, Ireland. Upon his death in 1971 his estate and the family home were bequeathed to the Irish State with instructions that the house be used as a residential artists' retreat. One of the artists who has benefited from the Guthrie family's generosity and vision is Louise Phillips, an award winning Irish crime writer. We include here her essay on her stay at the Tyrone Guthrie Artist Retreat.

Finally, we close this issue with a spotlight on the American Irish History Museum, which is a wonderful resource for anyone interested in the history of the Irish in America. It is perhaps fitting that our Irish-American issue is bookended by two literary and cultural centers dedicated to celebrating the Irish experience in America.

- i For a general discussion on the origins and development of a literary tradition among American writers of Irish birth or background who have explored the Irish immigrant or ethnic experiences in works of fiction see Charles Fanning, *The Irish Voice in America*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1990. For a discussion on Irish-American poetry and the question of tradition see Daniel Tobin's introduction in *The Book of Irish American Poetry: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.
- ii "Canal Farewell" was too late to include in Ruark's most recent collection; however, it was published in the *Irish Times* on July 30 2016. This is the poem's second appearance in print.
- iii For more examples of Bobbie Hanvey's work visit the Bobbie Hanvey Photographic Archives at the John J. Burns Library, Boston College.
- iv Due to space considerations, we unable to feature more Irish American fiction writers. For those readers interested in the field I recommend the recent week-long series from the *Irish Times*, "Women Writers and Irish-American Literature," which was commissioned to celebrate the centenary of Maeve Brennan's birth on January 6th, 1917. The series comprises articles on Maeve Brennan by Angela Bourke, Mary McCarthy by Ellen McWilliams, Elizabeth Cullinan by Patricia Coughlan, Mary Gordon by Claire Bracken and Alice McDermott by Sinéad Moynihan. [See here](#).

Norman P. McClelland

(1927-2017)



It is with heavy hearts we share the news of the passing of Norman P. McClelland, founder of the McClelland Library and long-time supporter of the Arizona Irish Community.

Many will know Norman McClelland as Chairman of the Board of Shamrock Foods Company. The iconic Arizona trucks and Shamrock's long-standing commitment to "treat associates like family and customers and suppliers like friends," have made a lasting business and philanthropic impact on the state.

Shamrock Foods Company – parent company of Shamrock Farms and Shamrock Foods – was founded by Norman's father, W.T. McClelland, an immigrant from Co. Down, N. Ireland, in Tucson, Ariz., in 1922 with a Model T truck and 20 cows. Norman was born in Tucson, Ariz., on June 21, 1927. He received a dual B.S. /B.A. degree in agriculture and business administration from the University of Arizona before moving to Phoenix, where he raised his family and grew the Shamrock business.

Norman's Irish heritage was a source of tremendous pride, and he dedicated much of his time to ensuring that Irish culture continues to thrive in Arizona. In December 2016, he received the Presidential Distinguished Service Award for the Irish Abroad from the Irish President in recognition of his philanthropic works and commitment to promoting Irish culture and history. Norman could be found at the Phoenix Irish Cultural Center and McClelland Library, named after and built in large part by the McClelland legacy, on a weekly basis. He was inspired by Irish Literature and was especially fond of W.B. Yeats, C.S. Lewis, and of late, Seamus Heaney.

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As treasurer of the Irish Cultural and Learning Foundation, Norman was a leader in the local Irish community. He supported and helped guide the organization with the same patience and business acumen that built up his father's dairy. His advice, guidance, support, and warm smile will be cherished and missed by all.



Barbara McClelland, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, Norm McClelland and Chas Moore, Head Librarian of the McClelland Library.

Essay: “Doubled in Every Way: Irish American Poetry and the Dual Tradition.”

by Daniel Tobin

The following essay is an extract from chapter one of Daniel Tobin’s book *Awake in America: On Irish American Poetry*. University of Notre Dame Press, 2011, reprinted with the kind permission of Notre Dame University Press and the author.

I.

In *The Dual Tradition*, Thomas Kinsella identifies a number of flaws in the preponderance of Irish poetry written in the English language during the nineteenth century. The inadequacies of Irish poetry at the time, he observes, “have something to do with the loss of a working Irish literary tradition” while simultaneously having even more to do with “the related colonial impulse to present the home literature to a ‘senior’ outside audience for its amusement and instruction.” In turn, the weakness of Irish-American poetry during roughly the same historical moment may have something to do with, conversely, the exile’s need to remain connected to his Irish homeland while simultaneously proving his mettle in his new country. In both instances, Irish and Irish American poets had to inflect their work largely away from inner experience—from what Yeats would later call “passionate, normal speech”—and toward an audience whose communal support for the poet’s artistic growth had either been abrogated by historical circumstance through the loss of the Irish language or, in the case of Irish-America, toward an audience that was as yet nascent in the emigrant’s painful but gradual enfranchisement into the American cultural order. In either case the historical and cultural forces at work were very nearly crushing; certainly, they were inimical to the making of great poetry.

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For Kinsella the root of the problem for Irish poetry in the nineteenth century lies in the loss of the Irish language as a “possible sustaining force.” What could be more devastating to a poet’s inner creative resources than the loss of the poet’s native language and the cultural community it perforce implies? In Ireland, “the virtual absence of good writers in both languages during the whole nineteenth century, when the people were painfully shedding one language and slowly acquiring another” likewise symbolizes for Declan Kiberd the fundamental division of Irish literature from which it is still seeking to recover. Kinsella states it succinctly: “Irish literature is a dual entity,” and it is so because one language had to be “abandoned for another” through a centuries-long process of dispossession “reducing energies of every kind, undermining individual confidence, lessening quality of thought.” In his essay “The Divided Mind,” Kinsella’s seminal reflections on his separation from a thousand-year-old tradition of poetry in Irish are deeply moving:

The inheritance is certainly mine by only at two enormous removes—across a century’s silence and through an exchange of worlds. The greatness of the loss is measured not only by the substance of Irish literature itself, but also by the intensity with which we know it is shared;

it has an air of continuity and shared history which is precisely what is missing from Irish literature, in English or Irish; in the nineteenth century and today. I recognize that I stand on one side of a great rift, and can feel the discontinuity in myself. It is a matter of people and places as well as writing—of coming from a broken and uprooted family, of being drawn to those who share my origins and finding that we cannot share our lives.²²

Both Declan Kiberd and Richard Kearney regard Kinsella's "double vision" as simultaneously shaping his insightful assessment of the trauma underlying Irish literary intelligence. What is so striking in Kinsella's lament, however, is that this Irish poet's classic statement on "the divided mind" of the Irish writer might just as well have been spoken word for word by any Irish-American poet conscious enough to recognize that the legacy of emigration and exile is not only a divided mind but a mind doubly divided by being still further uprooted from those people and places and writing from which he or she is dispossessed by distance and not only by time. If we add to the traumatic loss of the Irish language the further traumatic loss of native place experienced by millions of Irish in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and acknowledge as we should that emigration is as much a part of the Irish experience as the Irish American experience, and in turn situate the burgeoning of Irish-American poetry in the twentieth century in the context of both losses, then what we have before us is not simply "a dual tradition" but a tradition further displaced through the historical, cultural, and psychic trauma of emigration and exile. It is as if Irish American poetry has raised the dual tradition Kinsella articulated so astutely to yet another power.

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II.

What does this mean for how we understand the continuities and discontinuities of Irish poetry? For one thing, it suggests that to speak merely of a dual tradition is not adequate, unless one is willing either to elide or minimize the impact of mass emigration over the course of its history on Irish identity. To do so would constitute the most thoroughgoing denial of historical fact. This is, however, very nearly what Patrick Ward claims in *Exile, Emigration and Irish Writing* where he notes that even in this time of intellectual sensitivity to matters of cultural diaspora Irish journals "reveal a noticeable neglect of exile and emigration in spite of the fact that it has been and remains a central fact of Irish experience for writers as well as the population as a whole." It is important to recognize, though, that even in this urgent assessment the direction of Ward's objection remains focused on what might be called insular Ireland—the writers he speaks of are Irish construed narrowly, as is the population to which he refers. It is one thing to consider the self-elected emigration of Joyce and Beckett as insufficiently examined through the lens of exile; it is another to bring attention to the work of those who left under more grave duress than artistic choice, or who are the heirs of that legacy of exile and emigration into succeeding generations. This leads, naturally, to a second admission of substantial importance relative to how we understand the traditions of Irish poetry: it means Irish-American poetry has not yet been sufficiently acknowledged or explored either for its continuities with the poetry of the homeland, or for its own continuities and discontinuities, or for its potent affinities with other diaspora literatures. The result is a greater rift, a further gulf, than Thomas Kinsella's dual tradition wholly acknowledges. It also means the "quarantine" between Irish and Anglo-Irish that Declan Kiberd saw as

dividing “Irish schoolrooms” in the late seventies has hardly begun to be admitted even to exist between Irish and Irish-American poetry, except in those cases where the “Irishness” of the poet is not question. In those cases, the more “centrifugal” complexities of identity hardly matter where the “centripetal” identifier “Irish” trumps the hybrid-making realities of history.

This is not to say, of course, that emigrant and expatriate writers, and poets in particular, do not populate the Irish literary landscape. From the early twentieth century onward poets like Padraic Colum and Brian Coffey register limited but important responses to the experience of migration out of Ireland, if only for a time. Padraic Colum’s “A Rann of Exile” assumes a moving eponymous voice born on the Irish post-famine diaspora. Similarly, Brian Coffey wrote his long poem, “Missouri Sequence,” during his time teaching philosophy in St. Louis from 1947-1952. Here are lines from “Nightfall, Midwinter, Missouri”:

We live far away from where
my mother grows very old.
Five miles away, at Byrnesville,
the cemetery is filled with Irish graves,
the priest an old man born near Cork,
his boss like the day he left the land.

The poem continues:

Many Irish souls have gone back to God from Byrnesville,
Many are Irish here today
where cedars stand like milestones
on worn Ozark hills
and houses white on bluegrass lawns
house people honest, practical and kind.

All shows a long love
yet I am charmed by the hills behind Dublin,
those white stone cottages,
grass green as no other grass is green,
my mother’s people, their ways.

What is so striking in these lines is how the poet’s affirmation of continuity with the diasporic Irish who populated Byrnesville—even the name inscribing a founding Irish identity—suddenly elides to the recognition of difference. The hills behind Dublin are not the Ozark hills, and the stone cottages of Ireland are not those of this Midwestern town despite its Irish cemetery. For Coffey, what finally makes the Irish of Byrnesville not Irish in the fullest sense is the simple fact that they no longer live in Ireland where “grass is green as no other grass is green” and as such where “the ways” of his mother’s people manifest an un-breached continuity. In their unguarded honesty Coffey’s lines perform a paradigmatic slippage—the remarkable erasure of Irish identity from Irish America based upon the absence of Irish Americans from the native place. They likewise exemplify perfectly Ward’s judgment that

“the dialectics of ‘home’ and ‘abroad’, consciously or unconsciously, pervaded the cultural and artistic consciousness of those who stayed, and those who left.” Yet, if “the fact of emigration and expatriation covertly permeated all aspects of national life, for all Irish people, one way or another,”³⁰ then how is it possible the very reality that so defined consciousness and culture in Ireland for hundreds of years is the same reality that asserts itself as a marker of difference rather than identity, and as such between Irish and Irish American poetry?

One centrally important contemporary Irish poet for whom the “dialectic of home and abroad” becomes the vital substance of the work, explored consciously, and embodied in poems imbued with an unflagging awareness of both Irish and American history and culture is Eamonn Wall. Born in Enniscorthy, County Wexford, Wall emigrated to America with the other so called “New Irish” during the 1980’s before the Celtic Tiger changed Ireland from one of the weakest economies in Europe to the economic player it is today. Throughout Wall’s five books of poems one finds work that dives persistently and deeply into the gulf of discontinuity and displacement articulated in Coffey’s “Missouri Sequence.” Wall’s “The Wexford Container Tragedy” in his *Refuge at DeSoto Pass* can be read as an answering sequence to Coffey’s in which the experience of migration is the identifying thread uniting diasporic peoples from different cultures. The sequence begins in the New York Holocaust Museum and ranges broadly from the poet’s native place of Wexford to Ellis Island to St. Louis, Missouri where he presently lives, in an effort to reconcile the tragic discovery of eight dead African stowaways in the Wexford Business Park on December 8th, 2001. Their death in the ship container, as Wall implies, makes the boat on which the immigrants traveled the twenty-first century version of a coffin ship. Yet, as the poem “From St. Louis, Missouri” suggests, the heart-rupturing tragedy belies a deeper continuity among emigrant peoples:

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These words are whispered from St. Louis
where last night children in green gathered
at the Sheldon Concert Hall to play music,
dance jigs, sing in the ancient languages of
monks, navigators, saints, sinners, builders,
homesteaders, nuns, bakers, bankers, all
peoples of a scattered cast called Irish:
Catholic, Protestant, Muslim and Jew,
piled merrily to applaud dancers on stage.
Adults and pumped-up relatives had fought
the dismal early December night—city workers
in warm canteens drinking hot chocolate,
playing five card stud—streets and highways
uncleared, cars and semis in the ditch, a rolled
mini van upside down, wedged between the
guard rail and storm drain on I-44 between
the Hamptons and Kingshighway exits. Of
German, French, Swiss, Nigerian, and Irish
ancestry, these performers in hard shoes
gathered in our bright French city to dance
a steady narrative of removal and survival.

In contrast to Coffey's "Nightfall, Midwinter, Missouri," Wall's "From St. Louis, Missouri" describes a contrary arc of consciousness in which the Irish are identified as a "scattered cast" that includes Irish-America. For all its empathy toward its American setting, Coffey's poem re-asserts the idea of the Irish as an insular people. To be really Irish is to be native in one's native place. In Wall's poem, on the contrary, to be Irish is to be scattered, a wandering tribe. Paradoxically, it is the Irish as a diasporic people that most defines them and, in turn, that binds them to other diasporic peoples in Wall's "steady narrative of removal and survival." It is this steady narrative that at once shifts the concept of identity away from Nativist constructions and toward a more complex web of relations both cultural and historical—a common experience of passage rather than a common ground. Within that web, to be Irish cannot be separated from being Irish-American, or Jewish, Swiss, or African for that matter. Implicitly, Wall's poem redresses what James Byrne has observed to be the Irish American struggle "to locate itself along the lines of other, more successful, ethnic minorities, by striving to imbue itself with a sense of ethnic authenticity." Wall's poem does so, not by assuming an equivalency in the magnitude of racial and ethnic discrimination, but by furthering the insight that the experience of diaspora inherently composes a nexus of stories that need not at this historical moment compete for recognition and validation at one another's expense. Within the related narratives of diaspora, we become more ourselves in every sense by becoming more other than what we might initially deem ourselves to be.

Wall's poetry is potently significant, for to understand "emigration, immigration, and migration" requires us to recognize a complex web of related experiences that ultimately converge in a kind of subtending narrative of loss and endurance that unites people from different cultures and histories. It is more capacious understanding of diaspora that brings together all the "othered" others. Nevertheless, when he reflects on his own experience as an expatriate Irish poet in his ground-breaking study *From the Sine Café to the Black Hills*, Wall affirms the double nature of his life as an Irish immigrant in America:

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If I wish to define myself fin the future, I would have to begin
 With two huge words: Irish and American. But over the years
 I have revered both terms while at the same time seeking to
 Understand them better. But the two can never be separated.
 I have double vision; I am doubled in every way.

Whether he intends to do so, Wall's affirmation of his own double-ness underscores the need to enlarge Kinsella's "dual tradition." It requires the dual tradition to acknowledge that the rift the older poet rightly identifies deepens still further in the experience of "removal and survival" outside the homeland of Ireland. Not surprisingly, Wall implicitly sees the connection when he reflects: "Being an Irish exile is a heavy business because it is so tied up with mythology, pain and history. When I left Ireland I thought I was getting away from history; little did I know I was walking right into the middle of an historical web from which there would be no escape."

Wall, of course, is not the first Irish poet to venture into that historical web. His contemporary "New Irish" poet, Greg Delanty, has likewise produced a sustained body of work through five books of poems, as well as a recent *Collected*, that establishes him with Wall as the two Irish poets of their generation who have given themselves the task of bringing the

emigrant experience to the fore in Irish poetry, an experience that was until recently all but entirely ignored. Like Wall's poetry, Delanty's work reflects the double vision of the ex-patriot Irish writer living in America, yet the poems reveal important differences in the way these poets evoke the emigrant relationship to his adopted country.

To read through Wall's growing body of work is in large part to follow the poet's venture ever deeper into the continent, into the West in both the historical and metaphorical sense. This movement into the interior of the American milieu has been predicated by his literal journey as a poet who found academic work in Nebraska and Missouri—Wall's literal journey is the rehearsal for the poetry's imaginative venture. Even the lineation of Wall's poetry shows the "open-form" influences of American poets like James Schuyler and Frank O'Hara. In contrast, Delanty's poems reveal the emigrant's awareness of a fascinating though significant difference from his new home. His early poem, "America," begins with the declaration "I'm buffaloed / by this landscape / without voice / or memory." The shock expressed in these lines at once demonstrates the poet's consciousness of his own "otherness" in the midst of the American landscape and rehearses the myth of America as a land without a past. The poet might as well be a Puritan arriving at Plymouth Rock, or any European explorer from the Age of Exploration who projects upon the American landscape the status of an historical and metaphysical blank slate. At the same time the verb "buffaloed" is an American idiom, not an Irish one, so from the beginning the poem inscribes the poet's veiled equivocation—he has already been taken in linguistically by the landscape and its history. By the poem's third word the landscape has already altered the identity of the poet—I am buffaloed, I am become that which I am not and that is surely not Irish. As such the landscape is hardly without voice but is voiced by the poet; hardly without memory since the poem's trope reiterates the history of "discovery" by which Europeans assumed the New World as at once an otherworld to be feared and, perhaps more significantly, an opportunity—again the empty slate on which they might imprint a new version of the longstanding nexus of western tradition. Delanty is clearly aware of these tensions and countercurrents, for in the lines that follow he floats an analogy that potentially fuses American and Irish histories in what is nothing less than an archetypal pattern of oppression, victimization, and survival, or at least a palimpsest of such: Perhaps it pow-wows / with surviving Abenaki /the way Iveragha or Beara /parleys with us.

10

In this poem's analogical conceit, the Irish are like the Abenaki, the American landscape like the wild west of the west of Ireland. What saves the analogy from being strident to the point of confusion, a forced equation, is, again, the poet's equivocation—"perhaps." As before, the verbs carry the metaphor. "Pow-wow" and "parley" define parallel actions of verbal exchange between the landscapes and their inhabitants. Pow-wow, like "buffaloed," brings Native American language into the poem, while "parley" inscribes an entire history of Irish conquest into one word, since the verb "parley" arrives in Middle English through the Middle French *parlee*, which in turn originates in the late Latin *parabolare*, which is related to *parable* and *parabola*. The brief excursion into the etymology is worth the effort, since Delanty's poem is hyper-conscious of its own parabolic parallels between identities, landscapes, and cultures,

while at the same time questioning the very parallels it asserts, the final one reiterating a pre-Columbian journey to the New World from Irish legend:

Yet I can't help but feel
I'm one of Brendan's crew,
oblivious to the nature
of the fishy shore

they settled
before the whale
beneath their feet
surged to life.

The poem's final parallel is to assert a parable of the emigrant's inevitable slippage of identity, at once firm in the archetypal pattern of legendary passage and fundamentally unsettled since the archetype itself is founded on the undermining of firm ground, both native and adopted, through the parabolic journey away from home that will inevitably alter one's consciousness of home, wherever it is. As Delanty observes in "We Shall Not Play the Harp Backwards Now, No," "many of us learned the trick / of turning ourselves into ourselves, / free in the *fe fiada* anonymity of America." Here, playing on the Irish legend of Earl Gerald who turned himself into a stag, the poet affirms his emigrant identity as neither bound to the native place with its "all-seeing" small towns, nor to the ideal of American assimilation, but rather to the idea of the emigrant as artist whose freedom is enabled by America's *fe fiada*, its cloak of invisibility, an art made possible by America's sheer immensity relative to Ireland.

11

In Delanty's poem the use of Irish to describe an American phenomenon underscores the poet's equivocation about even his artistic identity—as artist he would be neither one thing nor the other, and perhaps both Irish and American at the same time, and/or as needed by the particular poem, or even at a particular moment in a particular poem. Such poems are about the shifting, essentially hybrid nature of the emigrant's sense of identity, as well as the cultural gaps and allegiances the emigrant must negotiate, and the poet negotiates through language. As such, a poem like Delanty's "Tagging the Stealer" uses baseball to track the shift from scoffing ignorance at the American Pastime to seeing the game as an art that, like poetry, has its own complex "sign language" through which the game is made possible. Such poems in turn track the emigrant experience somewhat differently than does Eamonn Wall's work, in that Wall's poetry feels rather more at ease in the emigrant encounter with the "otherness" of America, with that defining openness, whereas Delanty's poetry equivocates, and thereby charts an emigrant's resistance to redefinition and assimilation in the image of the immigrant's new world. Both poets, however, render apparent what Kearney calls in *Navigations* a transnational paradigm that underlies the history of Irish culture, and suggests the extension of that paradigm to the Irish American context, and to Irish American poetry specifically.

III.

Wall and Delanty are the most prominent poets of their generation who explore the Irish experience of emigration to America, though they have their progenitors as well in a few key figures that stayed and made lives in America. Born in Dublin in 1941, Eamonn Grennan established his career entirely in America and through American presses, garnering a substantial number of America awards. Born in 1951 in County Armagh, Paul Muldoon moved to the United States in 1987 and has since become an American citizen; he won a Pulitzer Prize for his book *Moy Sand and Gravel* in 2004. These poets are Irish poets by their birth on the island of Ireland; still American models, culture, and history have influenced their work pervasively. Again, as Wall reminds us, after Dermot Bolger, many Irish writers now are not exiles at all but “commuters.” The like would certainly be true to some extent for each of these poets, since each has easy access to frequent flyer miles as well as friends and family back in the home country, despite having family likewise on the American shore, as well as jobs, and publishers. However, to see such writers as only identifiably Irish, that is Irish by birth and therefore inextricably bound to the native place, is once again to cover with a kind of *fe fiada* cloak of invisibility the undeniable fact that emigration, as the novelist Joseph O’Connor observed, “is as Irish as Cathleen Ni Houlihan’s harp.” Beyond O’Connor’s rueful barb, to miss the American impact on these writers and its place in the history of Ireland and America—or to treat it as merely ancillary—is to avoid confronting the complex and perhaps challenging fact that the divided tree of Kinsella’s dual tradition has another transnational limb.

The paucity of poems expressly treating emigration and exile one can find in so defining a literary and cultural resource as *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* speaks volumes on this account. A quick track of such poems in the first volume notes Haicead’s seventeenth century “The Emigrant’s Love for Ireland” and James Orr’s eighteenth century “Song, composed on the Banks of Newfoundland.” One must wait until the third volume to find Brian Coffey’s “Missouri Sequence.” The third volume also includes work by John Montague and Grennan, both poets with strong ties to the United States, though in particular none of Montague’s poems from *The Dead Kingdom* are represented, the poems of his that most directly treat the experience of exile. We do, however, find his classic poem of emigrant longing, “All Legendary Obstacles.” Still, it is a telling omission that none of Montague’s poems engaging his family’s emigration to America or his father’s decision to stay in his adopted country find admission to this definitive collection. Thank goodness Eavan Boland’s “The Emigrant Irish” appears with its stern reproach—“What they survived we could not even live”—though the poem’s admonition might just as well be turned against a definition of tradition that appears to prune much of the poetry of emigration from the canon. Neither is Pádraig O’Heigeartaigh’s “My Sorrow, Doncha,” an exile’s lament for his lost daughter written in Irish—though it does appear in Kinsella’s *Oxford Anthology of Irish Verse*. Nor do we find Louis MacNiece’s “Last Before America,” again one of the few Irish poems that speak to the experience of exile and emigration. Future anthologies of Irish writing might seek to include more poems that explore this central theme of Irish history. Among them should be Michael Coady’s poem “The Letter” and his essay “The Use of Memory” that together form a classic exploration of the personal toll taken by the experience of emigration on the lives of Irish families for generations. Coady himself forcefully addresses the fundamental problem in “The Sea-Divided Silence” where he identifies a denial at the heart of the Irish literary

tradition that denies the magnitude of the diaspora for Irish literature. What we have, in his estimate, is “a tragic history of the unsaid, an evasive and disabling mode of response based upon the twin stereotypes which conspire to conceal rather than reveal—on the one hand the streets-paved-with-god-vista of America from Ireland and on the other the sentimentalised idealisation of the homeland among exiles, each curiously reinforcing the other, though in seeming contradiction.” The result, he judges, is a “lacuna in the national discourse’ and in the literature. The point here, without sounding shrilly critical, is to identify a significant blind spot in the Irish literary tradition, one that appears to manifest pervasively in the world of cultural memory the words of Boland’s lament for the emigrant Irish--“Like oil lamps we put them out the back, / of our houses, of our minds.”

The growing significance of this historical and cultural lacuna becomes even more apparent when one considers Irish-American poetry from the standpoint of those poets who are not Irish born, but who by ancestry deserve to have their work considered within a more encompassing formulation of tradition. From such a widened perspective, however, would Irish-American poets merely be appropriating an Irish-ness lost to them by history? Then again, is the tradition of Irish poetry complete without some measure of recognition given those works and poets who embody Ireland’s history of emigration? Yet, does assimilation over just one generation into the American cultural milieu preclude such considerations? Again, Wall broaches the subject implicitly when he reflects: “Irish culture has become so widely disseminated and influential in the United States, and travel has become so easy, that Americans bypass Irish America and come straight to Ireland. Similarly, many of the young Irish who go to America nowadays go straight to the Lower East Side of Manhattan and steer clear of an Irish American world they consider having ground to a halt, wallowing in a time warp.” Wall’s intention here is to argue for definitions of Irish and American to be “enlarged, inclusive, and allow both for fluidity and for a changed world,”⁴³ particularly regarding the “migrant” Irish poets who move between both shores, though what of first and second generation and third generation Irish American poets? Are they also to be considered part of an Irish American world that has ground to a halt? Such a judgment would be inconsistent with the remarkable burgeoning of Irish American poetry over the course of the last century.

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Moreover, the idea that assimilation into America should preclude the Irish American poet from being considered within an expanded understanding of Irish literary tradition is inconsistent with Irish history. Kinsella himself speaks of “the way of assimilation” as essential to the development of “the dual tradition” of Irish and Anglo-Irish literature and culture. Likewise, to envision being born on the island as the litmus test for Irish-ness is likewise inconsistent with Irish history. Is Montague not an Irish poet because he was born in Brooklyn? Is Eva Bourke not an Irish poet because she was born in Germany, though she lives and teaches in Galway and publishes with Dedalus Press in Ireland? Assimilation is part of Ireland’s history, as is the history of migration—emigrant, exile, or contemporary “commuter.” Irish assimilation to America was born of the forces of the Irish diaspora and is a part of the story. To further neglect that story would be to persist in what Kiberd has called “a revivalist culture,” a culture trapped by the need to define itself against a colonizer,⁴⁴ though surely revivalism must be misplaced when it is levied against a historically and culturally extended

community abroad of one's own. Given Ireland's inevitable and increasing confrontation with multiculturalism through the European Union, as well as the growing recognition of its own multicultural past, it is time vestiges revivalism give way to broader views on the conception and formation of tradition, and that means taking fuller account of the poetic legacy of the emigrant Irish in America, and thereby to bring Irish American poets out of the poet's corner for a long-awaited place at the larger banquet.

IV.

One important arena of Irish history and tradition that Irish-American poetry appears to have acknowledged and engaged more substantively than has Irish poetry—at least those Irish poems written in English—is the Great Famine. The Famine is a profound rupture in Irish history, a cultural caesura dividing modern Ireland from its past. By now there have been so many studies on the Great Famine and its catastrophic effects on Irish society during the decade from the early 1840s to the early 1850s that an extensive treatment in this context would be redundant. Brendan Galvin approaches the subject dramatically in “1847.” Galvin's poem is a short sequence of three parts that while retrospective nevertheless places the reader in the historical scene. As such the poem collapses temporal distance. The first poem places us in the perspective of a man from Adare in County Limerick who fired a pistol, unsuccessfully, at Queen Victoria during her visit to Ireland during the worst year of The Famine. Galvin's poem is laudable for its ability to place us in the mind of the desperate man, or at least to create that illusion:

Shoveled out, improved off the hand
too poor to be ballast for
a Black Star packet, his fate in
the failed potato, maybe he survived
the season of blackberries
while his children stared
like storybook rabbits
from under a scalpeen....

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Galvin's manipulation of perspective here—we are both inside and outside of the man's point of view—heightens the reader's empathy toward the figure. In the section that follows, Galvin fictionalizes a real report from the Board of Potato Commissioners that instructs the starving in how to derive nourishment from the rotted potatoes by mixing the soaked pulp with other ingredients—as if there were any—to make bread: “All true Irishmen, / we are confident, will exert themselves / to all we recommend....” The poet's bitter irony is palpable, and reminiscent of Seamus Heaney's tone in “For the Commander of the ‘Eliza.’” Galvin's sequence ends not in Ireland but in Grosse Isle, and thus affirms continuity with origin precisely through the searing breakage between the Old World and the New caused by The Famine. “Everywhere you step / into the indentations under grass,” Galvin reflects, thereby acknowledging the presence—or absence—of the thousands who died in the New World from the brutal social and historical machinery at work in the Old. In “1847” the huge historical, communal, and metaphysical gulf that is The Great Famine emerges from the unspoken of history in a manner that faces up to the whole of the event, including the emigrant experience, from the stand-point of Irish American poets removed from the horror of the experience by the space of the Atlantic as well as a couple of generations.

V.

The sense of place, of course, is not only a fundamental theme in Irish poetry. As we saw in Coffey's "Missouri Sequence" it is the fundamental allegiance defining Irishness as well, even when one has left the native land. Though Wall challenges this assumption in "The Wexford Container Tragedy," the centrality of place to definitions of Irishness is incontestable—to be Irish is to be related closely to the place of Ireland, and indeed, traditionally, to an even more localized sense of place than nation. One grows up in a country and town-land. The north side of Dublin is not the same place as the south side. While the urgency of this localized sense of identity has surely diminished with the advent of modernity in which differences of custom and self-definition collapse even as they heighten into at times combustible caricatures of themselves, Patrick Kavanagh's desire to distinguish the parochial from the provincial still has currency. This is even truer in our "post-modern" world. We live where we live, in our particular fractal portion of an ever more complex global nexus. Relevant again here is Kinsella's "way of assimilation," by which, he affirms, Irish literature knows the necessity for this paradigmatic negotiation and a need for adaptation through which it wrests some measure of continuity over the course of history in spite of the wrenching advent of the modern world.

At the same time, as might be extrapolated from Kinsella's reflections, the pressure between the sense of place and the recognition of displacement force a choice on the Irish poet—either one establishes one's voice in proximity to "primary audience sharing the facts of experience intimately with the writer," or one constructs "an ideal audience, a projection of the self, allowing an actual audience to appear when it can." For Kinsella, "with the second choice one enters the world of modern art, an art primarily of exploration." The choice is the one Yeats made against the revivalist cast of his early work, his "coat of old mythologies," and the one Joyce made to arrogate to himself the urgency of his own imagination unfettered by any allegiance to home except chosen by his own driven and watchful consciousness. The choice Kinsella identifies throws light on the problem of Irish American poets and their relation to the tradition of Irish poetry. Put, simply, most Irish American poems of the nineteenth century fail because they turn back in nostalgia toward the native place, toward the audience of shared native regard. In a sense, they refuse the modern directive toward exploration, toward acceptance of migration as both an historical and metaphysical condition.

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Firmly rooted in the American Northeast, in the landscape and fishing villages of Cape Cod, the poetry of Galvin embodies the Irish obsession with the local, though in a way that reveals a nearly pure transparency between Irish and American senses of place. At the same time, Galvin is as equally adept at absorbing and re-inventing Irish legend and hagiography in his long poem *Saints in their Ox-Hide Boat* as he is at retelling the life and work of American natural historian Loranzo Newcomb in his other major long poem, *Wampanoag Traveler*. Winner of major literary awards from the Hardison Prize to the Levenson Poetry Prize to a fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation and most recently a National Book Award finalist, Brendan Galvin is certainly the Irish-American poet of the past thirty years whose work achieves an almost perfect imaginative commerce between Irish and American traditions, and does so without strain or intellectual anxiety, but with a air of immediate reciprocity. It is as if in Galvin's work the divided mind of the Irish-American had found

a vital and conducive balance between the two geographical worlds. The poem “Hearing Irish Spoken” exemplifies this approach. What Galvin’s poem envisions, and embodies, is continuity between worlds in spite of historical division through the traumatic loss of place achieved, paradoxically, by the poet’s witness to the language he cannot speak.

The world opened up to the young speaker listening to the language of his deeper past and hence to a sense of place that likewise traces a deeper history of displacement. “I stood at the twilit / meeting of their knees and voices,” Galvin recounts at the poem’s end, “wondering if it meant some failing in me.” I do not know of a more truthful and tender rendering of the first or second-generation Irish American experience than is found in this scene, speaking at once to the sense of wonder and strangeness before the loss of what might have been one’s linguistic birthright and the sense of otherness from one’s own family. Irish is a language in exile in Galvin’s poem, having had to endure despite its usurpation by English, though it is also the stream that bears the undertow of the poet’s deeper sense of identity. He lives in both worlds, the vital cacophony of America and an Ireland “plaited” into the fabric of his sense of self as well as place like DNA. The “code” of Irish, then, is at once the cipher of Ireland as lost world and the conveyor of continuity for the poet’s connection to that world. It is as if Kinsella’s subtending continuity through division and the near culture-leveling catastrophe of The Famine had traveled with the emigrants and exiles to the new world, and that rift and nexus of meaning and identity is now made manifest in Galvin’s moving poem.

“Plaited” is the perfect verb in Galvin’s “Hearing Irish Spoken” to communicate both the intimacy of the Irish language with place and the encoding of the sense of being at once Irish and American for this Irish-American poet. His mindfulness of Irish America’s continuity with Ireland is maintained despite the disruptive passages of exile and emigration, but without denying the force of that disruption. As he reflects in his poem “Donegal,” “Now I understand / why treelessness and / bog that keeps brown water / are in me like a code, Grandfather.” In these important lines Galvin raises to consciousness the circumstance not only of being an Irish-American poet but of being Irish American; and more than this, of being anyone for whom the encounter with place awakens an almost unspeakable sense connection. The sense of place is encoded in the sense of identity. At the same time, Galvin’s poem also registers the feeling of incompleteness experienced by the loss of place that is perceived to be the “ground” of one’s identity:

But to say how the world began
where sheep lie down for
the journey into quartzite,
I will have to learn the single
jog of the head
men use to speak paragraphs
on the weather and the hard road
around here, where a lark
goes up each morning,
singing to penetrate the sun.

Galvin's "Donegal" refuses to affirm a perfect analogy between the poet's sense of identity and his sense of Ireland as the place of origin. Rather, though the code is inside him, it is not entirely readable—he will have to learn other codes, or the subtler nuances of the code he knows has shaped his entire being. As such, Galvin's awareness of the discontinuity between his sense of being Irish and his sense of being American is equally vital for his poetry. The sense of displacement as well as place explicitly shapes his identity and his poetry. The lark will not penetrate the sun, but the vital effort to do so is what enables the lark to sing, and so too the poet. As his recent poem "Blackthorn and Ash" articulates, incompleteness, the sense of displacement, provides the vantage that enables to poet to read and evoke the breakages of history behind his encounter with Ireland as native place:

So this is the source,
obscured by the ash trees and black thorns
growing through rooms my grandfather's
mother and father grew their children in,
before the boys caught rides to Merville and took
the lighter out to the Glasgow-Boston steamer
anchored on Lough Foyle, with ash twigs
in their pockets, charms against drowning,
that tree possessing the power resident in water.

It is important that as Galvin comes to the source, the perceived place of origin, his consciousness pivots forward to the journey endured by his family in leaving the source rather than sentimentalizing the passage of return. This ability to balance, to counterpoint, to stand imaginatively on the pivot between affirming his Irish identity and recognizing its loss through historical displacement is what makes Galvin's poetry so significant, and not only for Irish-America. Irish poetry should take stock of Brendan Galvin's vantage on what is a characteristically Irish experience, as it should take stock of other Irish-American poets exploring such themes.

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* * *

If we read back from Galvin's success in singing out of the Irish American awareness of historical displacement and equally out of a sense of place as vivid as Kavanagh's parish within its own indigenous American locale it throws into sharp relief the evolution of Irish American poetry from John Boyle O'Reilly's time to the present. The work of other Irish poets who came to America, in the nineteenth century until today have had to negotiate a similar sense of double allegiance, and have done so in their own individual idioms while recognizing their connection to the tradition of Irish poetry. For those poets whose immediate connection to Ireland has been broken by a generation or more, there has been a slow but evident passage of embracing their dual inheritance, of coming to consciousness to the significance of the Irish diaspora for their sense of identity. As Stephanie Rains observes "for diasporic communities whose ancestors made these journeys... the process was a single and indivisible event, albeit open to multiple meanings" as well as "a foundational narrative for the communities of these emigrants' descendants." For Irish American poets it has

taken generations for that “foundational narrative” to find its voice through many voices and sensibilities scattered across the wide and varied landscape of American poetry. Just as Ward affirms there is a “subterranean continuity within native Irish culture that survived the demise of the formal literary tradition and preserved the modified concerns of the *file* in the folk tradition,” so too there is what I would call a submerged continuity between the dual Irish tradition as defined by Kinsella and the poetry produced by Irish-Americans that, though modified, nonetheless preserves an identification and connection with what was once the native place.

It would be liberating for the Irish tradition, doubled as it already is, to acknowledge and examine these identifications and connections “plaited” and “encoded” into and through the further breach of tradition caused by the Irish diaspora in America.

Daniel Tobin



Bio

Daniel Tobin is the author of eight books of poems *Where the World is Made*, *Double Life*, *The Narrows*, *Second Things*, *Belated Heavens*, *The Net*, *From Nothing*, and *Blood Labors* in addition to *The Stone in the Air*, his versions of poems from the German of Paul Celan, forthcoming from Salmon Publishing. He is the author of the critical studies *Awake in America*, *Passage to the Center: Imagination and the Sacred in the Poetry of Seamus Heaney*, and the forthcoming *On Serious Earth*. He is also editor of *The Book of Irish American Poetry from the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, *Light in Hand: Selected Early Poems of Lola Ridge*, *Poet's Work*, *Poet's Play: Essays on the Practice and the Arts* (with Pimone Triplett) and *The Collected Early Poems of Lola Ridge*. His poetry has won "The Discovery / The Nation Award," The Robert Penn Warren Award, the Robert Frost Fellowship, the Katherine Bakeless Nason Prize, the Massachusetts Book Award in Poetry, fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, and the Julia Ward Howe Award, among other honors.

Two poems by Brendan Galvin

HEARING IRISH SPOKEN

Later, I'd understand how it put
the Atlantic west of them
again, kept places where scraggly grass
prevented the stones from ganging up
the way they did in Boston. On the top
rear porch of a triple-decker,
it tied them to whitewashed farmsteads
splashed with slurry, cowprints
baked in mud by the blue summer air.
All through the distant thwack and roar
of baseball at Glendale Park,
the Saccos voluble at their supper
next door, it ran like water
steady a thousand years from a limestone
lip, plaited itself through bogs
that absorbed roadsigns in English,
ran with watery sunlight after days
of rain. How Anna McCarron rejected
Donal Rua and he went out to Australia;
how a bachelor's money is never lucky.
Time left then to themselves,
left them themselves celebrating
an outlaw tongue. I stood at the twilit
meeting of their knees and voices,
wondering if it meant some failing in me.

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Reading Ireland would like to thank Brendan Galvin for his kind permission to re-print "Hearing Irish Spoken" from Great Blue: New and Selected Poems Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990.

MY GRANDMOTHER STEALS

HER LAST TROUT

(Donegal, 1884)

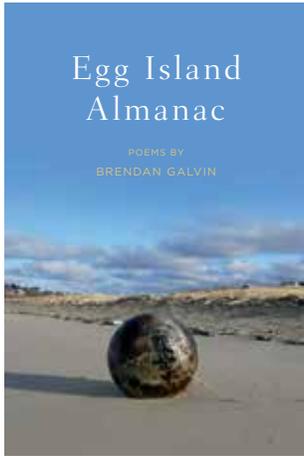
Last night a star followed
the crescent moon, trailing it
west, motif for a journey,
and this morning, skirts tucked,
wading the brook she dammed
with turf, she soothes feet unused to
the boots she's been breaking in
for wear in a Boston kitchen.

All her signs say water.
In its jostling she hears
brothers and sisters
lark in the sleeping loft.
She knows each shallow pool
below her dam, each stone
with a fish in its
shadow. Quick hands
scoop another trout up the bank.
She scrambles after, looks the field
round for the bailiff, slips
it flipping into the fattening
bag: this is demesne land.

F, like the scythe's handle;
T, for the handle of the spade;
Y, the rake's handle:
with the shank of a clay pipe
she had practiced her letters
on flagstone. She is Mary Ann,
and she's ready. Below, in the village,
they're baking oaten bread.

Three times to the oven
means loaves for a long sailing.
Last Hallow Eve, blindfolded,
she bypassed the plate heaped with
clay, escaping her death,
and the ring's plate, meaning
marriage, and set her hand
in the plate bearing water.

Reading Ireland would like to thank Brendan Galvin his kind permission to reprint "My Grandmother Steals Her Last Trout" from Great Blue: New and Selected Poems Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990.



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Egg Island Almanac Poems by Brendan Galvin

What the critics are saying about Brendan Galvin's new collection, *Egg Island Almanac*:

“Brendan Galvin is one of our best poets of place, perhaps the best. *Egg Island Almanac* takes us again to his home turf, to the woods and marshes at the outer reaches of Cape Cod, and in line after line he renders the physical world of changing seasons with a fine eye: a fox ‘light-footing it over the dunes of snow,’ chickadees braving a blizzard ‘in their workaday coveralls,’ or a peacock ‘spreading his fan like a stained-glass window.’ Written in the poet’s eighth decade, these poems are aware of the cruelty of time and the past that keeps happening, especially in the wake of his wife’s death, but small treasures of observation hold each day together and make endurance worth the effort.”—Peter Makuck, author of *Long Lens: New and Selected Poems*, Pulitzer Prize nominee

“‘Lavishly bushwhacked’ by Cape Cod and the creatures who share it with him, Brendan Galvin remains our most provocative witness to the thresholds where the wild and the settled intersect. Versed in Frost’s ‘old ways of being new,’ he employs his keen eye, salty wit, vast knowledge of living things, and gift for metaphor to reveal in *Egg Island Almanac* a landscape and a heartscape that readers will never forget.”—R. T. Smith, author of *In the Night Orchard: New and Selected Poems*

“At once elegiac and satiric, the poems in Brendan Galvin’s *Egg Island Almanac* reveal a writer at home in the largest sense. Galvin has always been a careful observer of the natural world, and his attention and intelligence resonate in this bird-haunted collection. The ridicule of American pretensions and acquisitiveness is always gentle but pointed, and the land itself always, inevitably, wins. An autumn melancholy dominates the tone, even of the spring poems, but it’s a sadness shot through with the quiet wisdom of a man dedicated to recording and interpreting even the smallest of beings. As he says in ‘Getting a Grip,’ something as tiny as a single chickadee has something of value to show us: ‘taking its time, . . . / for just the right seed, passing / its grip down to me, / a strength, a way of holding on.’”

—Sarah Kennedy, author of *The Gold Thread*

Brendan Galvin



Bio

Brendan Galvin is the author of seventeen poetry collections, including *Habitat: New and Selected Poems, 1965–2005*, a finalist for the National Book Award. His awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship, two NEA fellowships, the Iowa Poetry Prize, and the first O. B. Hardison, Jr. Poetry Prize from the Folger Shakespeare Library. He has been a Wyndham Robertson Visiting Writer in Residence at Hollins University, a Coal Royalty Distinguished Writer in Residence at the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, and a Whichard Chairholder in the Humanities at East Carolina University.

Two poems by Gibbons Ruark

Canal Farewell *for Marie Heaney*

Hearts blinded to the stirring of last things
By the sheen of laughter over wine and oysters,
Begging off the nightcaps urged upon us,
The four of us bundled into a cab
That hurtled past our guest house by a block
And after much shouting shuddered to a halt
On the lamp-starred arch of Leeson Street Bridge.
We got out then and laughed goodbye all round,
Our shocks of white hair whiter than the moon.
Then you two climbed back in and headed home.
We stood for a second, nothing left to say,
Windowlights random in the surrounding walls,
The canal's dark water under us there
Ambling so slowly it might as well be still.

Reading Ireland is grateful to Gibbons Ruark for his kind permission to publish "Canal Farewell."

Transatlantic Summer Elegy

Dusk in Kinvara. An old man quietly sings
To the air. In a distant time zone, late summer
Is leaving town. From houses with small children,
The yellow porch lights flick on after summer,
Hazy constellations of dim low stars.
High stars are still, the air so still the odor
Of honeysuckle sleeps in the hedges.
This is a night to keep still in the branches
Till someone on a porch starts calling you home.
Each house circled by light is holding its breath
When suddenly out of nowhere a breeze rises
And the whole of the great night trees starts swaying
As if it were not all the leaves but one.
The wrong old man keeps singing in Kinvara.

Reading Ireland is grateful to Gibbons Ruark for his kind permission to reprint "Transatlantic Summer Elegy" from The Road to Ballyvaughan Durham, NC: Jacar Press, 2015.

Afternoons In Donnybrook

by Gibbons Ruark

It's the spring of 1976, in the largely prosaic halls of an American university, and I'm about to begin a rich and happy friendship. A colleague is walking toward me in the company of a handsome silver-haired man in a good tweed suit a little warm for our climate. This solid man, in Yeats's phrase, is Benedict Kiely, who will be my neighbor for the term and then my friend for life. In my frequent travels in Ireland, many's the citizen who will not recognize my surname as Irish. Not so Ben Kiely, for he has no sooner heard it than he reaches into his bottomless kit bag and quotes, from Mangan's "Woman of Three Cows," "O'Ruark, Maguire, those souls of fire, whose names are shrined in story-" So the first words Ben says to me are in verse, but they include the word "story," and that tells us a lot.

Let's look in now on a favored Kiely venue, the front snug of McCloskey's bar in Donnybrook. It's September 1981, and those present and accounted for, along with me, are Ben himself and John Ryan and two veterans of World War I, Timothy Sugrue of Tralee and Peter McBride of Omagh.

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On the western front, Sugrue, a major in the Welch Regiment, knew Ford Madox Ford and Siegfried Sassoon. "Meet all the best people at Vimy Ridge," says Ben. Anyway, war stories are told, I listen, and my recollections become a sonnet.

Veterans

Backs to the window of the bar in Donnybrook,
Two bent but elegant soldiers remember
The Somme, living through it, how the river looked
Recalling the Liffey, the chilling number
Of wild Irish boys among the casualties.
The younger one lost an arm for his trouble;
The older, ninety-eight, first of the British
Officers to cross the Hindenburg, though able
To return intact, grows deaf to civil noise,
Yet quickens to the mention of a close
Compatriot bemedaled at the Parliament
Of London, who cheered all Dublin with his riposte:
"Insult the King and Queen? Not a bit of it boys,
Just couldn't take my eyes off the Duchess of Kent."

Ben will write me that he read that poem to Timothy Sugrue in the hospital on his 100th birthday, and, with characteristic generosity, will say that the old soldier had greetings from the Queen of England and the Prime Minister of Ireland as well.

The clock that counts the years and not the minutes whirrs forward, and it is nearly 20 years later, October 2000, 119 Morehampton Road, just steps from McCloskey's, where the inimitable Frances is opening the door to welcome my wife and me. We have been cautioned earlier that Ben can't sit for very long because he is having serious trouble with his old back injury, but we find that "arrangements have been made" when Frances leads us through to the bedroom where Ben is lying on his back, chatting genially with his old friend Val Mulkerns. Tea and wine and edibles are served, and thus begins a happy and considerably longer visit than expected. Never mind that Ben asks if there isn't a drop of whiskey in the house, and Frances informs him cheerfully that, since he is prostrate and she has her hand on the tiller, he will have to make do with wine. He affably does so, and all goes swimmingly, as I recall gratefully in these lines:

A Room in Donnybrook

The first man ever to hear Paddy Kavanagh
Sing "Raglan Road" to "The Dawning of the Day,"
Who, indeed, lifted his voice and sang it with him,
Is lying with the counterpane up to his chest,
The pillows doing all that pillows can do,
Deep laughter in his voice despite the pain.
"It's my only back," he says, "the same back
Put me in hospital when I was a novice
And the Jesuits lost me to the tender nurses."
And, what he doesn't say, to a storied life
Of seizing the days in marvelous stories.
"Now," somebody says, "Talk about the present.
You're slipping off on your own to the past."
The answer to that one is a song from Donegal.
Autumn is in the tree he sees in the window,
It's lowering light idling up the headboard,
Glazing, where it waits leaning against the wall,
The hand-worn grain of his knobby blackthorn,
A gift from a friend in Omagh, still within reach.

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Editor's Note: The two poems included in this essay, "Veterans" and "A Room in Donnybrook" (part 1. of "On an Autumn Day), are published in The Road to Ballyvaughan by Gibbons Ruark, Durham, NC: Jacar Press, 2015.

Gibbons Ruark



Bio

Gibbons Ruark, born in Raleigh, North Carolina in 1941, has been visiting Ireland since 1978. Now in his new and ninth collection, *The Road to Ballyvaughan* (Jacar Press, 2015), are gathered the poems he has published out of those travels. Among his earlier volumes are *Keeping Company* (Johns Hopkins, 1983), *Rescue the Perishing* (LSU, 1991), *Passing Through Customs: New and Selected Poems* (LSU, 1999) and *Staying Blue* (Lost Hills Books, 2008). He has given readings in over half the fifty states, in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland. The recipient of many awards, including three NEA Poetry Fellowships, residencies at The Tyrone Guthrie Centre in Ireland, a Pushcart Prize and the 1984 Saxifrage Prize for *Keeping Company*, he lives with his wife Kay in Raleigh.

Four poems by John F. Deane

Dark Night

And what is truth?
 Three a.m. Chicago,
a gunshot, somewhere,
 snap-sudden as a brain
stroke, a heart-attack,
 and alarms strident
across the night;
 screech of a car and a violent
smash –
 high voices in argument,
the sound of running feet
 and a motorbike roaring away
towards the city.

Then it is morning;
 a white sports-car by the kerb,
front axle cracked and tyres
 burst,
 the windows broken,
glass and oil-black bits of metal
 strewn about. Nobody has

a monopoly on truth;
 there are things hidden
 in every heart, dreams
 broken, angers, a fierce
loneliness no speed or violence can overtake.

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

It is all risk, and I scare to risk it all.
I have tasted you again, Lord, that bitter
honeyed taste; you have breached my self-
defenses, checked my breathing, chilled
my flesh, scraped your nails along my bones.
I hold on. Frightened and distracted. Can we lead
extraordinary lives? Outside the door, Madonna
della Strada, the loveliness of Lake Michigan;
on the horizon, a low rainbow of rich, billowing
sails, the sky a clear-glass blue, nothing of the vast
incomprehensible cosmic challenges visible
beyond: nothing of that intangible universe, and we
detached, an element, all bone, subject
to human logic, feeling ourselves flesh of the stars.

Camelback Mountain: Arizona

for Steve and Meri

They are strange to me: humming-bird, coyote, quail; and that
cackling and marauding band of grackles, sheen
on their featherblack, that came suddenly tossing by. Beyond

the high hedge of flowering oleander, the scrub-spotted
rust-red hump and head of Camelback Mountain.

Strange to me, too, the high heat of Arizona, mid-November,

and the standing guards of (shouldering-arms) cacti, all spine
and grump and proud rigidity. A world
where only human love and kindness give truth to the name

of Paradise Valley; and in this loveliness, the people, too,
are in God's care, but carrying – besides the coral snakes,
the rattlers and the scorpions – a weight of suffering

quietly home. The mountain, its billion-years-old rocks and canyons,
has seen it all before, and will again, being envious perhaps
of the shortness of the human span, of the immortal miracle

of mercy, mountains and grounds in a faith like that
of the old and heartfelt Abraham who offered shelter to strangers
coming towards him out of the haze of a shimmering heat.

American Sonnet

Dunkin' Donuts and Five Guys.
Dogs, Hot Dogs. MacDonalds.
Chase Bank. Go Grocer.
Potbelly Sandwich. Dunkin' Donuts.
Bang Bang Pie-Shop. Chase.
Chicago's Magnificent Mile. Go.
Subs and donuts and bagels. Chase.
Shoppers. Till you droppers.
Eateries. Drinkeries. Fat.
Fat Rice. Hot Dogs. Trader Joe's.
Five Guys. Taco Bell. Popeye's
Louisiana Kitchen. Eatery.
Drinkery. Meatery. Deep Dish Pizza.
Warm Belly Cookies. Potbelly. Trump.

John F. Deane



Bio

Born Achill Island 1943; founded Poetry Ireland and The Poetry Ireland Review, 1979; Published several collections of poetry and some fiction; Won the *O'Shaughnessy Award for Irish Poetry*, the *Marten Toonder Award* for Literature, *Golden Key Award* from Serbia, *Laudomia Bonanni Prize* from L'Aquila, Italy. Shortlisted for both the T.S.Eliot prize and The Irish Times Poetry Now Award, won residencies in Bavaria, Monaco and Paris. He is a member of Aosdána. His recent poetry collections: *Snow falling on Chestnut Hill: New & Selected Poems* was published by Carcanet in October 2012. His latest fiction is a novel, *Where No Storms Come*, published by Blackstaff in 2010. A new collection of poems, *Semibreve*, has just been published by Carcanet in 2015 and a 'faith and poetry memoir', *Give Dust a Tongue*, has also been published by Columba in 2015. John F. Deane was Mayo County Council's Writer in Residence for 2015. Deane was Visiting Scholar in Boston College in Spring 2008. Deane was appointed Teilhard de Chardin Fellow in Christian Studies in the Loyola University Chicago, for the Fall semester of 2016.

Three poems by Eamonn Wall

FLYING TO GLENDALOUGH

i.m. Seamus Heaney

Tighter than the holy monk's monastery cell
is this airplane seat I am planed and fitted to,
hurtled toward Ireland. If in cruciform
my arms stretch left and right, the steward's
cart is halted, my neighbor's screen divided.
Up here, no blackbirds land to settle in
for nesting and I guess that each Atlantic
crossing swipes dreamy phrases bonding
soul to lake, hillside, grainy sandy shore.

Cloudy, hazy, I walk along the trails today
of Glendalough to purge the body, loose
the mind of the jet plane's tight confine
the day before—oak and spruce shaded,
water warbling wood and pushing down
to lakeside, pressing on earth's sponge,
one moment of levitation before the spirit
lurches upward to perch amid the falconry,
descending to whip to icy water torment.

I place my soiled hands in the saint's clear
lake. Contrite. Joyful I have made it home.
We are all of us but mere shades arrested
water's edge, shapes held momentarily
on plated windows of high-street shops,
Seamus Heaney, "St. Kevin and the Blackbird,"
your lovely poem of here, *Opened Ground*.
To honor my own father, one Sunday I ascended
many steps of Kurama Dera in lush foothills
high above Kyoto, a world away. Glendalough
this hazy day and freed from airline's tinned air,
I breathe his fragrant verses ferried on the wind.

MIDWESTERN IRISH

Here in Iowa late autumn twilight
flicks through oak leaves rolling:
this air dry as museum parchment
cased away and, for clarity of sight,
daylight here is harshly cast. There,
cormorant and swan group Bare
Meadow's edge. Later, an image
I knew once walks home glare-
free from a Slaney bar, his river
coated to an inky sheen, his town's
revival franked by ziggurat of geese
and onward heavy juggernaut
of goods. A moment, this image—
ferryman and guide—gauges fiery
filament cast from bold quays, far
visible from this ground of Iowa.
I passed my youthful decades Slaney
side, hardly a light left on this hour,
hands paused above mother's piano
keys. I had snapped the latch: wept,
whooped, and hollered road ward
to seek salvation and crowning halo.

This far on Iowa blind-pulled twilight
I mark my child's height to doorframe
of her room, registering in her name
dinnseanchas, foolishness perhaps,
her shrieks bringing muted light
alive, light of evening as we say,
skin from bathing translucent,
her room catching rhythm of silver
maples rocking back and forth
along California St., her mother
grounding Heidi with grilled cheese
and promise of hot chocolate cup.

With care, I make measurements,
our child being kin to rivers, breath,
measure of this moment's penciled
sight. For one evening—if spared
dear Lord—we are a river holding
still. Our lives have not been wasted,
our tastes are sweet as Amish peaches
picked from baskets on summer days.

*Reading Ireland would like to thank Eamonn Wall for his kind permission to
publish "Midwestern Irish."*

BLUES FOR RORY

From the Slaney Co. Wexford Mississippi Delta
rode the rails in flannel shirts, warm CIE beer
in hands, in the smoking carriage by big muddy cities
Gorey/Chicago, Arklow/St. Louis, moving on mile
by mile marker by great rivers getting closer still
to hearing the legendary bluesman from Cork City
play on his battered strat the blues, and sing I could've
had religion but my little girl wouldn't let me pray,
that kind of girl hard to come by in the Slaney
Co. Wexford Mississippi Delta though neither did
we pray too much being all prayed out since
Confirmation. Rory Gallagher at the National
Stadium after Christmas, the first live gig ever
for me except for wedding bands in the Slaney Co.
Wexford Nashville Tennessee as I served across
the counter large Macs to speeded up Country
Roads, couples gliding across the maple floor. All
confused in Connolly/Union Station the route to
Harold's Cross to breathe the raw elixir of the
blues, Rory Gallagher's sweat falling on his guitar.
I could touch his feet if the bouncers turned their
heads, who can describe the thrill of knowing it all
for the first time, first bottleneck solo couple of
numbers in? Lord, take that sinner boy home &
I'm here on the prairie now with new CDS
from Amazon.com, window breeze from the deep
south wafting from tree-lined street to tawny alley,
potholes open wide, the rusted trucks, loose gravel,
night light yellow flickering, where for hours
the repo man stood with his forms and magazines,
the world not so bright now for your absence,
Rory Gallagher, Can't believe it's true, I can't
believe it's true. How we walked by the Grand
Canal in wet midnight winter air, lost looking for
Ranelagh, electrified & silenced by the wonder
of it all, not caring if we ever made it home to
Model County Wexford, hotbed of hurling, home
of strawberries, fields of barley & country music.

Reading Ireland would like to thank Eamonn Wall and Salmon Poetry for their kind permission to re-print "Blues for Rory" from Junction City: New and Selected Poems 1990-2015 (Salmon Poetry, 2015). To purchase this collection visit www.salmonpoetry.com

Eamonn Wall



Bio

Eamonn Wall's recent books include *Junction City: New and Selected Poems 1990-2015* (Salmon Poetry 2015) and *Writing the Irish West: Ecologies and Traditions* (Notre Dame, 2011). With Saeko Yoshikawa, he co-edited a special issue of *POETICA* (Tokyo) on "Coleridge and Contemplation" that appeared in 2016. He is also the author *From the Sin-é Café to the Black Hills: Notes on the New Irish* (Wisconsin, 2000) that received the Durkan prize from ACIS for excellence in scholarship. In 2014, he served as the Heimbold Irish Studies chair at Villanova University. Essays, articles, reviews, and poems have been published widely in journals and newspapers in the US and Ireland. Eamonn Wall is a past-president of the American Conference for Irish Studies and currently serves as a vice-president of Irish American Writers & Artists Inc. He teaches at the University of Missouri-St. Louis where he is Smurfit-Stone Professor of Irish Studies and Professor of English. His current projects include work on a new collection of poetry and a study of Irish and Irish American connections in writing, art, and music. A native of Co. Wexford, Eamonn Wall has lived in the US since 1982. For more information visit www.eamonnwall.net

Three poems by Greg Delanty

Umbilical

You bike most everywhere these days,
wary of your part in the latest war, the slaughter
of the innocents, the various wily ways

you've grown used to, complicity's tether.
The gas pump is an umbilical cord
sucking the life out of exhausted Terra Mater.

You read about leaders ready to award
the future and Mammon her body, smother
her in her own fumes. You know the reward,

the fate of those who kill their mothers.
Remember Orestes you translated to Humankind.
Down swoops the Erinyes, the avenging daughters,

driving tormented Orestes out of his mind.
No escaping the Furies now, the ever so kind.

ELEGY
to a friend with Alzheimer's

Your memory was dispatched ahead
of you to the land of Orcus
— the spool of all you are, to yourself, erased
though not to us.
This is as good as addressing the dead.
Your body's a blood hound baying, the scent lost
at that last river. Dumb, but tell Mnemosyne,
or the boss of Lethe,
or whatever god's your final host,
that my heart's a clenched fist.
You are a man alive dearly missed.

BLUES

There's a brilliant, but intangible lazulite blue
— you must have seen it — glistening off fresh snow,
something akin, but not quite the same as you
see shine off the back of a barn swallow,
the star-and-moon bling-ed night sky,
the neck of the male mallard, the halo
of a gas-stove flame, a certain neon butterfly,
or the back of a bluebottle fly. This ineffable glow
I noticed again seeing students, both unwhite,
Manny and Ty Prince, shimmering blue light
as they high-fived by the International Garden
outside my window. I didn't cotton on till then
why in the Irish language a black brother and sister
are called blue. O, my beautiful blue sister and brother.

Greg Delanty



Photo: John Minihan

Bio

Delanty's selected poems comes out in October 2017, titled *Selected Delanty* and it is introduced and selected by Archie Burnett. The poems included here are all uncollected and from *Selected Delanty*.

His latest book of poems is *The Greek Anthology, Book XVII* (Oxford Poets of Carcanet Press retitled *Book Seventeen* from LSU Press). Other recent books are *The Word Exchange, Anglo-Saxon Poems in Translation*, WW Norton; and his *Collected Poems 1986-2006*, Oxford Poets—Oxford Poets series, Carcanet Press. He has received many awards, most recently a Guggenheim for poetry. He is Poet in Residence at Saint Michael's College, Vermont and a US citizen as well as an Irish citizen.

He is past president of the Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers

Essay: Michael Longley on John Montague's poem "Windharp,"



Photo: ©Bobbie Hanvey

First published on the occasion of John Montague's 80th birthday, *Chosen Light* brings together more than thirty fellow Irish poets who selected one of Montague's poems and reflected on what the poem meant to them. "Windharp" is the poem selected by Michael Longley.

WINDHARP

By John Montague
for Patrick Collins

The sounds of Ireland,
that restless whispering
you never get away
from, seeping out of
low bushes and grass,
heatherbells and fern,
wrinkling bog pools,
scraping tree branches,
light hunting cloud,
sound hounding sight,
a hand ceaselessly
combing and stroking
the landscape, till
the valley gleams
like a pile upon
a mountain pony's coat.

A Slow Dance (1975)



Photo: ©Bobbie Hanvey

Reading Ireland would like to thank The Gallery Press for their kind permission to re-print John Montague's poem "Windharp" from Chosen Lights: Poets on poems by John Montague. Peter Fallon, editor. Loughcrew, Oldcastle, County Meath: The Gallery Press, 2009. Revised edition 2013.

Michael Longley Windharp

I have loved 'Windharp' for a long time. It was love at first sight. The narrow shape on the page helps to create this poem's strange effulgence – as a single shaft of sunlight breaking through on an overcast day focuses our attention on features in the landscape – a searchlight. Many of John Montague's finest poems deploy short lines and need to be read aloud with a nano-second's pause at the end of each line. This applies even (or perhaps especially) when the lines end with apparently unimportant words such as 'of' and 'till.' For instance, in its fourth line ('from, seeping out of') the poem finds its balance precisely. Syllable and breathing-space interact with great refinement. We read these lines with bated breath and are drawn into an enraptured state of mind. Attentive, devout even, 'Windharp' is a halting prayer, a broken spell. We are carried away and then brought down to earth.

I look up to this celebrant of the Irish countryside, the precision of his descriptions. The spare music, cool as a breeze, lifts the 'heatherbells and fern' and the 'bog pools' away from the stereotypical. Spaced in the single sentence like rosary beads on their thread the particles – 'whispering,' 'wrinkling,' 'stroking' – generate an atmosphere of suspense. Adverbs can so often be superfluous but here the solitary adverb 'ceaselessly' is detonated brilliantly and in a way becomes the soul of the poem. Its sounds are what these sixteen lines are all about. The intensity of 'Windharp' lends its particulars an emblematic aura. One concise rural evocation comes to symbolize the whole island. Implicated in every detail, the poet's love of Ireland is most beautifully embodied in the heart-stopping final image of the mountain pony, an incarnation of the spirit of the country-side, the poet's Pegasus.

I am reminded of when I first met John Montague decades ago on the campus of Queen's University in Belfast. He emerged out of the darkness of the quadrangle and into the dimly lit colonnade that led to the lecture theatre where he was going to read. This poet whom I had been studying for years all of a sudden took shape like one of his slim-lined poems. 'We meet at last,' he said. He was nimble and wry, a commanding presence, and friendlier than he needed to be. He read very well, with the audience gradually growing accustomed to his unpredictable stammer. The literary conversation that followed was full of angels like a good game of squash. And so it continues. I want to wish this complicated man and superlative poet a happy 80th birthday. It is high time I thanked him for his poems and for his devotion to the craft, 'a hand ceaselessly/combing and stroking/ the landscape.'

Reading Ireland would like to thank Michael Longley and The Gallery Press for their kind permission to re-print Michael Longley's essay Windharp from Chosen Lights: Poets on poems by John Montague. Peter Fallon, editor. Loughcrew, Oldcastle, County Meath: The Gallery Press, 2009. Revised edition 2013.

Michael Longley

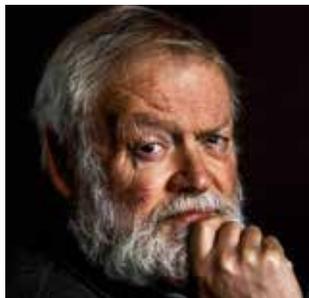


Photo: ©Bobbie Hanvey

Bio

Michael Longley's eleven poetry collections have received many awards, among them the Whitbread Prize, the T.S. Eliot Prize, the Hawthornden Prize, the *Irish Times* Poetry Prize, the Griffin International Prize and the PEN Pinter Prize. His *Collected Poems* was published in 2006, and *Sidelines: Selected Prose* in 2017. In 2001 he received the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry, and in 2003 the Wilfred Owen Award. He was appointed a CBE in 2010, and from 2007 to 2010 was Ireland Professor of Poetry. He and his wife, the critic Edna Longley, live and work in Belfast. In 2015 he was elected a Freeman of the City.

Review: John Montague's *Second Childhood*: a life in search of consolation

by Emmanuel Touhey

John Montague's final collection, *Second Childhood*, was published by The Gallery Press on February 28th on what would have been Montague's 88th birthday. Structured in two parts, Part One is a sort of tapestry of his long life, featuring some of the places he lived (Brooklyn, Garvaghey and Paris) and the people he encountered along the way, including fellow poets John Berryman and Hugh MacDiarmid. Part Two is a collection of conversations, written as poems, that he had with the great British poet David Jones in his final years. The subjects discussed cover the gamut, ranging from Ireland's conversion by a Briton and Scotland's by an Irishman (the irony not being lost on either man), to the Great War, which Jones himself fought in, the Irish Troubles, and the meaning of Robert Graves' "White Goddess."

Graves himself might have had his friend John Montague in mind when he told the Paris Review in a 1969 interview that "words are already fixed in the storehouse of the memory". Montague dug deep over the years into the recesses of his own memory, "scratched for and exhumed" the right words, creating small vignettes on the written page. *Second Childhood* offers us glimpses of a man who believed he was "born twice" as a result of the trauma he experienced after being shipped off from Brooklyn at the tender age of four to live with his spinster aunts, Freda and Brigid, in the "rough field" that was Garvaghey, in Co Tyrone.

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The mood changes throughout this collection with the help of precise, pared-back language. It is at times playful, longing, and seriously heartbreaking. Montague perfectly captures the simplicity of domestic farm life with his beloved aunts in the mischievous poem *Fowl Play*, where a rooster gets his comeuppance for getting above his station in the natural pecking order.

But when, lord of the farmyard,
he stalks over to chasten the turkeys,
swiftly they surround him,
plying their long, stabbing beaks –
eating the head off him!
The bright red rooster staggers,
his wattles laced with blood,
his trumpet call silenced,
while the hens settle in the sand
indifferent to their much offended lord.

Another poem, *New Milk*, reveals the sometimes carefree world and the anticipation of young love.

Sara Anne came to fetch the milk
Down by the Waterside every evening.
I lay in wait for her, shy, but bold
enough to entice her into a meadow.
In the stubbly aftergrass we kissed
and I touched her impossibly yellow hair.

My nostrils tingled with the smell
and dust of hay. All of summer
seemed to gather towards that hour
where we lay so close together.
But when I grew daring enough
to ease my body across hers
I upset the can of sweet milk,
Briefly whitening the warm earth.

But lurking beneath this bucolic scene is the trauma keenly felt by Montague as he remembers another place far beyond the meadow “and all the confusions” of his childhood coming flooding back. The pain of rejection and displacement captured in the heart-wrenching poem *The Locket* is revisited again in this collection as he searches for his lost childhood, his lost mother. In the poem *Riddles*, Montague gives voice to the silent experience of the returned Yank, a reverse Irish emigrant experience. Brooklyn embodies the longing for his dear mother. One minute he finds himself amid the hustle and bustle of an American city, and the next he is standing alone in an Irish field trying to make sense of a world turned upside down.

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I am a small boy,
standing in a field.
Where is my mother?
Where is my father?

Where is all
I have known,
streets of Brooklyn,
trolley cars and subways?
A whole world,
a whole town
turned upside down
into a lonely robin
on a branch of hawthorn.

Throughout his life there were moments when Montague felt like an outsider – the young American boy in an Ulster primary school and later in a boarding school, the Catholic in a Protestant-dominated Northern Ireland, the Ulster poet in Dublin, the Irishman in America, and the cosmopolitan in Cork. But he used this “outsider” status and the sense of displacement he felt all his life to good effect. St Patrick’s College seminary in Armagh during the Second World War, which he recalled in the poem *Guide*, was an inhospitable

and cold place of scholarly learning that produced priests for the archdiocese. The young Montague quickly learned that he was not destined for the pulpit. Surely his stammer, an emotional scar from his childhood, played a pivotal role. However, he was sustained by his friendship with Frank Lenny (a fellow Tyrone boy and future auxiliary bishop of Armagh) and instead found his voice in the written word, thanks to one of his teachers, Sean O' Boyle, who shared his love of language and literature with the young student. O'Boyle was gone by the time I arrived in Armagh some 32 years later, but his presence was still felt and his portrait hung in the main hall near the refectory – a ghostly presence keeping a watchful eye as the students went about their day.

As a past pupil of St Pat's, it's not hard to imagine a young John Montague walking those same corridors, stopping now and then to scan the faces of the past in the many photographs that adorned the walls, wondering about their hopes and dreams, and what became of their lives. It's reminiscent of a similar scene in the 1989 movie *Dead Poets Society*, in which Robin Williams' character John Keating asks his students about the meaning of the opening stanza of 17th-century poet Robert Herrick's poem *To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time*.

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying;
And this same flower that smiles today
Tomorrow will be dying.

"Carpe diem," (Seize the day) Keating offers his young charges as they huddle together and look more closely at the gallery of faces in the faded black and white photographs before them.

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In another scene, the students can be seen crouching around their unorthodox teacher, at the back of the classroom, as he recites Walt Whitman's poem *O Me! O Life!* and offers them a clue to their uncertain futures.

The question, O me! So sad, recurring – What good amid these, O me, O life?

Answer.
That you are here – that life exists and identity,
That the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse.

"What will your verse be?" Keating asks them. No doubt John Montague experienced such an epiphany during the many hours he spent in Sean O'Boyle's presence, as he sought to figure out his vocation. "He grabbed his pain and ran with it, and that's what most good artists do," says former student and Cork poet Thomas McCarthy. Montague dedicated himself to a scholarly life in writing and excelled in Dublin, Iowa, Albany, Berkeley and Cork. He made the world his home and poetry his life. For him poetry was a full-time occupation. He became what McCarthy calls an "unacknowledged legislator of the public...speaking to power, national struggle and conflict. To be a poet was to live an exceptional life, particularly a poet of a small nation."

McCarthy also remembers him as one who possessed a communal sense of the poet. "He was not a loner. He was a person who believed in the community of poets, one that spoke for the

community,” he says. And that sense of community stretched to everything he did, including what McCarthy called “the first response” to his writing, which Montague shared with his students when they visited his home on Grattan Hill, not far from the university in Cork, and discussed their work.

In the months since his passing, that sense of community has come full circle. University College Cork has acquired Montague’s extensive library (some 15,000 volumes in all) from his home in Ballydehob, as well as many of his writings, including his correspondence with fellow Ulster poet Seamus Heaney and notes from his conversations with British poet David Jones, some of which have been included in *Second Childhood*. The books and writings will take some 18 months to list and some will eventually be digitized,” says John Fitzgerald, the director for information services at UCC, himself a former student of Montague’s.

The university has also recently acquired the iconic Colin Davidson portrait of the poet. It will be soon be hung among the poet’s collections. It seems fitting that just as Sean O’Boyle’s portrait presided over the students in Armagh, that this bard’s likeness and spirit will now keep a watchful eye over future generations of students in UCC as they browse his heavily annotated volumes and peruse his papers in search of a better understanding of the poetic life.

John Montague had a strong sense of place, both physical as well as spiritual. And this is particularly evident in the poem *Wild Bird*.

In our last mountain field
beyond the limekiln
a stubborn circle of stones
with, at its grassy center,
a stiff glistening feather
shorn from a bird’s wing.
‘Look Johnny, and remember
for all those years to come,
that you once stood inside
what people round here still
call the Old Fairy Fort,
and that stray feather...
might well be a fairy’s wing.

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Nothing lasts forever, we are all here but for a short time. A giant in the literary forest has been felled. But to quote another great poet, Leonard Cohen: “Poetry is just the evidence of life. If your life is burning well, poetry is just the ash.”

Despite its traumatic beginning, John Montague’s life burned brightly. The glowing embers he leaves behind in the grate shall warm the hearts and inspire the minds of generations of poets to come. *Second Childhood* is but the closing chapter of an exceptional poetic life. “His poetry was a lifelong quest for consolation for his original rejection. He worked through the hurt,” says John Fitzgerald, “and ultimately he found solace in the written word.”

This review first appeared in the Irish Times on February 16th 2017.

Emmanuel Touhey



Bio

Emmanuel Touhey was born and raised in Ireland and now lives with his family in Washington, D.C., where he is currently the web editor at C-SPAN. Previously, he worked as a senior producer for the nationally syndicated *Diane Rehm Show* on NPR and as the opinion editor for *The Hill* newspaper. His literary contributions can be found in *The Irish Times* and IrishCentral.com. You can follow him on Twitter at @netouhey.

Interview: Alice McDermott in conversation with Adrienne Leavy.

Q. Before we talk about your books could you describe your upbringing? How much, if any, of your early life and background is used as raw material or inspiration for your novels?

A. I sometimes tell my students that everything they write is in some way autobiographical because our first language is learned through experience, not study. The words we chose, the phrases we use, the rhythm of our sentences, the voice of our prose – all of it reflects how and where, and from whom, we learned to speak. I grew up in post-WW II suburban Long Island, where most of the parents were city-bred, and most of the grandparents had accents – Irish, Polish, Russian, Italian. My parents were first-generation Irish, but were more proud of their city-smarts than their Irish DNA. They were not college grads, but they were readers, talkers, storytellers and philosophizers. Realistic, if devout, Catholics. I guess that description alone reveals how I've made use of this background in my novels.

Q. What Irish writers were influential to your development as a writer?

A. I wanted to be a Russian writer long before I wanted to be an Irish writer. Tolstoy, Chekov, Nabokov. (I visited the then-Soviet Union before I ever visited Ireland.) But, inevitably, I was directed to Joyce and Yeats, Frank O'Connor, Synge, Beckett, and then discovered William Trevor, Edna O'Brien, Elizabeth Bowen, Maev Brennan, Mary Lavin, John McGahern, Seamus Heaney, Eavan Boland, etc, etc.

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Q. What American writers have influenced you?

A. I was an undergraduate English major at a time when all of us were obsessed with the triumvirate of Faulkner, Fitzgerald and Hemingway. Add Henry James to the mix (I also spent a year in England before I ever visited Ireland), and I suppose you've got my earliest influences as a writer.

Q. Much of your fiction concentrates on a specific strand of American society: the predominantly Irish American lower middle class world of Brooklyn, the Bronx or Long Island dating from pre World War II up through the Vietnam War. How much of this milieu is an imaginative construct and how much of it is based on your memories of the lives of your parents' generation?

A. I wish I could say the middle class milieu of Brooklyn and Long Island between the Second World War and through Vietnam was my own imaginative construct – something like Hogwarts or Middle Earth – but, alas, it comes to us courtesy of the real world, not my imagination! I have only imagined the characters and the stories within.

Q. Was there every any concern that your novels might reveal private family details?

A. After my third novel, *At Weddings and Wakes*, was published – the first novel I wrote that dealt with this Irish American world, my mother asked me, “I know this isn’t our family, but how will anyone else know this isn’t our family.” Actually, my family sorely lacks private details that would be rich fodder for a novelist – we’re pretty dull.

Q. Do you think that the close knit Irish American community you portray in your novels is disappearing?

A. My younger son plays Irish music, and through him, I’ve discovered a vibrant Irish American (with much 21st Century diversity) community that’s thriving throughout the U.S. Honestly, it’s a kind of community I’ve had no personal experience of until recently – although they tell me I’ve been writing about them for decades.

Q. Not all of your fiction involves your Irish genealogy. Is this a thematic issue you decide consciously to either incorporate or jettison at the onset of beginning a novel?

A. I try to make very few conscious decisions about anything when I begin a novel. I start writing and see what I have to say. If Irish Americans are required for the story to be told, I sigh deeply but keep writing.

Q. In both *Charming Billy* (1998) and *Someone* (2013), the Second World War casts a shadow on the peripheral of the characters lives. The Vietnam War intrudes more directly in another of your novels, *After This* (2006), in which a Long Island family struggles to deal with the death of its eldest son in Vietnam. Was the Irish-American community of your youth involved in the widespread protests against the Vietnam War?

A. Since I didn’t grow up in an Irish-American community but in a kind of suburban melting pot of children and grandchildren of mostly European immigrants (see above), I suppose I can only speak for my generation, not my genealogy. Nearly everyone I knew of my generation was in some way drawn into the protests against Vietnam. It was both a moral exercise and a coming-of-age kind of thing.

Q. Dermot Bolger recently commented on Irish novelist Jennifer Johnston’s “uncanny ear for the subtleties and hidden meanings behind seemingly innocuous dialogue,” and I think the same assessment could be made about your work. I also see a similarity in how both of you deal with family relationships and the difficult transition from childhood to adulthood. Do you feel an affinity to Johnston?

A. Sorry, I haven’t read her work, though I know her by repute.

Q. In many respects your novels are reminiscent of the stories in James Joyce’s *Dubliners*. For example, as in *Dubliners*, there is great economy in your writing and your prose has the same quality of documentary realism, which is conveyed subtly through ordinary language. Similarly, in Joyce’s work, hardly anything of any great significance seems to happen, and when it does, its role in the story is not that of the conventional climax or resolution at the end of a tale. In your fiction, ostensibly inconsequential details in the characters lives are often later revealed to be of greater import. Can you talk about your work in the context of Joyce?

A. I might skip this one as well. I hesitate to compare myself to Joyce in any way!

Q. Critic Sinéad Moynihan sees a connection between your work and that of F. Scott Fitzgerald, specifically in regard to *Charming Billy* and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. Moynihan reads Billy's idealization of an imagined ancestral homeland in Ireland in the context of Gatsby's idealization of the American Dream. Can you speak to this comparison?

A. Of course, I hoped to play out Gatsby's romanticism in *Charming Billy*. As much to pay homage as to riff on the Great American novel. But I'm not sure Billy's idealization is of an ancestral home in Ireland. His green light across the bay is heaven itself – the afterlife where he believes he will be reunited with his lost love. For Billy, Ireland is a cold place where she's buried, where he goes not to win her back, a la Gatsby, but to visit her grave. Billy's a Roman Catholic romantic; after all, what he desires cannot be achieved through wealth, only through death. A very big difference between him and Jay Gatsby. (Although if you read Fitzgerald's story "Absolution" – once meant to be a part of Gatsby – you'll learn something about the kind of Catholic Gatsby might have been.)

Q. You write sympathetically and with great empathy for your characters; however, your novels do not romanticize or glorify these individuals. How hard is it for you as a writer to resist the pull of sentimentality?

A. No harder, I think, than it is to resist the pull of cynicism, easy irony, mockery, wry disdain. It comes down to asking yourself again and again, is this authentic, fair, honest? Is the novel about *them* – my characters – and not *me* – that egotistical writer self who hopes to impress?

Q. Your novels are populated with vividly realized male and female characters. Is it difficult for you to write a male character or does it not make any difference what the gender of the character is?

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A. I don't even think about it. Again, you write whatever it is the story demands.

Q. Do you think there is a literary generation gap between your work and that of younger Irish American writers?

A. Not sure what a *literary* generation gap would look like. Each generation, each writer, writes what he or she is compelled to write. I think of younger Irish American writers like Matthew Thomas, Eddie Joyce, Siobhan Fallon, J. Courtney Sullivan, Brenda Matthews, each following his or her muse to create a work of art.

Q. The characters in your novels are often Irish American Catholics, and in *Someone*, the brother of the main character, Marie, has left the priesthood less than a year after being ordained. How big a part does religion play in your life?

A. In my life as a writer, Catholicism certainly has shaped how I use language (see question #1) and metaphor. Not incidentally, it has shaped how many of my characters see, and speak of, their experiences. (See Gatsby answer.) I'm a practicing Catholic myself – though I probably don't practice enough to be really good at it. I love the gifts of the Church, and I'm constantly dismayed by its failings. Kind of the same way I feel about people.

Q. The recent scandals that have plagued the Catholic Church both in the United States and elsewhere have been a watershed moment for Irish-American Catholics. Have you thought about setting a novel in this context?

A. No. One way or another, it seems to me, the story would be rigged – i.e., too consciously manipulated to make a point of some sort. I’m not interested in making a point. I’ll let the journalists and memoirists, lawyers and theologians handle the subject for now.

Q. In another interview you described how you wanted to give voice to an “unremarkable woman,” which is what you do so well in *Someone*, where the main character Marie, looks back over her long life with all its attendant joys and disappointments. This novel was published seven years after your previous book, *After This*. Did it take you longer to write Marie’s story than your other stories?

A. Not really. I was working on two novels at the same time. Something I always do. Not a good habit if you want to finish a book quickly.

Q. For me, some of the most interesting passages in *Someone* are the scenes where Marie spends time with the elderly mother of her boss Fagan, the local undertaker. Mrs. Fagan and her visitors, mostly nuns, discuss the lives of the recent dead whom her son is attending on below. The small vignettes about Big Lucy and Mrs. Meany, Redmond Hogan and Florence Hogan and Bishop Tuohy and his sister Margaret Tuohy, take up only a few pages in your novel yet there is a lifetime of love and pain encapsulated in each of their stories. How long did it take you to sketch out their backgrounds?

A. I never have any clear idea about how long it takes me to write a paragraph or a scene, or even a novel. I write and rewrite every day. There does come a point in the process when you feel that the story is nearly writing itself, but the truth of the matter is that it’s taken years of writing and rewriting, tossing out and putting in, to reach that (delusional) sensation.

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Q. What role does humor play in your novels?

A. In the pursuit of honesty, authenticity – of putting yourself at the service of your characters – if you’re not finding humor, you’re not creating human beings, only vehicles for ideas. This, I find, is especially true of writing about Irish Americans. If someone among them isn’t funny, you’re not telling the truth.

Q. When you begin a novel, do you have the ending already etched out in your mind or does that emerge as the story evolves is finished?

A. The more I do this writing thing, the more I learn to distrust anything I’ve sketched out in my mind beforehand. Only the real, wondrous, difficult work of writing sentences yields anything worth keeping.

Q. You are the Richard A. Macksey Professor of the Humanities at John Hopkins University. Is there any advice about writing that you give to your students that you would like to share with our readers?

A. As far as the writing of literary fiction goes, I tell my students that if they can do anything else and still lead a happy life, they should do that other thing.

Q. You have a new novel coming out this September; can you talk a little about it?

A. It's called *The Ninth Hour* and it's about nuns. And laundry. Other things, too, of course – notions of sacrifice and selflessness and how the past reverberates, or doesn't. I've always balked a little at being labeled a Catholic novelist – much as I balk at being labeled an Irish-American novelist (sorry) – but there were times when I thought about this one, “You want a Catholic novel? I'll give you a Catholic novel!”

Q. I understand that you spent some time in Ireland on Inis Meain this summer. How often do you visit Ireland and when did you first start travelling there?

A. After visiting Russia, and spending a year in England, and traveling through Spain (Cervantes!) as an undergrad, I finally visited Ireland for the first time as a grad student. I've been back quite often since, for work and pleasure, and to accompany my Irish-music playing son to various fleadh's. That same son lured us to Inis Meain, where he was doing an internship. We fell in love with the island – and I got to reconnect with good old Synge. Being in Ireland reminds me every time of just how very Irish my family has always been – when all the while I was growing up, I thought we were just New Yorkers.

Thank you Alice.

July 2017

Alice McDermott



Bio

Alice McDermott's eighth novel, *The Ninth Hour*, will be published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux in September. Her seventh novel, *Someone*, 2013, was a New York Times bestseller, a finalist for the Dublin IMPAC Award, the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Patterson Prize for Fiction, and long-listed for the National Book Award. Three of her previous novels, *After This*, *At Weddings and Wakes* and *That Night*, were finalists for the Pulitzer Prize. *Charming Billy* won the National Book Award for fiction in 1998. It was also a finalist for the Dublin IMPAC Award. *That Night* was a finalist for the National Book Award, the PEN/Faulkner Award and the Los Angeles Times Book Prize. Her stories, essays and reviews have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The New Yorker*, *Harpers* and elsewhere. She has received the Whiting Writers Award, the Carington Award for Literary Excellence, and the F. Scott Fitzgerald Award for American Literature. In 2013, she was inducted into the New York State Writers Hall of Fame. She is the Richard A. Macksey Professor of the Humanities at Johns Hopkins University.

Maeve Brennan at 100

by Angela Bourke

She shot herself in the back with the aid of a small handmirror at the foot of the main altar in St. Patrick's Cathedral one Shrove Tuesday.

Maeve Brennan had been a staff writer at *The New Yorker* for ten years when she wrote that sentence as part of a spoof letter in the spring of 1959. The letter was about herself, intended for her colleagues' eyes, and not for publication. She was forty-two, coming to the end of a ruinous five-year marriage; her mother had been dead in Ireland since August, and none of her fiction had appeared in the magazine for three years, when a reader wrote a letter, inquiring about more stories. When the magazine copied its standard, three-sentence reply to Brennan, she wrote this much longer response on the back of the carbon. 'And thank you for your kind interest in the unfortunate Miss Brennan,' it ended, 'I am glad to know that someone remembers her. As for her, I am afraid she would only spit in your eye. She was ever ungrateful. One might say of her that nothing in her life became her.' She signed it 'William Maxwell,' the name of her editor, and he kept it carefully, including it in the introduction he wrote for her first posthumous short-story collection, *The Springs of Affection*, in 1997.¹

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The letter registers Brennan's frustration, not just with writer's block, but also with the essentialism of her colleagues' regard. They loved her Irish accent; they called her 'a changeling,' said she was 'like a pixie,' 'like a fairy princess'; they remarked on her perfume, and on the flowers she brought into her office. Introducing a new edition of *The Springs of Affection*, published in Dublin in January to mark the centenary of its author's birth, Anne Enright writes, 'It is hard to find a description of Brennan that is not code for her ethnicity.'² We might add, 'or one that does not refer to her diminutive size, her feminine style.' Pinning a lot of hair into an elaborate chignon, as she did daily, or doing up buttons on the back of a dress, were things done with mirrors. Like shooting oneself in the back, they must have seemed like conjuring tricks to the male writers and unadorned singular women who were her *New Yorker* colleagues. Maeve Brennan had learned her craft writing about fashion for *Harper's Bazaar*, and developed a way of being in New York that allowed her to pass for a woman of leisure, her elegant dress, high heels and makeup rendering her unapproachable. That was the persona she developed as the unnamed Long-Winded Lady in the magazine's 'Talk of the Town' column, where her insouciant musings appeared to pose no threat to the certainties of a post-war society where women's work was in the kitchen and men did the thinking.

Brennan was deadly serious, however, and in this, her centenary year, as her readership grows, as more women writers publish memoirs and become the subjects of long interviews about their lives and their practice, and a new generation of critics engages with her work, it becomes clearer than ever that the only identity she sought for herself was as a writer.

The fiction she wrote about Ireland reads as a series of attempts to solve recurring, increasingly recalcitrant, puzzles of memory. Most of her American stories, however, are either

coded expressions of immigrant rage, or lyrical meditations on the lives of domestic pets, especially her own black Labrador retriever, Bluebell.³ These last reflections take place outdoors, around Greenwich Village in New York or among the sand dunes of East Hampton, at the farthest tip of Long Island, out of season, but Brennan's best known stories happen indoors, in domestic space. Shot through with dark humour, by turns exquisitely compassionate and harshly dismissive, they use walls, doorways and shadows, and the careful small movements of characters among them, to lay bare painful, complex truths about human interaction, and about Irish culture at home and in the US in the twentieth century.⁴

By contrast, almost all the captivating scenes the Long-Winded Lady presents play out in Manhattan's public places. The Lady is on the sidewalk, or she observes the street from behind a window, her attention diverted from its dramas only when a commotion arises in the restaurant or lobby where she sits. Sometimes she occupies a hotel room, or someone else's apartment; now and then she looks from one window across to another, where something, or nothing, is happening. These pieces notice tragedy and misunderstanding; they showcase the ridiculous and the pompous. If they end in any kind of resolution, it is likely to be tongue-in-cheek; more often, the Lady simply lets them go as she moves on. The Irish references are rare.

The Long-Winded Lady first appeared in *The New Yorker* in 1954, as the only female voice in 'Talk of the Town'. Her identity was not revealed until fifteen years later, when 47 pieces appeared as a book, introduced with a brief Author's Note.⁵ Reading them together makes clear that Brennan's two American short stories in which no Irish maids, or cats, or dogs appear are observations of the same kind, grown too big, and imagined with too much complication, for 'Talk.'⁶

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Maeve Brennan's fiction and her own life choices suggest that the repeating patterns of domestic life are dangerous, possibly fatal to human happiness, and certainly to creative expression. Unmasking the Lady revealed her as a flâneuse, in Lauren Elkin's recent coinage: a woman escaping, not just from domesticity, but from gender and social connections too as she walked the city, savouring her anonymity, like George Sand in Paris, Virginia Woolf in London, or Vivian Gornick in New York.⁷ The carefree air and intense interest the Lady shares with Bluebell the black Labrador as she explores the world around her gives a clue to the importance of Brennan's animal stories. 'Everyone should have a cat called Minnie,' she told her friend the novelist Edith Konecky, sometime in the mid-1970s. After a sudden move in 1960, when her marriage ended, Brennan's own Minnie, nursing her kittens in a room at the Hotel Earle 'with the steady, resolute anxiety of the devoted mother' had embodied all she could bear of intimacy.⁸ One of her last stories, 'Christmas Eve', which *The New Yorker* published in December 1972, took up the theme, identifying 'the instinctive kind of attentiveness animals give to their young' as one of the kinds of love that give 'the child grown old and in the dark' something to hold on to, 'a rock that will never give way.'⁹ Brennan was not just a woman besotted by her pets. Carefully observing one dog and many cats, creatures untrammelled by culture in a world designed by humans, she was practising a kind of mindfulness, mapping what a writer's life might be. 'I think if I could be alone for a month,' she had written to William Maxwell in 1957 from Dublin, on a visit to her parents with her husband, 'I could write a much better book than War and Peace.'

Maxwell wrote in the 1997 Introduction already mentioned, ‘I don’t know whether in Ireland she is considered an Irish writer or an American. In fact, both countries ought to be proud to claim her.’ In actual fact, few Irish people had heard of Maeve Brennan by then, although older *New Yorker* readers remembered her work well. The magazine was an expensive luxury in Ireland, and the books she published in her lifetime had appeared only as US hardbacks, towards the end of her career. In any case, as Fintan O’Toole remarked in *The Irish Times*, January 1, 1998, Irish society in the 1950s and ’60s would have been remarkably inhospitable to what she was: ‘an intellectual woman and a writer.’

Brennan died in obscurity on 1 November 1993. Twenty-four years later, she is a favourite of book clubs in Ireland, where her picture appears often, and readers unfamiliar with her work are becoming rare. A number of media features and sold-out events marked her hundredth birthday in Dublin on January 6, the level of knowledge, appreciation and affection among the audiences remarkable to see. In Chicago in May, days after its first opening to the public, the American Writers Museum on North Michigan Avenue held a capacity evening event where fiction writers Alice McDermott and Éilís Ní Dhuibhne celebrated her work, along with the present writer. Also in May, New York’s Washington Square Hotel—the Hotel Earle of Brennan’s many stays—hosted an evening of words and music in her honour to launch The Village Trip, a new festival to celebrate the history and culture of Greenwich Village.

On 7 July a *Financial Times* review by Lucy Scholes described the heroine of Kathleen Rooney’s novel, *Lillian Boxfish Takes a Walk*, as ‘a career girl in the line of Maeve Brennan, wearing Vivian Gornick’s walking shoes’. The casual mention seems like a milestone: a clear indication that Maeve Brennan walks vividly again in readers’ mental worlds, and not just in Ireland. As she herself wrote of one of her most enduring characters, Rose Derdon, ‘It had all been only in her imagination, that she had been forgotten. She had not been forgotten at all.’¹⁰

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Author note

A new paperback edition of Angela Bourke’s 2004 biography, *Maeve Brennan: Homesick at The New Yorker*, is published by Counterpoint in Berkeley, California. She lives in Dublin.

NOTES

1. William Maxwell in Maeve Brennan, *The Springs of Affection: Stories of Dublin* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 5-6. Christopher Carduff selected and arranged the stories and solicited Maxwell’s introduction for the US edition. For the letter, see also Angela Bourke, *Maeve Brennan: Homesick at The New Yorker* (London: Jonathan Cape; New York: Counterpoint, 2004), 207.

2. Anne Enright in Maeve Brennan, *The Springs of Affection: Stories* (Dublin: Stinging Fly, 2017), viii.

3. Maeve Brennan, *The Rose Garden: Short Stories* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 2000), 3-15. Her newly discovered novella, *The Visitor* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 2000), written in the 1940s, is set in Ireland.

4. For more on this see Angela Bourke, ‘The House that Never Blew Up: Maeve Brennan’s Dublin Home’ in Rhona Richman Kenneally and Lucy McDiarmid (eds), *The Vibrant House: Irish Writing and Domestic Space* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2017: forthcoming, October), 149-67.

5. The publisher in 1969 was William Morrow. See the expanded US edition, *The Long-Winded Lady: Notes from The New Yorker* (New York & Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998); Irish edition, with introduction by Belinda McKeon (Dublin: Stinging Fly, 2016).

6. *The Rose Garden*, 225-49: ‘The Daughters’; ‘A Snowy Night on West Forty-Ninth Street.’

7. Lauren Elkin, *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice and London* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2016); Vivian Gornick, *The Odd Woman and the City: A Memoir* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015).

8. From ‘At the Hotel Earle,’ *The Long-Winded Lady*, 42.

9. *The Springs of Affection: Stories of Dublin*, 307.

10. ‘A Free Choice,’ *Ibid.*, 103.

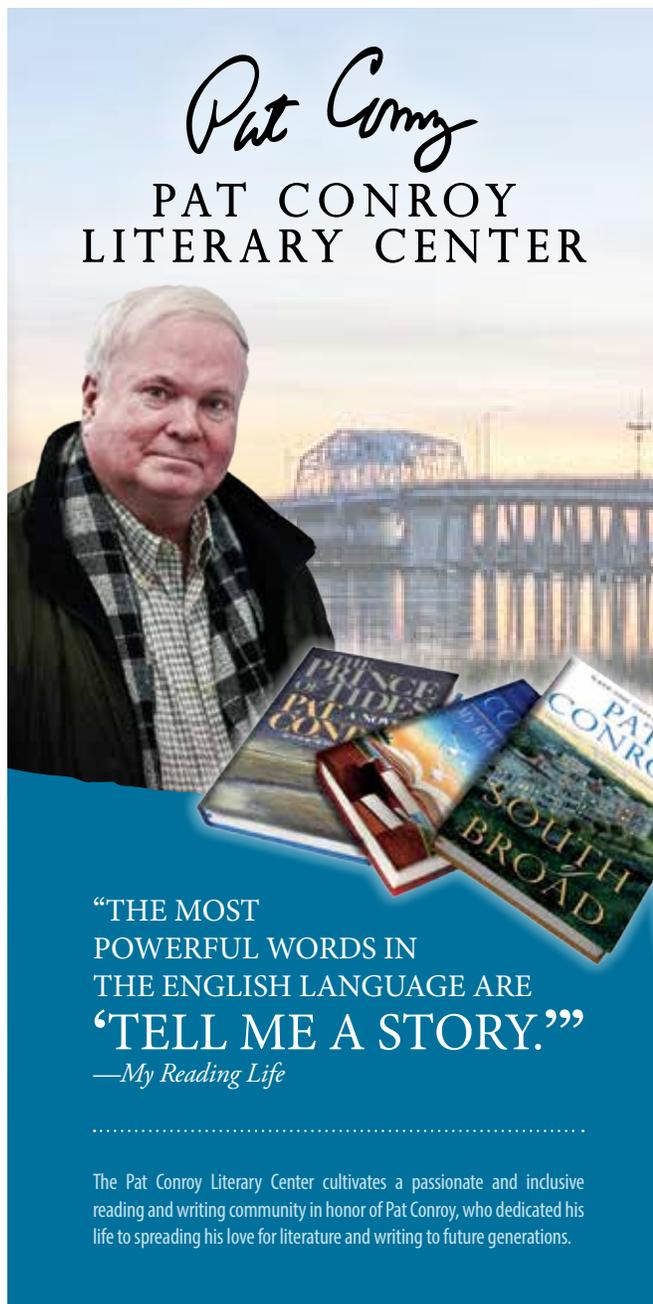
Angela Bourke



Bio

Angela Bourke is author of the biography *Maeve Brennan: Homesick at The New Yorker* (2004): <http://www.counterpointpress.com/dd-product/maeve-brennan/>; *The Burning of Bridget Cleary: A True Story* (1999): <http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/332612/burning-of-bridget-cleary-by-angela-bourke/9780141002026/> and most recently, the Famine Folio *Voices Underfoot: Memory, Forgetting, and Oral Verbal Art* (2016): <http://www.corkuniversitypress.com/Memory-Forgetting-and-Oral-Verbal-Art-p/9780997837407.htm>, along with many articles and reviews in scholarly journals and elsewhere. Joint editor of *The Field Day Anthology* vols iv & v; *Irish Women's Writing and Traditions*, and a frequent contributor to cultural debate on radio and television, she writes and lectures in both Irish and English. She is professor emerita at the UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies, Folklore and Linguistics, and a Member of the Royal Irish Academy.

Spotlight on Pat Conway and the Pat Conway Literary Center.



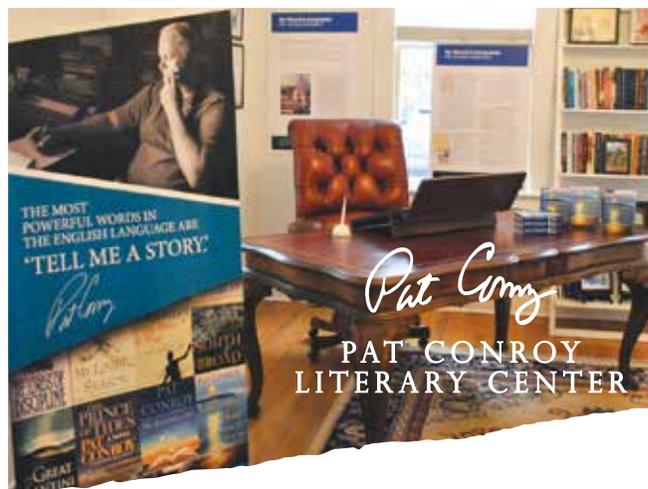
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Pat Conroy, born in Atlanta in 1945, was the first of seven children of a young Marine officer from Chicago and a Southern beauty from Alabama, to whom Pat often credits for his love of language. The Conroys moved frequently to military bases throughout the South, and Conroy eventually attended The Citadel, a military college in Charleston, South Carolina. Conroy often joked that a military school was an unconventional choice for someone who dreamed of being a writer, but, in fact, he found a number of deeply supportive faculty there, and Conroy's first book, *The Boo* (1970), is a tribute to Lt. Col. Thomas Nugent Courvoisier, who served as a mentor to many Citadel cadets.

Following graduation, Conroy taught English and psychology at Beaufort High School, his alma mater, and in 1969 he took a job teaching underprivileged children in a one-room schoolhouse on Daufuskie, a small island about three miles off the South Carolina mainland. Conroy's year on Daufuskie was one of great change. That fall, he married Barbara Bolling Jones, a young Vietnam widow with two daughters, Jessica and Melissa, whom Conroy adopted. They would welcome a third daughter, Megan, the following year. He fell in love, too, with his students on the island, and was alternately energized by the challenges of teaching and enraged by the ways that the children had been neglected by the school system. After just a year of teaching on Daufuskie, Conroy was fired for his unconventional teaching practices, including his refusal to allow corporal punishment of his students, and for his clashes with the school's administration.



Conroy wrote about his experiences that year in a memoir, *The Water is Wide*, which was published in 1972 and was recognized with an award from the National Education Association for its unflinching depiction of institutionalized racism in the public school system. In 1974, the book reached wider audiences when it was adapted as a film, *Conrack*, directed by Martin Ritt and starring Jon Voight, and these successes allowed Conroy to dedicate himself to writing as a full-time occupation. Although his teaching career was officially over, Conroy's loyalties remained with those still in the classroom: throughout his career, he regularly sang the praises of his beloved high school and Citadel teachers, and he was always quick to assist teachers in any way he could, from meeting with classes to defending teachers in debates over censorship.

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In 1973, the Conroys moved to Atlanta, where Pat wrote *The Great Santini*, published in 1976. The novel, which was later made into a film starring Robert Duvall, is grounded in Pat's own childhood, particularly his difficult relationship with his father, a fighter pilot who regularly beat his wife and children. The publication of a book that so painfully exposed his family's secret brought Conroy a period of tremendous personal desolation, and this crisis contributed not only to his divorce but to the divorce of his parents: his mother presented a copy of *The Great Santini* to the judge as "evidence" in divorce proceedings against his father.

The Citadel became the subject of his next novel, *The Lords of Discipline*, which was published in 1980 and was the third of Conroy's books to be adapted as a film. In keeping with the themes of his previous work, the novel looks beyond a carefully constructed façade—in this case, that of a southern military institute—to expose the violence and hypocrisy that lie beneath it.

Conroy remarried and moved from Atlanta to Rome, where his fourth daughter, Susannah, was born. It was here that he began to work in earnest on *The Prince of Tides*, which, when published in 1986, became his most successful book. Reviewers immediately acknowledged Conroy as a master storyteller and a poetic and gifted prose stylist. Readers were immediately and absolutely devoted to the book: in fact, there are a remarkable five million copies in print. In 1991, *The Prince of Tides* was released as a film by actor/director/producer Barbara Streisand, and Conroy received an Oscar nod for his work in adapting the novel for film. *Beach Music* (1995), Conroy's sixth book, is the story of Jack McCall, an American who moves to Rome to escape the trauma and painful memory of his young wife's suicidal leap off a bridge in South Carolina. The novel is wide-ranging in its historical and geographical scope, and in its treatment of the Holocaust, Russian pogroms, and southern poverty, among other themes; it is generally recognized as Conroy's ambitious—and perhaps darkest—work. Indeed, the writing of *Beach Music*, along with the suicide of his youngest brother and the end of his second marriage, triggered the most severe of what Conroy has termed his “great breakdowns.”

Cassandra_Pat_WeddingConroy's marriage to the novelist Cassandra King in 1998 represented a shift in his personal life, and, more subtly, in his work. His memoir *My Losing Season* (2002) allowed Conroy to reconnect with teammates as he sought to recreate his final season on the Citadel basketball team, and the book functions, in part, as a meditation on the ability to heal through collective memory. Conroy followed *My Losing Season* with a culinary memoir, *The Pat Conroy Cookbook* (2004), a collection of recipes and reminiscences that was recently identified by the *Paris Review* as “one of the very best of the genre.”

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Conroy's fifth novel and ninth book, *South of Broad* (2009) uses James Joyce's *Ulysses* as a loose model, and follows its aptly named protagonist, Leopold Bloom King, as he makes his way through Charleston and, later, San Francisco. Despite Conroy's nod to Joyce, the novel is generally viewed as “quintessentially Conroy” in its fast-moving plotline and lyrical descriptions of Charleston. Just a year later, Conroy released *My Reading Life* (2010), a collection of essays that celebrate the books that have most influenced him, and tantalizingly offers fascinating glimpses into the daily life of a writer.

In 2013, Conroy published *The Death of Santini*. Subtitled “The Story of a Father and His Son,” the memoir details the impact that the publication of *The Great Santini* had on Conroy's father, who, when faced with that novel's portrait of him, underwent a radical reinvention, becoming a “kinder, gentler” Santini. In pulling the curtain aside and allowing readers to see Conroy as both protagonist and artist, *The Death of Santini* invites readers to think about the ways that life and art reverberate in each other in often invisible ways.

In 2014, Pat Conroy assumed the mantle of editor at large for Story River Books, his original southern fiction imprint at the University of South Carolina Press. Story River Press was launched in 2015.

Pat Conroy Funeral
Conroy was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in January 2016, and succumbed to the disease on March 4, 2016. He is buried in a small cemetery on St. Helena Island near the Penn Center, where as a teenager he first met Martin Luther King and where he was honored in 2011 for his dedication to social justice.

In October of 2015, just months before his death, Conroy was feted by friends, family, readers, writers, and scholars at a three-day celebration of his work in honor of his 70th birthday. In his closing remarks, he told those gathered, “I have written [my] books because I thought if I explained my own life somehow, I could explain some of your life to you.” It is this impulse—to explore what it means to be human, and to recognize the ways each of us are connected in our search—that remains central to Conroy’s legacy.

Essay: “Mick on the Make: notes on an Unusual Name”

by Dinty W. Moore

We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be.

Kurt Vonnegut

There’s this comic strip, *Bringing Up Father*, created in 1913, but if you ask your grandparents, they’ll remember it as “Maggie and Jiggs.” That’s what everyone called it, because Maggie and Jiggs were unforgettable.

George McManus’s daily comic follows the working-class couple’s ups and downs after winning the Irish sweepstakes. Jiggs, a stonemason by trade, doesn’t take well to the pampered world of chauffeurs and afternoon tea, longing instead for his old pals, familiar foods, and impromptu poker games at the corner saloon. Maggie wants status, stability, and a reliably sober companion.

Much of the humor derives from the tension between these competing desires. The final panel of the strip often depicts Maggie, rolling pin in hand, waiting silently behind the door of their sparkling new mansion. Jiggs, inevitably, is sneaking home drunk, dress shoes in hand, reeking of corned beef and cabbage.

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McManus’s comic was an instant and enduring hit because it worked on twin levels. The jokes were good, the characters well drawn, the situation – instant prosperity – wrought with comic possibility. But underneath the jokes, the strip was sociologically brilliant, capturing precisely the passionate dreams and fears of the new immigrant working classes.

For many Irish, the primary reason for coming to America was to move forward in life, but to move forward often meant moving beyond your own people, leaving behind what was familiar and comfortable. Songs, vaudeville acts, and other forms of popular humor poking fun at “mick on the make” were rampant at the time, popular because they struck a deep cord.

My great-grandfather James Moore didn’t win any Irish sweepstakes, but after immigrating in the late 1880s, he managed to scratch his way into the middle class. He did this through either real estate, marriage or crime. I’ve heard all three explanations but have had little luck tracking down the truth.

My father insisted that old James was murdered by gangsters and buried under a main highway of our hometown, but Dad told a lot of stories that later turned out to be far from actual. There’s an expression for this sort of blarney: *Irish facts*.

What is verifiable is that James Moore's only son, my grandfather Billy, lived in a grand house near the Erie Bayfront, owned a popular nightclub, managed blocks of prime real estate, and conducted himself somewhere between a civic leader and a scoundrel. Like Jiggs, he travelled in "lace curtain" circles but loved nothing more than to hoist a beer or two (or six or eight) with the old gang at Sullivan's Saloon.

One of my father's favorite stories involved a high-ranking figure in the local Catholic church. The celibate man of God would drop by the house on Friday evenings, having a drink or two in the parlor, disappear briefly upstairs, and return in civilian clothing. He was round, solid, like my grandfather, so everything fit. Both men would head to Cleveland for the evening, presumably to engage in pursuits the man found unavailable on his home turf, or in his priestly collar.

My grandfather – he died seventeen years before I was born, so I rely on my father's stories and a few yellowed newspaper clippings – profited from Prohibition. He owned a fast boat, lived in a city full of Irish cops. Canada was just a quick trip across Lake Erie. He once stymied federal agents by filling his speedboat with nuns from a local convent, ostensibly taking them on an afternoon cruise. The brides of Christ returned from Ontario with bottles of blessed nectar hidden under their full black habits. No treasury agent was going to frisk a good sister.

"Why would they go along with this?" I once asked my father.

He just laughed.

The nuns were Irish. They liked a good drink, too.

There's more, some of it not so amusing.

My mother was born into a family of Chicago printers, fairly well-established at the turn of the century, but circumstances unraveled when her father died. She was only eight, and barely five years later her mother died as well. Mom was raised by an Irish aunt from the less well-heeled side of her family tree.

She married my father, in part, because she believed he was the ticket to regaining lost respectability. Her new suitor was from a prominent family and, when they met just after World War II, he claimed to be headed off to medical school.

But unlike Maggie and Jiggs, Bill and Cathy were headed *down* the ladder of class and influence. My father was also orphaned young and raised by a kindly Irish aunt. Family assets were sold off one by one to finance elaborate vacations and private schools. In the end, no money remained to speak of, and by the time he hit adulthood, my army veteran father preferred hanging around the same saloons his father once frequented to the hard work of cracking open medical books.

My parents' adult lives turned out to be an ironic reemergence of the old comic stereotype: Maggie the wife hounding Jiggs to stay home, be a family man, pay attention to the children, fix the faucet, stop all that drinking with ne'er-do-well friends in low-class dives.

McManus had them nailed.

Anyone familiar with early comic strip history is perhaps well ahead of me, but for the rest of you, here's the kicker: though the social themes of class tension and upward Irish-American mobility found in McManus's funny paper saga connect to my kinfolk in countless ways, what ties me most to this comic burlesque is that Jiggs was sneaking out night after night to visit a *particular* salon. Dinty Moore's.

I am thus the namesake of the third most popular character in *Bringing Up Father*, a wiry, mustachioed, cigar-smoking scoundrel in spats and a bowler hat. Dinty not only owned the tavern that Jiggs habitually retreated to when ducking out of Maggie's society soirees, but Dinty was Jiggs' best friend, his remaining connection to the working-class world he so badly missed.

Dinty Moore represented everything that Irish-American men of that time clung to like lifelines: buckets of beer, fatty corned beef, back room card games, coarse language, and the absence of pesky family responsibilities that tended to dictate when a man had to be home. Not surprisingly, Maggie hated the rascal, often ending the daily comic with lines such as "I don't want you sneaking off with that Dinty Moore fellow," or "Huh! It's that Dinty again!" So the question remains, why in heaven's name would a woman knowingly name her son after a comic strip character whose chief activity was luring respectable fellows out of their homes to drink beer and play cards? Especially given the fact that her husband stayed out night after night, drinking beer and playing cards. There's an odd one for you. I should point out that just a week or so prior to my birth, Mom mentioned to the good priests at St. Patrick's her intention to give me the comic strip name. The priests made it exquisitely clear that they would never baptize me under that moniker, and as a result, my birth certificate and baptismal record list me as William. But my mother called me Dinty from the first second of my life, as has everyone close to me, and that's the name I live by, and how I pay my taxes.

The comic Dinty was a gentle stereotype, a wink and a nod toward working-class male camaraderie, but the case can be made that he also represented a bit of an ethnic slur. The Irish were lazy, drunk, and unwashed, according to prejudices of the time, and Dinty's comic character played into each one of these. All in all, a great handle for a beaming boy. Mom's usual account is that her cousin Jimmy insisted, "Any Irish lad with the last name Moore has to be known as Dinty." Jamesy-boy, as he was called, was mom's favorite male cousin and probably enjoyed a good laugh when he opened his morning paper, but this still seems a pretty weak rationale.

My best guess is that my name connects to the fact that my mother's "Irishness" was of such importance to her. She was only half Irish, in fact, and her father's side of the family – En-

glish and Eastern European (actually bohemians) – seemed largely to lose interest in Mom and her sister after her father died. It was the maternal, Irish side – the O’Briens and the Smiths – who became her comfort and support.

So perhaps calling me Dinty was just my mother’s symbolic way of staking claim to the part of her own family that did not disappoint or abandon her.

Or perhaps she had a better reason.

My father, so the story goes, could not be found high or low on the August evening that my mother went into labor, despite repeated phone calls to Mentley’s Tavern, Barilla’s Bar, and the Cascade Club. Of course, he had a standing agreement with his favorite bartenders to say, “Oh, he just left,” whether Dad actually had moved on or was sitting right there. Maybe my mother was angry, and rightfully so, since she had, after two daughters, delivered what every red-blooded war veteran American male was supposed desperately to want – a healthy, bouncing boy. As expected, she named her pink-cheeked son William Jr., on the birth certificate at least, after his rascal of a father, and then, to make her point, she never, ever used that name again.

Reading Ireland would like to thank Dinty W. Moore and *The Southern Review* for permission to reprint this essay which was first published in *The Southern Review*.

Dinty Moore



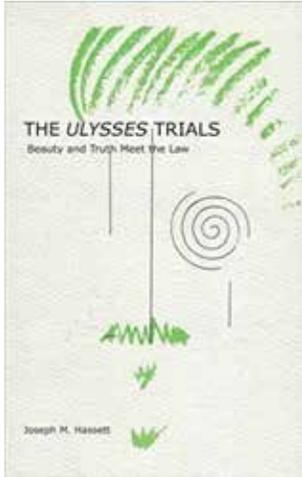
Bio

Dinty W. Moore is author of *The Story Cure: A Book Doctor's Pain-Free Guide to Finishing Your Novel or Memoir*, the memoir *Between Panic & Desire*, and many other books. He has published essays and stories in *The Southern Review*, *The Georgia Review*, *Harpers*, *The New York Times Sunday Magazine*, *Arts & Letters*, *The Normal School*, and elsewhere. A professor of nonfiction writing at Ohio University, Moore lives in Athens, Ohio, where he grows heirloom tomatoes and edible dandelions.

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United States v. Art: *Ulysses* on Trial

Gregory Castle



Joseph M. Hassett, *The Ulysses Trials: Beauty and Truth Meet the Law*. Dublin: Lilliput, 2016. ISBN 978-1-84351-668-2. 221p +ix.

In recent years, James Joyce's *Ulysses* has achieved a certain notoriety as a scandalous book, I should say it has achieved it *again*, for Joyce's novel—according to many, his masterpiece—was born in controversy. If we look at Joyce studies over the last thirty years or so, we see the growth of a cottage industry devoted to the meanings and mysteries of the novel's production under extraordinary circumstances: banned in the US and UK after its publication in 1922, it was typeset and printed in France, where people from all over the world got their copies to smuggle home, where shipments had been seized by the US Post Office. Pirate editions appeared in the US, notably one by Samuel Roth, who became a major figure in one of the late *Ulysses* trials.

Our interest in Joyce's text as a locus point of scandal cannot be denied. Witness the conflict over a new edition of *Ulysses* in the mid-1980s, which reminded everyone that Joyce's text, at the very level of production, was a "cause for offense," a "stumbling block," "a trap" or "snare laid for an enemy" (all meanings of *scandal* according to the OED). At this time, in Europe, new theories of editing were giving rise to new ways of assembling a definitive text. One of the earliest was developed by Hans Walter Gabler, who published a new edition of *Ulysses* in 1986. Within Joyce studies, this caused a furor, mainly because his synoptic method involved using a collation of manuscripts as the "copy text" of his edition, rather than the last published text overseen by the author, which was the gold standard at the time. The only people who really cared about this were other editors (and a handful of textual scholars), but the new edition retained the character of a bad act, as John Kidd showed when he published (in 1988), to much fanfare and controversy, a review of the new edition in the *New York Review of Books* under the title "The Scandal of *Ulysses*." In this case, the scandal amounted to the introduction of editorial decisions that, according to many scholars and editors (most famously Charles Rossman), did not need to be made. To be sure, the 1934 Random House *Ulysses*, on which subsequent editions were based, was riddled with errors; but, as Kidd shows, another 5000 or so new errors followed Gabler's attempt to correct the text. Though this kind of scandal is something only Professor Dryasdust would care about, it does point to the way *Ulysses* served at the time as a bellwether for cultural trends. In this case, in the middle of the culture wars in the US, the sanctity of a Great Modernist Book was being assaulted by editorial practices that undermined authorial control over the aesthetic object.

But *Ulysses* persists in being regarded as scandalous, though the point nowadays is less the scandal of the *book* than the scandal of *its having been published at all*. What has changed in recent years is that we tend to speak of a larger framework in which the "scandal of *Ulysses*" can be understood as symptomatic. For example, Margot Backus, in *Scandal Work: James Joyce, the New Journalism, and the Home Rule Newspaper Wars* (2013), reminds us of the broader context of scandal in the era in which Joyce was publishing, a refreshing reorientation that got us out of the sewer and into the gutter. An even broader, and certainly more

speculative approach—Kevin Birmingham’s *The Most Dangerous Book: The Battle for James Joyce’s Ulysses*—reintroduces an element of danger that had gotten lost in the minutia of cultural history concerning the *Ulysses* trials. However, according to Joseph Hassett, Birmingham’s “creative approach to narrative” (111) misses the finer points of the trials that *Ulysses* instigated and therefore misstates the “danger” that it posed to its early readers. These and innumerable studies of censorship and copyright, illustrate a systemic context for scandal in which *Ulysses* is less the scandalous object than the subject of slander.

Hassett’s *The Ulysses Trials: Beauty and Truth Meet the Law*, canvasses the important early studies and shows that a “backdrop of misunderstanding about the legal decisions involving *Ulysses*” (4) has prevented a clear-eyed account of this sometimes sordid, sometimes inspiring tale of its publication. But Hassett does more than clarify the charges of obscenity, the attempts at suppression and censorship, and the various legal tactics on all sides. Vital to his study is an understanding of the roles played by those involved in telling truth to power about the nature of beauty: principally, Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap, editors of the *Little Review*, which published the work of emergent modernist writers. One of those writers, Wyndham Lewis, published a story, “Cattleman’s Spring-Mate,” that was deemed obscene and seized by the US Post Office in October 1917. John Quinn, the lawyer and pigheaded hero of this tale, maneuvered his way into service to the *Little Review*, when it faced charges of obscenity for publishing Lewis’s story. The case was heard by Augustus Hand, whose cousin, Learned Hand, had four years earlier decided for the defendant, and Quinn, in *United States v Kennerley*. Augustus Hand found himself limited by Quinn’s moral argument, that Lewis’s “hard” and “clean” style, by representing sordid elements of society, had a “deterrent effect in the moral realm” (42). This was a response (rather than a challenge) to the existing *Hicklin* definition of obscenity. An 1868 decision in *Regina v Hicklin*, which elaborated on the British Obscene Publications Act of 1857, held that “the test of obscenity” is any tendency “to deprave or corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences” (37). Quinn argued that Lewis’s work fell outside this standard. Unfortunately, Hand could only rule within the limits of the standard and grant the Post Office due deference. Hassett notes that his opinion “was an open invitation to lawyers to use the ideas of beauty and truth to reshape the law of obscenity” (41). Sadly, Quinn did not rise to the challenge and compounded the loss by advising Heap and Anderson to avoid an appeal because “Judge Hand, although wrong on the merits, was right on the technicalities” (46). This kind of thinking followed Quinn into the courtroom when it came time to defend *Ulysses*.

Quinn was an influential Irish-American attorney who, at the time of the *Little Review* trials, ran “a successful practice in New York,” and had developed a “reputation as an able practitioner in corporate, finance, insurance and banking law” (18). His main client, The Equitable Life Assurance Society of America, was a continual reminder of how far he could go in pursuit of his literary and artistic passions. He had “an amazing collection of cultural artifacts,” including manuscripts by Joseph Conrad, W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, and paintings by major impressionists and post-impressionists (19-20). He had longstanding connections with leading members of the Dublin Literary Revival, particularly Yeats, *père et fils* and John M. Synge, and was a confidante of Pound, Joyce and a host of other Continental luminaries.

By day, he was a steady mainstream attorney who hewed to the conventions of his profession, and most of all did not want to appear as having any interest whatsoever in what was then called “sex literature.” Hassett shows that Quinn was reluctant to advance his private views on obscenity (he was broadminded enough to realize that Joyce had to include “disgusting” sexual and bodily details) in the public venue of the courts; he feared that any association with literary writing that was reputed to be obscene would mar his legal standing. Balancing his legal practice with his work in the arts, Quinn managed to satisfy no one. That the *Ulysses* trials went the way they did, Hassett argues, that beauty and truth ultimately prevailed, is in no small measure due to appellate judges like Learned and Augustus Hand and, later, John Munro Woolsey, who understood the stakes (and the possible legal remedies) better than either Quinn or the various prosecutors ever did. The New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, led by John Sumner, was a fierce opponent, and the pressure to censor or suppress any work with even a single mention of proscribed behavior, cast a pall on literary writers who sought to depict the realities of life. Quinn’s decision to fight against this suppressive force, rather than *for* the aesthetic qualities of literature is the central theme in Hassett’s fascinating tale of legal and artistic intrigue.

At first, only Heap and Anderson understood the fundamental logic that ought to prevail: beauty cannot be obscene; Joyce’s book was clearly a work of artistic beauty; therefore, it could not be obscene. Anderson “preferred [this] aesthetic argument to a moral one” (46), but she could not convince Quinn to take this approach (also suggested by the Hands). John B. Yeats, the poet’s father, living in New York at the time, tried to persuade Quinn that Joyce was a “truth-telling artist” (86) and that his “unflinching veracity” was a courageous and unselfish attempt to show the reality of “sexual love” (90). A strong, even combative personality, Quinn ignored the arguments for beauty and truth and insisted on a defense based on the idea that the average reader was too dim to make it through *Ulysses* and therefore could not be moved to prurience. It was an acceptable defense, well within the limits of jurisprudence, but it did not challenge what was, in effect, a “judge-made” law about obscenity (76) that many judges seemed to have outgrown.

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Hassett, a Washington, DC, attorney and author of two books on Yeats, gets at what is *really* scandalous about the *Ulysses* affair: not censorship so much or editions or copyright, but the people surrounding Joyce, each of whom had their own investments in the legal status of *Ulysses*. Prosecutors, the US Post Office, and the Society for the Suppression of Vice wanted to make an example of Joyce’s book, while Hand and other jurists wanted to test their ideas about obscenity and art so they could overturn the outmoded standard they had inherited (and that Quinn tried to exploit). Heap, Anderson, Ezra Pound, and John and W. B. Yeats wanted to defend the sacred flame of art, while Quinn wanted to advance his career and prove himself right that Joyce’s decision to publish serially in the *Little Review* left future publishers open to prosecution (a possibility that those publishers didn’t flinch at). Quinn’s defense was essentially to dodge the existing statutes; he did not attempt to redefine what obscenity was or to establish that true art could not be obscene. Because he remained within the terms of the Hicklin standard, he lost the trial. But only his stubbornness prevented an appeal. “Joyce’s prose was found obscene without Quinn having sought an appellate ruling,” Hassett writes, which meant that important issues concerning the aesthetic value of the work were tabled. Quinn missed the opportunity to force “the judicial system to focus on the fundamental issue of the quality of Joyce’s writing as literature” (103). Though one applauds

the Hands, Woolsey and Ernst, though one roots for Anderson and Heap, one is ineluctably drawn to Quinn, the anti-hero of this story, for he embodies the true scandal of it, in Hassett's telling anyway: his own personal investments (some of them financial), an agenda that blinded him to the true nature of art and the role it plays in a civil society.

The final trial began in 1931, long after Quinn's untimely death in 1924. A new defense attorney, Morris Ernst, was eager, finally, to argue the *aesthetic* merits of the case. His task, and it was a daunting one, was "to supplant the traditional *Hicklin* test upon which the earlier decisions were based" (127). He and Bennett Cerf, the Random House publisher who contested the Post Office seizure, were lucky to get Judge Woolsey to hear the case and a prosecutor, George Medalie, who was sympathetic to the defense (130). Ernst's case was grounded on views expressed more than a decade earlier by Anderson, Heap and John B. Yeats; his brief "wove an argument that sounded the important notes of the beauty and veracity of Joyce's writing." His logic is essentially Anderson's. "Sex is present, to be sure," Ernst writes, "but sex is part of man's existence. One can no more say that Ulysses is obscene than that life or thought is obscene" (137). He also marshaled evidence in the form of testimonials from literary critics, a tactic that Quinn failed to use but that provided substantial support for Woolsey's own literary conclusions about Joyce's text and became a useful tool in future legal battles.

Woolsey was a learned and literary man who recognized the aesthetic distinction of a work that included, as an artistic necessity, material that in isolation might be judged obscene. Rather than refer to the *Hicklin* standard—that any tendency of a text that would incite minds open to "immoral influences" meant the whole was obscene—Woolsey ignored it and "simply plunged ahead with the *ipse dixit* that the proper test was a reading of the book in its entirety in terms of how it would affect 'a person with average sex instincts'" (142). His decision was grounded in a 1930 opinion in the Second Circuit by Augustus Hand who reversed the conviction of Mary Dennett, "for using the mails to distribute her pamphlet *The Sex Side of Life*" (130). Though not original, and somewhat fanciful, it paved the way for other trials that would create an unmovable mountain of precedent. When Cerf included the decision as a preface to *Ulysses* when it was finally published in the US in 1935, he was suggesting that this Great Modernist Book was under the symbolic guardianship of judges who were clear-sighted enough to see that literature could contain obscenity but was not itself obscene.

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Given that this is a scandalous story, a villain is required, and one appeared soon enough in the form of a new US Attorney, Martin Conboy, who saw that an appeal of the Woolsey decision would shore up *Hicklin* and confirm Sumner's victory over Quinn years before (143-4). The appeal was less a trial than a vendetta, and a confused one at that. Conboy's attempt to hold Woolsey responsible on appeal for having ignored the *Hicklin* standard conflicted with assistant US attorney Joseph B. Keenan's pointed 1934 memorandum to the Solicitor General, which granted that literature could lift itself above "the class of the legally obscene," but that Joyce's novel "had not attained 'a position in the field of literature'" that could lift it out (144). This double pronged approach failed doubly, for the panel that heard

the appeal included the two Hand cousins, and their clear impatience with *Hicklin* and their conclusion that *Ulysses* was “a very notable contribution to literature,” meant that Woolsey was not only affirmed, but the underlying principles were placed on “a more solid legal footing (146).

The last two chapters of *The Ulysses Trials* illustrate the impact of the Woolsey decision, particularly on the 1960 case of D. H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*. But they are somewhat anticlimactic. The heart of the story is the destiny of *Ulysses*, and Hassett is a reliable guide through the morass that is the scandal of Joyce’s text. One quibble worth mentioning is that this study, so astute in articulating a legal narrative, is sometimes short on or confusing about dates (more than once I had to use Google to find a date for use in this review). Hassett is a good, crisp stylist, no doubt trained to write clearly and to marshal facts persuasively. Though somewhat repetitious—John Yeats’s opinion about Joyce’s “terrible veracity” is repeated perhaps a few times too often for the attentive reader, and certain legal details and events are relayed multiple times—the legal novice will not be altogether ungrateful for the repetition, especially concerning legal principles and decisions. The Joyce community, and anyone interested in the way literature and law intersect, will be grateful for Hassett’s commanding and passionate telling of this surprisingly still-gripping story.

Gregory Castle

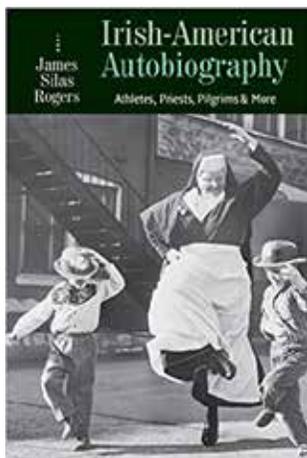


Bio

Gregory Castle is a Professor of British and Irish literature at Arizona State University. In addition to essays on Yeats, Synge, Joyce, Stoker, Wilde and other Irish modernists, he has published *Modernism and the Celtic Revival* (Cambridge UP), *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman* (UP Florida), and the *Literary Theory Handbook* (Wiley-Blackwell). He has edited the *Encyclopedia of Literary and Cultural Theory*, Vol 1 (Wiley-Blackwell) and the *History of the Modernist Novel* (Cambridge UP). With Patrick Bixby, he has edited Standish O'Grady's *Cuchulain: A Critical Edition* (Syracuse UP). He is currently editing *A History of Irish Modernism* (Cambridge UP). He continues to work on the Bildungsroman and the temporalities of the Irish Revival.

Irish American Consciousness Manifested through Memoir

Adrienne Leavy



Irish-American Autobiography: The Divided Hearts of Athletes, Priests, Pilgrims, and More by James Silas Rogers. The Catholic University of America Press, 2016. ISBN 978-0-8132-2918-8

In this wide-ranging study author Jim Rogers sets out to understand “the various meanings of Irishness in America,” arguing that “the story of the Irish in America is in some ways the story of an ‘ethnic fade’ that never quite happened.” In a series of ten essays which follow a loose chronological path from the latter part of the nineteenth-century up to the present day, Rogers pursues his thesis by examining the memoirs and autobiographies of a cross-section of Irish American writers, sports figures, priests and entertainment figures.

As the Director of the Center for Irish Studies at the University of St. Thomas and the longstanding editor of the Irish Studies journal *New Hibernia Review*, Rogers brings a depth of knowledge and insight into his meticulously researched study of the extent to which this ethnic group assimilated into mainstream America. Two overlapping questions inform the narrative: What does it mean to be Irish in America; and can Irish ethnic identity persist under the pressures of assimilation and the forces of homogenization?

In his introduction Rogers observes that Irish-American memoirists share a sense “that being Irish in America conveys something distinctive - even if they are not always clear what that distinctiveness is, nor necessarily pleased when they find out.” As their writings reveal, the individuals discussed also share a Janus-like psychic or emotional split, which Rogers identifies as having four distinctive facets: the sadness that lies under the humor; a disconnection from one’s own past; the ‘larking’ side-by-side with a hardscrabble struggle to survive; and a psychic homelessness running under the surface of many of the narratives of return.

Rogers is to be commended for highlighting the memoirs and autobiographies of several figures who up until now have not figured prominently in studies on Irish-Americans. The book opens with a discussion of the memoirs of three late nineteenth-century sports figures, John L. Sullivan, James J. Corbett and Connie Mack. Anxious to discard the mantle of the “shanty Irish,” which clothed their immigrant forbearers, each of them to a certain degree “approached his autobiography as an exercise in performing respectability.” As Rogers demonstrates, collectively they understood that “as public figures, they were taking on the burden of representation for their ethnic group.” In Chapter Two, Rogers focuses on the memoir of the America-born actress Barbara Mullen, who passed away in 1979, which was published when Mullen was in her twenties. In Roger’s assessment, “Mullen’s unaffected story makes a major contribution to the literature of ethnic Irish America.” As he proceeds to reveal, her memoir offers “a rare first-person view of the history of Irish music in America,” along with “a portrait of Irish-American urban poverty before and during the depression.”

One of the most prescient chapters of Rogers’s book relates to his examination of the Irish subtexts in the popular 1950s television series, *The Honeymooners*, written by Jackie Gleason, who was also the show’s star. Through an examination of Gleason’s Brooklyn Irish

background and various episodes of the series, which he terms “an artifice of Irish America,” Rogers demonstrates how the sitcom was subtly “shot through with second-order signifiers of its creator’s Irish background.” Rogers shows how tropes of the “black Irish temperament” and the “luck of the Irish” are interrogated in the series. He also argues that the relative poverty of the on-screen husband and wife couple, Ralph and Alice Kramden, “evokes the tenement life of the immigrant generations that Gleason’s immigrant forebears would have known.”

In a later chapter Rogers turns his focus on several contemporary Irish poets, John Montague, Michael Coady, Eavan Boland and Chris Arthur, along with the Irish-American poet Brendan Galvin, to explore how these writers aesthetically incorporate investigations of family and ancestry into their work. In Rogers’s reading, “genealogy is not a gesture of self-importance, but rather a way of knowing and a means to approach complex human experiences and emotions.” Elsewhere, Rogers examines the memoir of Michael Patrick Macdonald, a community activist who instigated a gun buy-back program in Boston. Macdonald, who grew up in the working-class Irish Catholic neighborhood of South Boston, describes a life of violence and deprivation that was typical of the residents of South Boston. Rogers writes that Macdonald’s memoir reveals “a profound feeling of separation from the larger world and its traditions; among other things, the community misses out on the normative Irish-American narrative of success and acceptance into mainstream society.”

Another interesting chapter is Rogers’s analysis of the cryptic ending to Frank McCourt’s bestselling novel, *Angela’s Ashes*. Published in 1996, McCourt’s autobiography has drawn controversy and criticism regarding the extent to which the events recounted in the book are fictional rather than autobiographical. Rogers avoids rehashing this debate, focusing instead on an analysis of the significance of the book’s final chapter, which contains the narrator’s response to a question, the single word, “ ‘Tis.” *Angela’s Ashes* closes with Frank and his travelling companion Tim Boyle arriving in New York and spending their first night in America. Rogers argues that Frank’s answer to the question posed in the penultimate chapter by Boyle, “Isn’t this a great country altogether?” reveals “a deep ambivalence toward the goal of taking up a new life in America.”

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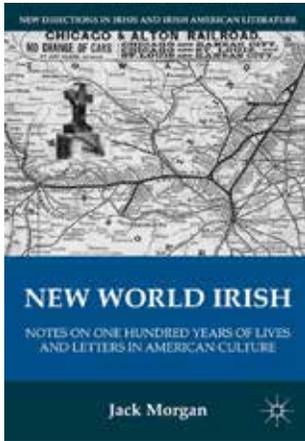
The closing chapter addresses recent Irish-American memoirs regarding familial pilgrimages to Ireland from the U.S. Typically, what the memoirs reveal is that these journeys to Ireland, often once-in-a-lifetime experiences, result in the authors gaining “a new and deeper understanding about their own family of origin” rather than a greater appreciation of the history and culture of Ireland. For contemporary Irish-Americans, travel to Ireland is not the impossible dream it was for their grandparents. As Rogers shows, the fruits of these return journeys to their ancestral homeland are as varied and complex as the individuals who embark on them.

The only aspect of the book that I take issue with is the cover art, which depicts a genial nun in traditional habit engaged in what appears to be a highland fling (which is a further example of Irish-American disconnection from their Irish roots) with two young boys who are wearing hats with shamrocks painted on them. Although this urban black and white photograph is an arresting image, and it underscores the influence of Catholicism on most of

the subjects of the book (additional chapters cover mid-century memoirs of Irish-American priests and the growth of the Catholic church in 1960s and 70s suburbia), it veers towards a cliché, and as such undermines the scholarly character of the work.

At the onset of his book Rogers draws attention to the growing critical acceptance of “Irish America as a subject deserving of attention in its own right – not an afterthought or appendage to Ireland, but an integral part of its history and culture.” This informative study adds to that body of critical work by illustrating the myriad ways in which successive generations have engaged with their heritage to understand what it means to be Irish-American. The individuals surveyed by Rogers emerge from a self-consciously Irish-American milieu, whether personal or societal. Through their memoirs and autobiographies, a clearly identifiable Irish-American identity emerges, one that clearly belies the notion of an “ethnic fade.”

Spotlight on *New World Irish: Notes on One Hundred Years of Lives and Letters in American Culture* by Jack Morgan



Jack Morgan. *New World Irish: One Hundred Years of Lives and Letters in American Culture* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. ISBN: 978-1-349-29772-6

Morgan's study, which was awarded the 2011 Michael J. Durkan Prize by the American Conference for Irish Studies, carefully examines representative texts and events that reflect the Irish presence in American culture from the Famine to the present. A noted scholar in the field of Irish-American literature and culture, his previous publications include *Through American and Irish Wars: The Life and Times of General Thomas W. Sweeny 1820-1892* (2006), and as editor, Harold Frederic's *The Martyrdom of Maev & Other Irish Stories* (2015). In *New World Irish* Morgan sets forth and analyzes a wealth of material previously unexamined with clarity and insight. Writers from Mark Twain, Henry David Thoreau, and Margaret Fuller, to Harold Frederic and Sarah Orne Jewett, are considered in terms of their engagement with, and relationships to, the new Irish arrivals in the nineteenth century. Through a variety of texts, lives, and events, this study unfolds a fascinating panorama of Irish-American history, culture and popular culture.

Some Reviews:

"Readers interested in Irish American literature and history generally will know the work of Jack Morgan well... *New World Irish* is a worthy addition to the corpus of his work, continuing its breadth and originality.

– *New Hibernia Review*

"Underlined by wide reading and deep sympathies, Morgan's *New World Irish* is a quite splendid work of literary scholarship."

– Eamonn Wall, author of *Writing the Irish West: Ecologies and Traditions*

"Morgan's *New World Irish* is an absorbing, meticulously researched study. Starting out by complicating widely held generalizations about Yankee-Irish-Catholic antipathies, he goes on to set forth a compelling and original narrative of the Irish adventure in America."

– Donna Potts, author of *Contemporary Irish Poetry and the Pastoral Tradition*

"*New World Irish* advances scholarship on Irish American in several ways, sometimes by upsetting conventional wisdom, sometimes by identifying authors and themes that have been overlooked, and always with perceptive and original readings of a literature still in the process of being retrieved and defined. This is a thoughtful and useful contribution to both Irish and American studies."

– James Silas Rogers, author of *Extended Family: Essays on being Irish-American*.

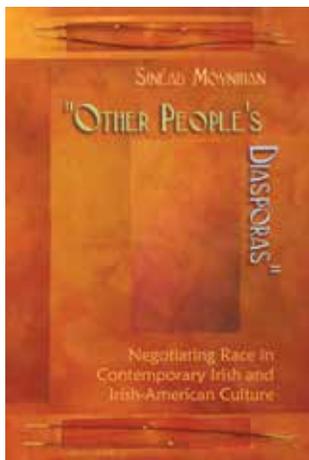
Jack Morgan



Bio

Jack Morgan is Emeritus Research Professor of English, Missouri University of Science and Technology (formerly University of Missouri-Rolla.) He was born in Hartford CT, parents from Ireland; his father was born and raised in Carlingford, Louth, and his mother in Belfast (with family in Carlingford). Morgan has five books presently in print, most recently *Joyce's City: History Politics, and Life in Dubliners* (2015), *The Martyrdom of Maev and other Irish Stories by Harold Frederic*, Editor (2015), *New World Irish: Notes on One Hundred Years of Lives and Letters in American Culture* (2011). He has published as well in film and popular culture.

Spotlight on “Other People’s Diaspora”: Negotiating Race in Contemporary Irish and Irish-American Culture by Sinéad Moynihan



Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2013
ISBN: 978-0-8156-3310-5

A lecturer in twentieth-century literature at the University of Exeter, Moynihan pulls together a wide range of literature, film, and popular culture in Ireland and carefully contextualizes a discourse of immigration, identity and citizenship around it to make a compelling argument about the role of race in contemporary Irish culture. As she states in her introduction, “the premise of this book is that one of the most palpable trends in Irish culture of the Celtic Tiger years was the juxtaposition, literal or implied, of narratives of Irish *emigration* to the United States with those of *immigration* to Ireland.” Individual chapters include ones devoted to Joseph O’ Connor’s “Fictions of Irish America,” and Roddy Doyle’s “Fictions of Multicultural Ireland.” Now several years post Celtic Tiger, Moynihan closes her fascinating study with a question and a challenge: “Will writers, dramatists, comics, and filmmakers continue to find in the Grand Narrative of Irish transatlantic emigration rich terrain on which to map their contemporary concerns? If so, what will the racial, political, and ethical implications of such engagements be?”

Some Reviews:

“Moynihan is not the first to note the shadow that America’s racial experience casts over Ireland, but she deploys it in original and fascinating ways.”

– *Irish University Review*

“One of the most impressive aspects of Moynihan’s overall approach is her repeated warnings against recasting Irish experience in terms of American debates of race and immigration... her own close readings of Irish texts are similarly enhanced by an attentiveness to the small print of race and immigration in contemporary Ireland.”

– *The Irish Times*

“The book is enriched by a wide-ranging sense of the expressive genres in which such difficult questions are aired – not just fiction (the work of Joseph O’ Connor and Roddy Doyle), and drama (selected works of Ronan Noone and Daniel O’ Kelly), but also films by Jim Sheridan, Neil Jordan, and Eugene Brady whose provenance is as much American by way of Hollywood as it is Irish per se.”

– *New Hibernia Review*

“A compelling argument about the role of race in contemporary Irish culture.”

– Lauren Onkey, author of *Blackness and Transatlantic Irish Identity*

Sinéad Moynihan



Bio

Sinéad Moynihan is a Senior Lecturer in Twentieth-Century Literature at the University of Exeter with research interests clustering around Irish, American and Transatlantic Literature and Culture, particularly in relation to questions of race, migration, displacement and diaspora. She has published widely on the literature of Irish America, including on writers such as Alice McDermott and Joseph O'Connor. Her book, *Other People's Diasporas: Negotiating Race in Contemporary Irish and Irish-American Culture*, appeared with Syracuse University Press in 2013. Her current project – *Ireland, America and Return Migration: The “Returned Yank” in the Cultural Imagination* – is under contract with Liverpool University Press.

Spotlight on *Post-Ireland?*: *Essays on Contemporary Irish Poetry*

Edited by Jefferson Holdridge and Brian Ó Conchubhair



Wake Forest University
Press, 2017
ISBN: 978-1-930630-76-5

Written by established and emerging scholars, the essays in *Post-Ireland?* recognize both the perpetual search for a sustaining national concept of Ireland and a sense that long-established definitions no longer apply. Edited by Jefferson Holdridge and Brian Ó Conchubhair, these lively and engaging essays assess how contemporary Irish poetry is being shaped by questions of personal, social and national identity in an Ireland that is becoming post-nationalist, post-Catholic, post-Gaelic and even post post-colonial. Included is a chapter by James Chandler on three contemporary American poets: Michael Donaghy, Campbell McGrath, and Maureen McLane. Chandler begins his essay with the question central to this collection: “How do we identify an Irish poet ‘post-Ireland?’” His answer is “to consider three American poets of Irish descent, each with a discernible relationship to Ireland and its poetic traditions.” Chandler wonders if it might be best to or most appropriate to call them Irish-American poets. Circumventing any final conclusion to this question, Chandler concludes that it might be better not to ask whether they are poets who write in light of Ireland (i.e., post-Ireland) or in search of Ireland, but rather to concentrate on the transnational poetic inheritances in the English language, in America, in Ireland, and in England.

A History of the Guthrie Theater



The Guthrie Theater opened on May 7, 1963, with a production of *Hamlet* directed by Sir Tyrone Guthrie, the theater's founder. The idea of the theater began in 1959 during a series of conversations among Guthrie and two colleagues – Oliver Rea and Peter Zeisler – who were disenchanted with Broadway. They wanted to create a theater with a resident acting company that would perform the classics in rotating repertory with the highest professional standards. The Guthrie became a prototype for an important new kind of theater in contrast to the commercial environment of Broadway. There, the high costs associated with mounting a production increasingly mandated that shows must be immediately successful at high ticket prices. The Broadway atmosphere was conducive neither to producing the great works of literature, nor to cultivating the artists' talents, nor to nourishing the audience.

The idea of a major resident theater was introduced to the American public in a small paragraph on the drama page of *The New York Times* on September 30, 1959, which invited cities to indicate interest in Tyrone Guthrie's idea. Seven cities responded: Waltham, Mass., Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, San Francisco and Minneapolis/St. Paul (which was not only interested but eager). Guthrie, Rea and Zeisler visited the seven cities, but were

drawn to Minneapolis/St. Paul because of its location in the heartland of America, the vitality of the cultural community, the presence of a large state university and many small colleges, and the enthusiasm shown by the Upper Midwest for the new theater project.

In 1960, a steering committee that had been formed to bring the theater to the Twin Cities obtained from the T.B. Walker Foundation a commitment: to donate the land behind the Walker Art Center for a building and to contribute \$400,000 for construction. The steering committee itself agreed to raise at least \$900,000 from the community. Thus, the Guthrie Theater was born in Minneapolis/St. Paul, symbolizing for many the birth of the not-for-profit resident theater movement.



Tyrone Guthrie, center, during a read through of *Hamlet*.

The steering committee was constituted formally as the Tyrone Guthrie Theater Foundation in the summer of 1960. (The committee consisted of H. Harvard Arnason, Pierce Butler III, John Cowles, Jr., Roger Kennedy, Otto Silha, Philip von Blon, Frank Whiting and Louis Zelle). With the help of hundreds of dedicated volunteers, a massive statewide fundraising effort was launched and more than \$2.2 million was raised. The new theater was completed

in 1963. It was planned by architect Ralph Rapson and included a 1,441-seat thrust stage designed by Tanya Moiseiwitsch. The stage area was a seven-sided asymmetrical platform about 32 x 35 feet, raised three steps above floor level. A professional company composed of stage veterans Hume Cronyn, Jessica Tandy and Zoe Caldwell and young actors such as George Grizzard, Ellen Geer and Joan van Ark performed in the inaugural season.

With support from the McKnight Foundation, the Guthrie and the University of Minnesota undertook a model program for engaging graduate students in the theater arts as interns in acting, directing, design, playwriting and management. Following the 10 years of McKnight Foundation funding, the Bush Foundation took over for an additional five years.



Tyrone Guthrie seated right in rehearsals.

The theater opened with 22,000 season ticket holders and \$300,000 in advance sales for its first May-September season of four plays. The Ford Foundation provided funds to offset operating losses for the first six years.

Sir Tyrone Guthrie was the artistic director from 1963 through 1966 and thereafter returned to direct each year until 1969. He passed away in 1971. In these beginning

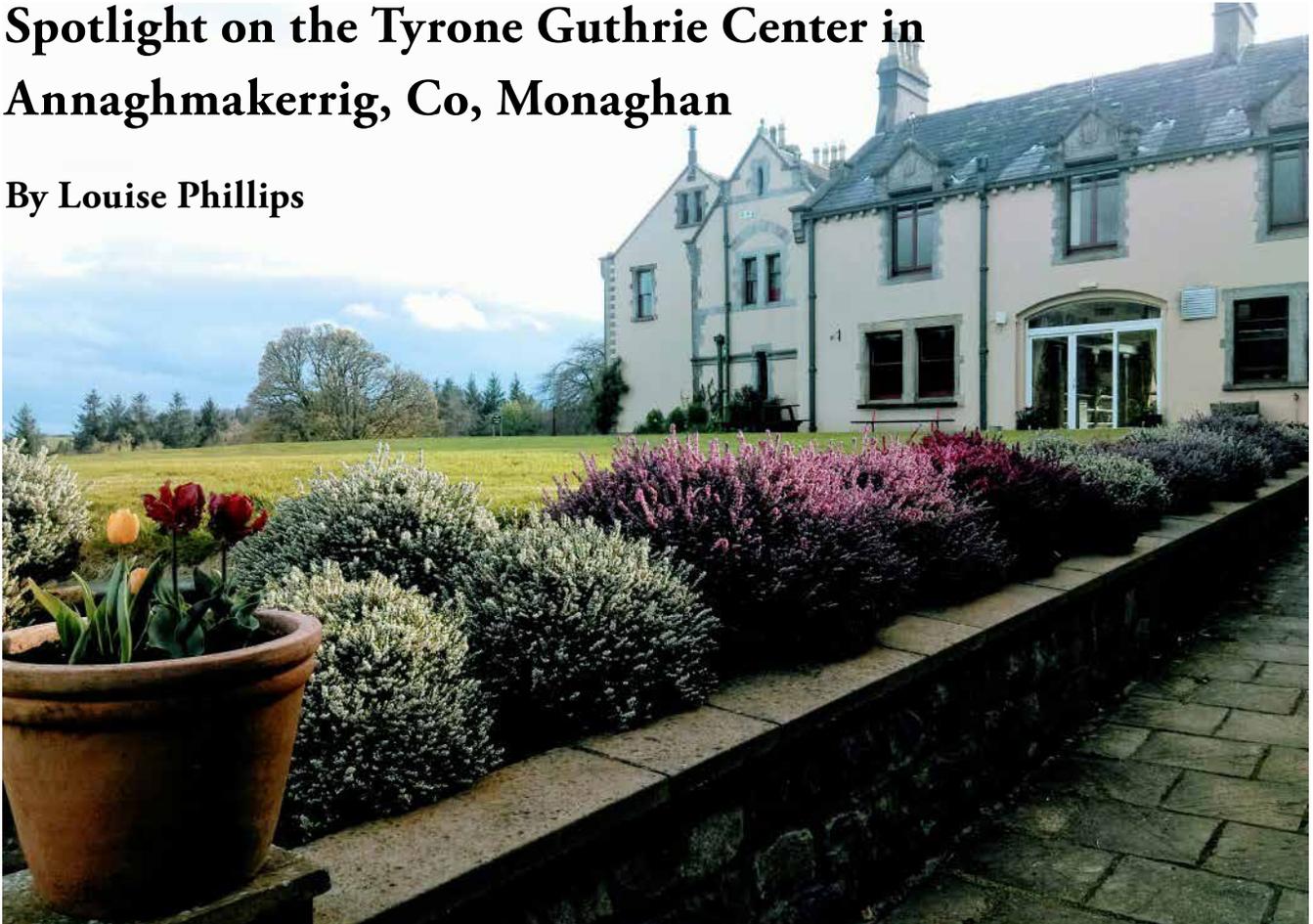
years, epic productions included *Henry V*, *St. Joan*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *The Three Sisters*. Tyrone Guthrie's 1968 production of *The House of Atreus* brought the Theater renewed honor and attention. In 1968, the Guthrie became the first resident theater to undertake a national tour, taking *The House of Atreus* and *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* to theaters in New York and Los Angeles.

In 1966 Guthrie's protégé, actor/director Douglas Campbell, took over as artistic director. Oliver Rea, who had shared administrative responsibilities at the theater, resigned the same year, leaving Peter Zeisler the sole managing director. When Campbell left in 1967, Zeisler emerged as the single leader of the Theater and hired two producing directors to work under him: Edward Payson Call and Mel Shapiro. There would be no artistic director until 1971. When Zeisler left in 1969, Donald Schoenbaum was appointed managing director, a position he held until 1986.



Spotlight on the Tyrone Guthrie Center in Annaghmakerrig, Co, Monaghan

By Louise Phillips



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It's been a few weeks since I've stayed at the Tyrone Guthrie Artist Retreat in Monaghan and it feels like the right time to reflect. The place certainly grips you emotionally while you're there, creating an almost surreal experience for an artist. Arriving at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre this time around, I had the sense of returning to the familiar, only with a different set of eyes than my previous visits. I returned more confident of my fictional abilities, yet laced with enough uncertainties to make this literary territory still feel full of adventure.

The place felt even more like a sanctuary than before. Beauty and history can do that, especially with the spirits of previous artists everywhere. The inky shimmer of the lake beneath the moon, the magnificent swans gliding across the water, the uniqueness and history of the Manor House, with the ever-changing colours of the garden, and the lush forest beyond, all tell you, you are in a very special haven.



Writing, and editing, in cottage four, which, like the other cottages on the estate, was furnished in old world style, with paintings donated from visiting artists throughout, I felt truly energised. Alone with the fictional characters of a fluid and evolving story, I found new exciting fictional pathways.

When in need of human company, I popped up to the main house, past the landscaped gardens and the visual artists' studios, to share a cup of tea or coffee with others staying at the centre. It's hard to describe the joy of being with other creative souls, or to fully explain the warmth and hospitality of the house, especially when you're nestled in the kitchen with the aroma of fresh baking and the culinary delights for the group evening meal already taking hold, and you feel part of a creative family.

The evening meal starts with the sounding of a large gold dong in the main hallway, the sound bellowing through the house, after which, all visiting artists sit around a large wooden table, lit by candlelight, to eat and converse. This coming together to share food and conversation was a stipulation made by Tyrone Guthrie on bequeathing the house and grounds to the State, and one which has proven to be a very positive one.



Each night, after the meal and a couple of glasses of wine, I returned to the sanctuary of my cottage with a rejuvenated sense of self, ready to read for a couple of hours before settling for the night. In the morning, I awoke with a fresh and strong desire to write. This made me realise something else. The centre wasn't only a sanctuary for me, a headspace to write, it was a sanctuary for my fictional characters too. They were given the opportunity to breathe, to grow in a space where they weren't in competition with other people, like family and friends, or the mundane demands of life, and in this space, they could fully realise themselves. The Tyrone Guthrie Centre, and all it affords an artist, brought the people within my fictional world closer to me, and in doing so, closer to the characters they needed to become.

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Writers live an existence rooted in reality. But, they also explore a fictional world, one which often holds more truth than its realistic counterpart. Tyrone Guthrie did a very fine thing when he bequeathed the house and grounds to the Irish State. He granted a creative lifeline to many, a wondrous place which epitomises, nurtures, and respects that all artists are on a journey, and sometimes we need to stop, and sometimes, if we're lucky, it's in a place that feeds the creative soul.



Louise Phillips



Bio

Louise Phillips is an author of four psychological crime thrillers. Her debut novel *RED RIBBONS* was nominated for the Best Irish Crime Novel of the Year 2012, and her second novel, *THE DOLL'S HOUSE*, won the award in 2013. *LAST KISS*, her third novel was also shortlisted. Her work has formed part of many anthologies and literary journals. She was also a winner of the Jonathan Swift Award, the Irish Writers' Centre Lonely Voice platform, and shortlisted for the Molly Keane Memorial Award, Bridport UK, and many others. In 2015, she was a judge on the Irish panel for the EU Literary Award. *THE GAME CHANGER* is her fourth novel.

The American Irish Historical Society



One of the most interesting aspects of the American Irish Historical Society is their outstanding library which contains a wealth of archival materials on Irish American culture and history. Included in their archives are Special Collections from Judge Daniel F. Cohalan, the Friends of Irish Freedom, the Catholic Club of the City of New York and the Brooklyn Benevolent Society. Also housed in their archives are newspaper collections such as *The Nation*, *Dublin Penny Journal*, *Gaelic American and Irish World* and *American Industrial Liberator*.

Other items include letters from Padraig Pearse and Charles Stewart Parnell, along with a taped interview with Brendan Behan, which subsequently became *Confessions of a Rebel*.

For more information about the library and its holdings and to access its online catalog, visit www.aihs.org/library.

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THE SOCIETY TODAY

The American Irish Historical Society serves as a cultural center and event venue. It offers its members, as well as the general public, the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of a rich heritage and to come together in a place where a chance meeting so often becomes the basis of lasting friendship.

In the past year we have provided our members and visitors with fine arts and design exhibitions, plays, film, and concerts, as well as other cultural and historical activities.

THE BUILDING

Home for the American Irish Historical Society is a magnificent five-story townhouse at 991 Fifth Avenue, just across the street from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It was built in 1900 on the trailing edge of the Gilded Age, when Fifth Avenue was called the “street of dreams” and the neighborhood included so many Vanderbilts, Astors, Carnegies, and other barons of industry and finance that it was known as “Millionaires’ Row.”

991 Fifth Avenue was built on speculation in 1900 by two brothers, John T. and James A. Farley. It was designed by New York architects James R. Turner and William G. Killian and praised by contemporary critics as an exemplary model of the Beaux Arts style. The first owner of the townhouse was a widow, Mary King, who was followed by a banking executive. In 1911, the interiors were redesigned by the leading American designer of the day, Ogden Codman. The most famous master of the premises, however, was William Ellis Corey, president of U.S. Steel, who kept the tabloids buzzing when he deserted his wife and carried on a highly visible affair with a showgirl. He lived at No. 991 from 1918 to 1934, eventually leaving it to his son.



He lived at No. 991 from 1918 to 1934, eventually leaving it to his son.

The fourth and current owner of 991 Fifth is the American Irish Historical Society, who purchased the property with the support of the Irish Palace Building Association in 1940. In 1977, New York City’s Landmarks Preservation Commission named 991 Fifth Avenue as a “designated building” possessing “a special historical, cultural, or aesthetic value” that made it “an important part of the city’s historical and architectural heritage.”

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MUSIC SALON

For the past twenty years, the Society has hosted an ongoing chamber music series with the Juilliard School, showcasing many of the finest young musicians in the world within its ideal salon environment. These classical, opera, and jazz performances integrate with the Society’s program of Irish traditional music and visiting classical artists from Ireland. Having recently begun a cutting-edge music series with Ensemble LPR, the Metropolis Ensemble, and other leading lights on the contemporary scene, the Society is also inaugurating a collaboration with the Royal Irish Academy of Music, furthering its presence as a unique venue in which to experience music in an intimate and elegant environment.

THE ONE HUNDRED YEAR RENOVATION

Early in the 21st Century, more than one hundred years after its construction, the building was in urgent need of repair and restoration. The deteriorating masonry in the beautiful stone facade needed to be re-pointed and repaired. The front door had to be restored. Windows facing the street required restoration, rebuilding, and re-glazing. Neo-classical leaded windows on the second floor needed to be restored to prevent further deterioration. The windows in the rear of the second and third floors were collapsing and in need of replacement. A crumbling steam vault in the basement was undermining the front sidewalk.

Electrical systems, plumbing, and other fundamentals needed major work and upgrades. A complete installation of a modern HVAC system was undertaken in order to help maintain and preserve all of the historical artifacts housed in the Society.

The “heavy” part of the construction and renovation was conducted over a period of sixteen months between 2005 and 2007. During that time, the amount of work that was done was enormous for a five-story townhouse, while painstaking attention was paid to the preservation and restoration of the original woodwork, marble, plasterwork, and skylights. The renovation of our beautiful home was a complete success and the Society was awarded the Lucy G. Moses Award of The New York Landmarks Conservancy as the best renovation in 2008 for a landmark building in New York City.

A PRICELESS LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES COLLECTION

The library houses the most complete private collection of Irish and American Irish history and literature in the United States. More than 15,000 books, among them Bishop Bedell’s Irish Bible of 1685 are preserved in temperature controlled rooms and are available for scholarly use.



The periodical collection includes copies of such rare publications as *The Northern Star* and *The Belfast Newsletter* dating back to the late 18th century, as well as and such early and mid-19th century newspapers as *The Nation*, *The United Irishman*, and *The Dublin Penny Journal*. Also preserved at the Society are letters from Patrick Pearse and Charles Stewart Parnell, the archives of the Friends of Irish Freedom, and the personal papers of leading Irish and Irish American political and cultural leaders.

Paintings by Nathaniel Hone, John Faulkener, George Russell (A.E.), John Butler Yeats (father of the poet) and Aloysius O’Kelly, and a sculpture by Augustus St. Gaudens are among the works of art in the Society’s collection. An audio collection has the taped interview with Brendan Behan that became his *Confessions of an Irish Rebel*. Scattered through the

building are busts of Edmund Burke, Robert Emmet, Daniel O'Connell, Charles Stewart Parnell and Admiral Richard Worsam Meade, the Society's first President-General.

Following our re-opening in 2008, the Society has been working tirelessly to catalog our library and archives. The vast majority of the materials are now available through a digital catalog on our website, allowing for easier access for researchers. We welcome scholars of all ages to avail themselves of our extensive archives and library, from high school students to doctoral candidates, professors and authors.

ANNUAL DINNER

Every year in early November the Society hosts its Annual Dinner during which the Gold Medal, the Society's highest honor, is awarded to an individual whose exemplary life highlights the continuing mission and purpose of the Society.

Recipients in recent times have included President Ronald Reagan, Senator George Mitchell, Bono, Police Commissioner Ray Kelly, Donald Keough, Wilbur Ross, Mary Higgins Clark, George Meany, and many other illustrious men and women of Irish extraction..