

Plan B

for Bealtaine
at Cork City Libraries

Issue 2 – Friday 15th May 2020

Lord Mayor of Cork Cllr John Sheehan, Lady Mayoress Aedamar Sheehan and author Catherine Kirwan at the launch of *One City One Book*, 2019.



**Cork author
Billy O'Callaghan shares
an excerpt from 'The
Inner Light' from his
2009 short story
anthology 'In Too Deep
& Other Short Stories'**

From beneath the gauzy blanket of a dream, the old man felt something shift, compromising the stillness. He strained to listen, but the world was full of sounds that he'd only lately begun to hear, and it was a minute before he caught the certain telltale sound of a floorboard's groan, the loose board on the landing just beyond his bedroom door.

'Jack.' His mouth shaped the name, a flicker of old tongue and a small widening of cracked and sunken lips, but the sound that wheezed to the surface was as dry and blanched as withered November leaves. Then, even before opening his eyes, he smiled.

Smiling really did make everything seem better. The air lost its stifling clamour and lightened around him, and even irreversible situations felt suddenly bearable. He held the smile until it had spread its rays out to the very furthest reaches of his face and delighted one more time in how the muscles tightened, how the creases of time flexed and deepened into the place of worthy shadow.

Then he opened his eyes on the half-lit day.

'How did you know it was me?' Jack stood in the doorway, small and impossibly young, a flower still a long way yet from fullest bloom. The glow of wonder at this piece of magic glimpsed lit a bonfire in his wide, heart-shaped face and made pools of his dark staring eyes, yet it was clear enough that he had reached a kind of

precipice. Eight years old was childhood honed to a deadly edge, when all innocence felt distilled to its purest form. At eight, every breath tasted of newly hatched summer, every bone ached to run. There was mystery to be found at every turn, the bristle and thrill of another challenge to be met and faced down. But all that chasing, laughing and playing had to lead somewhere.

The old man, the grandfather, shifted in the bed, then opened up that smile again. 'A trick I picked up over the years,' he said. He could feel the frail words flutter winged from his mouth, and almost expected to see them in flight. 'There are other things than maths and geography to learn, boy. And school won't have all the answers.'

Shyly, Jack approached the bedside, stood uncertainly for a second or two, then perched on the edge of the bed. The mattress barely sagged beneath his lithesome body. He stared at his grandfather, then took to studying what the fingers of his left hand were doing, how they bunched and built the white linen sheet into neat and even pleats. Two knuckles were skinned raw, the pale flesh pocked with a crust of scab. Fighting perhaps, or a careless careen against some pebble-dashed wall while in the fullest flight of some important game. Those were nasty wounds, yet of a kind quick to heal; a few wincing tears shed, a duty served, and then that stinging – surely the worst pain in the whole world – would begin to fade. Summer was calling, full as brimming wells with dew-laden mornings and joyous, rambling afternoons. There was time for tears, but not time to linger over them.

The Inner Light, 2009

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Short Story Writing with Sorcha Fogarty

Over the next few weeks Sorcha Fogarty, a member of our Bishopstown Library staff will be going through how to begin writing. Let's continue!

Hooking the Reader

Begin a story in the middle of a conversation:

"Just who do you think you are?" Mrs. Fleming asked as April slammed her notebook on the desk.

Begin with a description:

Millie's face turned red when she entered the room. Staped on the walls all around were pictures of her.

Begin with background information (exposition):

Kevin was accustomed to being first. Since he had started running, in sixth class in secondary school, he had always been a champion.

Begin with a peek into the character's mind:

How could things have gone so wrong? I asked myself, as I looked out over a sea of laughing faces.

Begin with a startling statement:

When I was little, I would think of ways to kill my daddy.
(Ellen Foster by Kaye Gibbons)

Begin with a question:

What would you do if you were standing in the shopping centre one day minding your own business, when suddenly, the girl who you knew you would spend the rest of your life with...the girl who makes your heart beat like a drum...the woman whose fingers could crush you like an insect or hold you like a delicate flower... walks by? What would you do if you had never seen her before and did not even know her name?

Don't forget!

Take your time before revising and editing: you won't be able to assess your piece immediately after you've written it; give it time, get a little distance from it, so when you return to it you can look at it with some objectivity. Being too immersed in a piece will not help the revision or editing process.

...more tips next issue

**Cork City COVID-19
Community Call
Helpline**

 **1800-222-226**

 **covidsupport@corkcity.ie**



Early Years of Cork Cinema

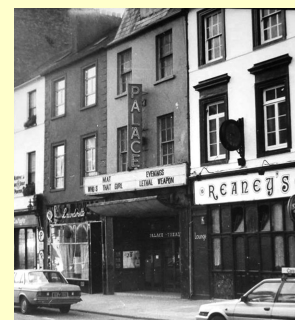


*Assembly Rooms:
Architectural rendering of
proposed facade, 1861.*

Films arrived to Cork in April 1896, at a "Fancy Fair" held at the Assembly Rooms. Little fanfare greeted their unveiling; more of a splash was created when they featured as an attraction at the "Wonderland Bazaar" - a Cork variation of a World's Fair - held that September on the grounds of the City Hall. Patrons attended a programme of "cinematographe pictures" featuring spectacles of "men boxing, Joan of

Arc being burned, Loie Fuller Dancing, the Derby from start to finish". The Evening Echo commented: "they startle by the realism of the action, and there is no doubt that the Cinematographe is the prime novelty of the Show" (Sept. 3, 1896).

Soon, other entertainment venues such as The Assembly Rooms, the Palace Theatre and the Opera House were including moving pictures in their offerings, but Cork only got its first designated cinema in December 1909, with the opening of The Electric Theatre at 9 Maylor Street. Its advertising boasted that of "the newest and cheapest entertainment in the South of Ireland", featuring programmes of actualities (such as a film of the 1909 Derby) and features (an American serial film, Nick Carter) guaranteed to "interest and amuse grave and gay alike" (Cork Examiner, Dec. 29th 1909). The Electric had a short history, marked by disputes with city authorities over licences and adherence to fire regulations, with interest groups that expressed concern over "indecent" films that might "pollute" good Catholic audiences, and with rival venues that resented the competition. After four months marked by temporary closures and revamps, Cork's first cinema conceded defeat and closed its doors in April 1910.



*The Palace Theatre as a cinema, 1908.
image source:
oldphotosofcork.wordpress.com*

from 'Movie Memories' Exhibition,
Dept of Film & Screen Media, UCC

Redeployed Library Staff Rose Smyth



Since the end of March library staff members have been redeployed to assist in essential services in the Covid-19 emergency. A number of colleagues and I have been redeployed to the HSE, helping out with contact tracing. The work takes place in UCC and the contact tracing teams are made up of both clinicians – public health doctors and nurses – and non-clinicians, such as myself, library colleagues and other redeployed public service staff. The clinical teams make the initial call to the patient, informing them they have tested positive for Covid-19, carry out a medical assessment and give information about self-isolating and keeping safe. Non-clinical staff then make follow up calls to find out all people the patient had close contact with from 48 hours before the first onset of symptoms. Further calls are then made to these contacts to inform them that they have been in close contact with a positive Covid-19 case and advice on limiting movements and contacts and on what to do if they become symptomatic. The work is interesting but can be challenging at times and each call is different. Each 'case' you contact is a person dealing with a serious health issue and at all times you are mindful of the unique difficulties each one is facing. Having kindness, understanding and empathy is important in helping you carry out the work. It is also rewarding knowing you are doing something to help out in the current emergency.

The Lottery and its Cork Agents.

In June 1799 lottery fever was in full swing as the Cork Advertiser and Commercial Register carried an advertisement proclaiming that William Henry Creagh of the Mercantile Office No 2, Grand Parade promoting the lottery. The same newspaper carried an advertisement from the printer James Haly of the Kings Arms near the Exchange selling tickets and shares for the Irish lottery. By 1803 lottery tickets were selling fast and furious as the citizens of Cork were lured by the huge prizes offered, often the equivalent of a lifetime's savings. So great was the demand for lottery tickets that the aptly named Temple of Fortune Cork Lottery Office was established at No 1 Grand Parade. The Irish lottery worked in conjunction with its British counterpart ensuring enormous payouts. On the 4th of April 1803 there were four top prizes of £20,000. The number of tickets issued was 44,000. Most people could not afford the entire cost of a lottery ticket, so the brokers would sell shares in a ticket; this resulted in tickets being issued with a notation such as "Sixteenth" or "Third Class."

The Cork office was a branch of the main business which was located at Dame Street Dublin. Such was the extent of its growth that government and Bank of Ireland bonds were lodged as security by the Cork office. Prior to this, some unscrupulous individuals had set up a business selling lottery tickets in the city. Unfortunately, when the lucky winners went to collect their prizes they were informed that the seller had vanished with the money. By 1803 in order to make the scheme more attractive, literally thousands of prizes ranging from £20 right up to the jackpot of £20,000 were offered. This was the third English lottery draw and the Cork office proudly announced that since its commencement the Irish firm had handled £380,000 in the form of tickets and prizes.

The printing establishments of Cork city worked hand in glove with various lottery concerns. In the early 1820's John Bolster whose business was at No 7, Patrick Street was the state lottery agent. But, this venture was to be short lived as gambling had become a liability and the government was unable to control the many private lotteries which appeared each year. Finally in 1826 the British Parliament passed an Act declaring all lotteries to be illegal. It must have been quite ironic for John Bolster to see his lucrative business dissolved by this Act of Parliament, as he was his Majesties printer in Cork responsible for printing and selling copies of that decree.

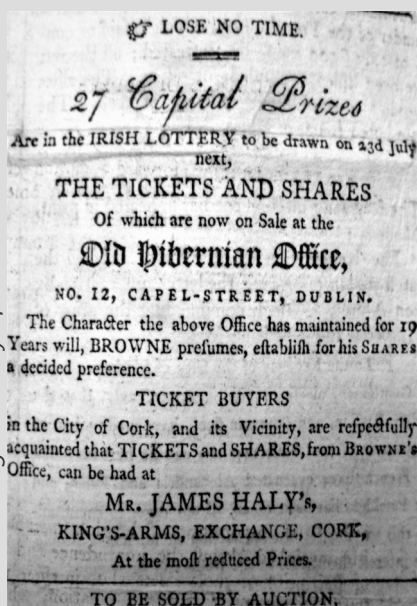


Image courtesy of Michael Lenihan

The Cork and Covid-19 creative writing initiative invites you to write a poem or short story (max 1000 words) giving us a snapshot of your life in these strange times.

Poetry and stories are welcome and Cork City Libraries will compile and keep your work for our social history archives. A piece will also be chosen for the Bealtaine newsletter each week, this week's poem is by Ed Cashman

Michael Lenihan is a member of our Glanmire Library staff

Grace Notes

Brainwormed by newsfeeds,
and this strange grammar of being-
your palm enfolds a pint of stout
in the backyard quiet,
the frost of Perseus.

We're gonna need a third or fourth wind
to skiff these islands,
a lodestone or talisman
to world the spaces between us -
but less busybodied,
less glutted by wants
as we queue for simple needs.

Do we have enzymes to digest this?
Can we code it
with the lifehack,
the lifestyle app

in the vanishing of the workaday
as the kids scramble your nerves,
as you rush the forms,
as there's no gadding about,
as there's no visiting gran?

The future is a moon-blurred
gauze of rain

and there's a stopped heart in every stat;
goodbyes at a distance.

But like a grate of embers
something flickers in the silence

and you sense the practice
that ignites your spark -

the slow exhale to fire the vagus nerve,
humming of the song that fathoms you,
spading of soil
or kneading of dough.

It changes how you pay attention.

So navigate this troubledom,
the whatness of it

with gratitude for the grace notes,
gratitude for the spine of service:

nightfeed for the newborns,
bins collected,
the helping of the mottled hand,
the nurse who must clock in.

There's a breakage, there's an opening;
we can vernalise our ways of being
but if, in the small hours,
you are cramped in fear
let this be your mantra of action
for the days, hours, minutes ahead:

that after this I do that,
and that after that, I do this.

April '20

Ed Cashman is a member of the City Library staff



We are Cork.

QUIZ TIME!

The Coal Quay's official name is Cornmarket Street. How did it become known as the Coal Quay?



Image courtesy of Michael Lenihan

Email or text answer to patricia_looney@corkcity.ie or 086 6061193. The person who sends the first correct answer will receive a copy of 'The Immortal Deeds of Michael O'Leary' by Cónal Creedon.



Book censorship in Ireland

When the Irish State was founded, its leaders were strongly influenced by Irish Catholicism. A Committee of Enquiry on Evil Literature was appointed in 1926. The Committee's report was the basis of the Censorship of Publications Act 1929. The

Censorship Board, established in 1930, banned any literary publication it considered "obscene" or "indecent". No appeal board was set up before 1946. The Censorship Board was required to assess the literary, artistic, scientific or historic merits of a book as well as the inclusion of any abhorrent subject matter. However, judgement was made on the objectionable nature of passages in a book rather than on their overall literary value.

Eminent authors who were censored between the 1930s and the 1960s include Maura Laverty, John McGahern, Edna O'Brien, Kate O'Brien, Seán O'Casey, Frank O'Connor, Seán Ó Faoláin, Brendan Behan, James Joyce, Eric Cross and Liam O'Flaherty. Kate O'Brien's *The Land of Spices* was banned due to one single sentence because it had homosexual connotations. John McGahern's *The Dark* was censored because it discussed adolescent sexuality in rural Ireland, resulting in McGahern losing his job as a teacher. The most notorious case of censorship in Cork, and championed by Frank O'Connor, was that of *The Tailor and Ansty* by Eric Cross. Professor William Magennis, a member of the Censorship Board said that the male character in it was sex-obsessed and that his wife was a person of inferior mental development. The book was banned due to its tendency towards indecency. Timothy Buckley, the Tailor, was forced by three priests to burn his copy of the book.

No work of prose or poetry in the Irish language was ever banned under the 1929 Act. However, Frank O'Connor's translation of Brian Merriman's *Cúirt an Mheán Oíche* (*The Midnight Court*) was banned on its publication in 1946, while the Irish language version remained uncensored! There was an assumption that material in the Irish language was unlikely to corrupt. However, some Irish-language books were censored before 1929. Pádraic Ó Conaire's *Nóra Mharcais Bhig* and *Deoraidheacht* were both removed from the Matriculate Examination course by an t-Athair Peadar Ua Laoghaire. It was no coincidence that *Deoraidheacht* was replaced by the book *Séadna*, written by none other than an t-Athair Peadar Ua Laoghaire!

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Deirdre Swain is a member of the City Library staff.

from Cork City Libraries' exhibition

'No Longer Forgotten' Cork Women of the Revolution

Many of our exhibitions can be viewed online at www.corkcitylibraries.ie

Mary MacSwiney

Mary MacSwiney was born in Surrey on 27th March 1872 to John MacSwiney, a native of Cork, and Mary Wilkinson, an English Catholic with strong Irish nationalist opinions.



She was the eldest of seven, and her brother was Terence MacSwiney. As a child, she developed a seriously infected foot, which eventually had to be amputated, and she was fitted with a surgical boot, but she had a severe limp all her life. She was one of two Irish Catholic women studying in the teaching programme in Cambridge University which accepted one hundred, the majority of whom were men. After receiving her teaching diploma, Mary started working in a boarding school directed by nuns of the Order of St. Benedict in Farnboro, England. She seriously considered entering the religious life during this time, but in the end, she became a member of a lay organisation, the Third Order of St. Benedict. When her mother died in 1904, she returned to Cork to assume a matriarchal role over the MacSwiney family. Mary's first political association was with the Irish suffrage movement, and she became a member of the Munster Women's Franchise League. She believed that women's suffrage and Home Rule for Ireland were compatible goals. However, other members of the suffrage movement did not agree with the fact that Mary was helping men of the Irish Volunteers. While Mary believed in the justice and relevance of women's suffrage, she believed that the cause of a free Ireland was more urgent, and she resigned from the Munster Women's Franchise League in November 1914. She also joined Cumann na mBan in 1914, and the inaugural meeting of the Cork branch of Cumann na mBan was held in the MacSwiney house in May 1914. She was a teacher at St. Angela's during this time, and on 2nd May 1916, she was arrested by British soldiers in front of her students for her part in aiding Irish Volunteers as a member of Cumann na mBan. On 3rd May 1916, she was dismissed abruptly from her teaching post due to her radical politics. New schools were reluctant to employ a known political radical, so Mary decided to open her own school later that year, Scoil Íte, which enrolled boys up to the age of 10 and girls up to the secondary grades. This school had a strong Nationalist emphasis, and Mary established there a philosophy of education which was in accordance with her beliefs, combining careful moral and religious training with a high standard of intellectual work. After her brother Terence died on hunger strike in 1920, Mary was elected for Sinn Féin to the Cork Borough constituency, taking her seat in the Second Dáil in 1921. Mary MacSwiney died on 8th March 1942.



We are Cork.



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