

Plan B for Bealtaine at Cork City Libraries

Browsing for bargains at the street fair during the Cork World Book Festival, 2019

Issue 3: Friday 22nd May 2020



Kevin Doyle is the author of two political crime thrillers *To Keep A Bird Singing* (2018) and *A River of Bodies* (2019) – both published by Blackstaff Press. He co-wrote with Spark Deeley the award-winning children's picture book, *The Worms that Saved the World* and has also written widely on anarchism and the radical tradition.

The Water War

excerpt from a new story by Kevin Doyle

There were briquette bales in the hall, and I could hear the radio; her coat and scarf lay on the stairs. I stood there for a moment. The front door was wide open, so I called out, but there was no reply. I walked down the hall as far as the kitchen door and saw her, half-bathed in sunlight, standing near the table. She was wearing only jeans and a yellow bra, and her body was twisted in a spiral, in a way that reminded me of a discus thrower. Except that there was no discus in her hand. She held a mobile phone and was taking pictures, a lot of pictures of her lower left side.

'Karen,' I asked, 'what are you doing?'

The phone clattered onto the floor. 'Jesus,' she replied, 'the fright you gave me.'

Another time, maybe a month or more after we met, I went to her place. She had read a review of a bottle of wine in the newspaper and had gone out specially to buy it. Laughing, she explained that I had started to make her do things like that. I was pleased; it was an admission of sorts.

We drank the wine slowly. Unexpectedly, she asked, 'When were you happiest in your life?'

I had to think about my answer. It was not a question I had ever been asked before and I was then fifty-one, I am now fifty-two.

'Apart from this moment, you mean?'

'Be truthful.'

'I am,' I said.

She put her hand on my wrist and squeezed it. Her eyes were green, deeply set. She had a long face. After a moment she returned to her question. 'Okay so, apart from now?'

MOBILE LIBRARY AT AVOCA FLATS, 1982

i.

The sound of a car being revved to death:
An amplifier of buildings, the boom of it;
Laughter of children and dogs is music
Right now. All our books defeat concrete.

ii.

Stones are flying through the library door,
A gift of the new season. It is now high summer
And children swing like branches, calling out
Our names, wanting us to go chase about.

iii.

The street gang wants to join for nothing:
Ten pence is far too much when it's four
Against one. "Piss off, piss off," they sing
As they bolt through the lunch-time door.

THOMAS McCARTHY

Poet and retired staff member of Cork City Libraries



Cork City Mobile Library circa 1976

Short Story Writing with Sorcha Fogarty

Let's continue with Sorcha's helpful tips on mastering the written word!

Synesthesia

Synesthesia is when one mixes up the senses, basically. For example, "a wolf's howl tastes like the rain" mixes sound and taste, or "your shirt is loud today!" combines sight and sound. So, it's a blending of the senses; and the intriguing part is that it is different categories of senses that become blended together. A person with synesthesia (a synesthete) can feel the shape of a taste; for example, they may feel sweetness as something round/circular. Or such a person can see sounds – the composer Alexander Scriabin could see the colour of musical notes. In literature, synesthesia refers to a technique adopted by writers to present ideas, characters, or places in such a manner that they appeal to more than one sense – like hearing, seeing, smell, etc. – at a given time. Dante's *The Divine Comedy* contains one of the best examples of synesthesia in literature. In the first Canto, the poet tells us about a place called "Inferno". He says, "**Back to the region where the sun is silent**".

Here, Dante binds the sense of sight ("sun") with the sense of hearing ("silent").

Writing Prompts

Smell

Think about your "scent memories". What smells bring you back to your past? What smells comfort you and conjure up positive thoughts?

Taste

If you were to write a life history through food and beverages, what would be the "touchstone" moments. What are the meals and/or drinks that represent turning points or significant memories for you? What tastes have you loved? What tastes have you hated?

Sound

Think of a song that carries a specific memory. What event or time in your life do you think of when you hear this song? List the title of the song and explain the memory associated with it. You could also do the same with the sound of a voice of someone you love (or dislike!), either from your past or present.

Touch

Choose an object that is important to you. Explain the significance of the item. How does it feel in your hands? What memories are tied to this object and why? Or maybe think of the first time you held your partner's hand, or your child in your arms, or some other form of human contact that has particular significance for you.

Quick Synesthesia Prompts

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| What would thunder smell like? | What would a shadow taste like? |
| What would smoke feel like? | What colour would loss be? |
| What would snow sound like? | What would anticipation taste like? |
| What would hope smell like? | |

Sorcha Fogarty is a member of the Bishopstown Library staff

...more tips next issue

Cork City Libraries have loaned their two Ultimaker 2+ 3D Printers to BenchSpace Cork. BenchSpace are printing face shields for frontline health workers in the fight against Covid-19 and Cork City Libraries are delighted to do their bit.



My Personal Experiences of Reading Books in Translation



'**LEAVE YOUR COMFORT ZONE**', shouted the lecturer, a stout woman with a red face and a trumpeting voice, '**EXPLORE OTHER ATTITUDES, OTHER CULTURES!**'

I nodded, as if in agreement. She pounced. 'YOU,' she bellowed, '**READ BOOKS IN TRANSLATION, WIDEN YOUR HORIZONS!!**'

I surveyed the basket of 12 books doubtfully.

The dust sheet on the first book showed a poor child in a refugee camp struggling through a flood, traces of severe malnutrition showing on him.

I sighed and thought wistfully of Mills and Boon, and finding one's Prince.

However I persevered and in the Books in Translation I found attitudes that were eye-opening, revealing and thoughtful. I had left the smug, narrow, pragmatic Anglo-Saxon world far behind.

The Japanese writers were a revelation to me. They held a spirituality, a philosophical and moral questioning outside the Western world's mindset. I was impressed with **NishiMura's** short stories. The writers were aware of the animal world and the place of humans in the natural world of trees, plants and oceans.

Modern European literature was imbued with a dark pessimism, I thought. Murder was a popular theme. Absurdity was another. Perhaps two major world wars left scars on the minds of Europeans.

The Islamic world was delightful. Turkish literature seemed to circle around the '**Jinny**'. Do you remember the Genie in the Bottle in the fairy tale of Aladdin and his Magic Lamp? That's him, the **Jinny** that makes every wish come true!

African literature was full of magic, of other worlds impacting on the real world, so that it was hard to distinguish fact from the surreal in **Ben Okri's** work.

I survived it all and emerged broken, but unbowed, and determined to continue.

Thank you to the Library Service who orders and supplies these mind-expanding **Books in Translation** for their Readers.

Cecily Lynch is a member of many groups in the City Libraries

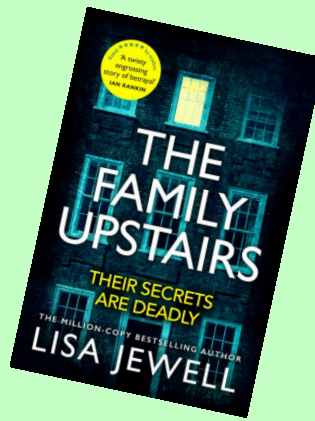
You might like to read...

I had completely lost my reading mojo... In the last 6 weeks I have started, and abandoned, 5 different books. I simply have not been able to concentrate on any of them. I found myself re-reading paragraphs and chapters over and over again and still not being able to absorb anything. I decided I had to kickstart my brain with one of my favourite authors - Lisa Jewell, and this is how her 2019 release - "The Family Upstairs", finally broke the spell.

The Family Upstairs is the story of how Libby, on her 25th birthday, came to inherit a multi-million pound Chelsea mansion. It tells the story of how she was found healthy and happy, at 10 months old in the mansion seemingly the only living person left in the house. The bodies of her parents and another man are found on the kitchen floor with a note in what looked like a cult suicide pact. But were there others? And if so where were they? And who looked after the baby for the days when her parents were dead? And who took everything from the house, except the baby?

The subject matter might not suit everyone as it involves a dark story of how a 'normal' family can be manipulated by one person. Some of the characters are quite dark but the book was right up my alley, it was easily read, thrilling, mysterious & fast moving. From a third of the way through I couldn't put it down and as it was coming to the final chapter I didn't want it to end.

Triona Dunlea, Hollyhill Book Club



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 from Sara O'Mahony

Evening Grace

Harbour's misty haze
Uncanny stillness, unheard of!
Like childhood days
Sunny Seaside summers
Little traffic fumes amaze

Spires Friary domain
Document Histories ageless battles
Centuries remain
Town illustrates tales
Bloody combat
Lives lost by scales
Hard lessons to learn

Like now, perhaps
Adjust difficult
Hold onto hope
Without insult
Replenish to cope

Primrose bunches pop up!
Green lawn grasses
Funny to see this bloom
Heart-warming calming
Soft delicate masses

Watercolour prints, dusty hues.
Echo care, soulful attentiveness
Exhausted from life's timely engagement
Some Life paths winding down
Sideways lament.

@ Sara O'Mahony, April 2020. Sara is a member of the Non-Fiction Writer's group which meets fortnightly in The City Library.



Redeployed Library Staff Nicola Lyons

For the duration of the Covid-19 lockdown I have been redeployed as a Social Distancing Park Ranger in Tramore Valley Park. This involves regular patrols of the park during my shift and reminding people, where necessary, to observe the 2 metre distancing rules. It has been a wonderful experience, especially with the weather we've been having. It's also lovely to be able to interact and chat with patrons

again, something I have missed while away from the library. I have also seen first hand just how much the people of Cork appreciate the green spaces in the city, particularly these days where they may not have a garden to enjoy. They can go to their local park for a walk or run or even to kick a ball around with the kids.

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Cork City Libraries
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Please visit

www.librariesireland.ie



Knit on!

Glad to see that the members of Hollyhill Library Knitting Club are staying busy while staying home. Beautiful work. We look forward to seeing all our library clubs back in our libraries again when the time is right.



We are Cork.

QUIZ TIME!

Dunnes Stores
105, Patrick Street.

**When did
Dunnes Stores
first open in
Cork?**



Image courtesy of Michael Lenihan

Email or text your answer to patricia_looney@corkcity.ie or 086 6061193. The person who sends the first correct answer will receive a copy of 'Movie Memories' Documentary DVD - articles from which we have featured in our previous newsletters!

Liquid Gold

Shop bought compost contains about 6 weeks worth of feed in it. But plants need feeding throughout the growing season. You can make your own free, organic liquid fertiliser. What you need is a bucket and something that will act as a lid; it doesn't need to be tight fitting. Next if you have some comfrey growing in your garden, you can gather the leaves; if not, get yourself a pair of scissors and some gloves and find your nearest clump of nettles. Cut the upper parts of the nettles, enough to fill the bucket. Cover the nettles or comfrey with water. Place the lid over the bucket. Leave for about 4-6 weeks or until it looks like a thick black liquid. Check it regularly over the weeks so that the water doesn't evaporate off, top up if it does. Best to place the bucket as far from your house as possible as it can be a bit smelly. Advice on application dosage is to dilute to the colour of weak tea for use. Best to use more dilute liquid feed regularly than more concentrated fertiliser rarely. Nettles are high in Nitrogen which is good for leafy growth so good for most plants. Comfrey contains high levels of potassium which is good for fruit production. It also contains potash and nitrogen. When choosing a comfrey plant a Russian sterile variety called Bocking 14 (*Symphytum x Uplandicum*) is best as the common comfrey (*Symphytum Officianale*) will take over.



Eleanor Twomey is a member of The City Library staff.

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



1800-222-226



covidsupport@corkcity.ie



Image courtesy of Michael Lenihan

Remembering Roche's Stores.

William Roche was initially apprenticed to the drapery trade with the well known firm of Cash & Co and after five years he decided to leave for London to make his fortune. In 1900 he returned to Cork and opened a small household and furniture shop in a side street at No 22, Merchants Street and James Keating became a partner in the business. His next project was to sell ladies fashion from his premises, an idea that was considered unsavoury, due to its proximity to the city's quays. His venture succeeded as Cork citizens always had an eye for good value. The rapid success of the Cork Furniture Store now meant that it occupied building No's 12, 13, 19, 22, 30, 31, 32 and 33 in Merchant Street. Further expansion was to follow with the purchase of the London House at No 15, Patrick Street in 1919 and the official founding of Roches Stores Ltd in September of that year.

Unfortunately, at that time the continuous worry of operating a business with military curfews, raids, looting, shootings and the general harassment of citizens was taking its toll on trade. The London House was burned to the ground on the night of the 11th of December 1920 by British military forces along with much of the city centre. Fortunately precautions were taken and much of the stock at the Merchant Street warehouses was saved. Roche's Stores were the very first to hold a salvage sale. Trade continued for many years operating from temporary premises until the new building was completed in January 1927. The cost of this new modern department store was £26,474 16s 10d. William Roche died on the 23rd February 1939 at the age of 65 years having achieved his aim of founding his new vision of a department store. On 8 August 2006, it was announced that Debenhams would buy the leaseholds of nine of the 11 Roches Stores nationwide stores for €29 million, it was the end of a golden era. Many generations of Corkonians will remember with great fondness the iconic Roches Stores and particularly their annual real sale always considered to be the best sale in the city.

Michael Lenihan is a member of our Glanmire Library staff



We are Cork.



www.corkcitylibraries.ie
libraries@corkcity.ie

Queries to patricia_looney@corkcity.ie