

Dinnsheanchas: The Lore of Place

Cork Spring Literary Festival 2010

presented by
the Munster Literature Centre

Dinnsheanchas in modern Irish means “topography” but in a literary context it retains its original meaning of “lore of places”. It is no co-incidence that the author of the novel *Ulysses* stemmed from a literary tradition obsessed with place and the naming of place. Nor is it surprising how even in the French works of Beckett, where place is rarely named, the physical description of the landscape is so evocative of Irish topography.

An exploration of place and topography is an essential element in most national literatures but the late Séan Ó Tuama has argued that Dinnsheanchas is never more central to a literary tradition than it is to the Irish. Not all writers’ imaginations are concerned with place: for this year’s festival (our theme changes from year to year) we are bringing to Cork an assembly of Irish writers, mostly poets, who have written most evocatively about place. Also we have invited two distinguished American authors, not of Irish background, who deserve to be better known here. Adam Johnson (who writes about an America which is a world fast and furious compared with even the busiest and craziest Dublin neighbourhood) and Martín Espada as a poet who crafts committed but non-polemical, political poetry. We had the good fortune to publish a new essay by Espada in our online journal *Southword* where he expounds most eloquently exactly why place is so important to a writer’s imagination:

“To some poets, a lake is exactly that, a body of water, a place for bird-watching or contemplation of nature’s mysteries.

To Everett Hoagland, a lake is something more. He stands at the edge of Lake Champlain, and wonders, “who walked in, fell in, jumped in, went/ under to lake bed long ago.” He reports: “Something unseen splashed.” His poetic imagination takes him below the surface of the water, beyond whatever we see or want to see, to envision suffering humanity.

There are “unspoken” places all around us, places we never see, or see but do not see. There are hidden histories, haunted landscapes, forgotten graves, secret worlds surrounded by high walls, places of pilgrimage where pilgrimage is impossible. Sometimes, these places are “unspoken” because the unspeakable happened or continues to happen there; sometimes, because the human beings dwelling in the land of the unspeakable find a way to resist, and their example is dangerous.

Speaking of the unspoken places means speaking of the people who live and die in those places. These are people and places condemned to silence, and so they become the provinces of poetry. The poet must speak, or enable other voices to speak through the poems. Indeed, poets continue to speak of such places in terms of history and mythology, memory and redemption. They pose difficult questions: Who benefits from silence and forgetting? Who benefits from speaking and remembering? How do we make the invisible visible? How do we sing of the world buried beneath us? How do we soak up the ghosts through the soles of our feet?”



Michael Coady

Reading with Mary Leland
Friday February 19th 8pm



Michael Coady was born in 1939 in Carrick-on-Suir, County Tipperary, where he has lived all his life and where he has worked as a teacher, musician and writer. He has won numerous prizes including the Patrick Kavanagh Award in 1979 for his first poetry collection; the Listowel Writers' Week award; the RTE Francis McManus short story award in 1987 and 1993; and the eighth annual Lawrence O'Shaughnessy Award from the Centre for Irish Studies at the University of St Thomas in St Paul, Minnesota (2004). Bursaries from the Arts Council have enabled him to travel in the USA and Newfoundland. More recently he has held a residency in the Irish Cultural Centre in Paris.

His works include:

Poetry Collections

Two for a Woman, Three for a Man, The Gallery Press, Dublin 1980

Oven Lane, The Gallery Press, Dublin 1987

All Souls, The Gallery Press, Oldcastle 1997

One Another, The Gallery Press, Oldcastle 2003

Going By Water, The Gallery Press, Oldcastle 2009

Miscellany

Full Tide, Relay Books, County Tipperary 1999

CHECKPOINT

Out of the deep galaxies
of detail and the blind ways
that we go and the light
or dark that shines on us

there is this measure of
the nitty-gritty impact
that I've made so far
upon the earth:

an unreckonable fraction
of a millimetre in
wear-down of polished
kerbstone, the first

on the bridge,
southwestern side,
after I step at half-past
midnight out of

Maggie Dunne's
in Carrick Beg
to cross again
(no record of how many

times in all, of which
no two the same
in one direction
or the other),

cross again that old bridge
built before Columbus,
on my way to sleep
in Carrick Mór

where the weir plays
when the tide's away
and sometimes
between quays

I'm pulled up
and asked where
I've come from
and where I'm going

by stars
that stand
on night-watch
in the river.

© 2003, Michael Coady

From: *One Another*

Publisher: The Gallery Press, Oldcastle, 2003

ISBN: I852353562

Cónal Creedon

Reading with Martín Espada and Paula Meehan

Friday February 19th 9.00pm



Cónal Creedon was born in Cork in 1961 and is a playwright, novelist and documentary maker. He has received many awards for his work including two National Business2Arts Awards for his play *The Trial of Jesus* (also nominated for the Irish Times Theatre Awards). Creedon's play, *When I was God*, featured in the 1st Irish Festival New York (2009). Creedon has also written over sixty hours of radio drama and his work has been broadcast on RTE, BBC4, BBC World Service, ABC (Australia), RTHK (Hong Kong), LATW (USA), CBC (Canada) and NZR (New Zealand).

His novel *Passion Play* has been translated into Italian and Bulgarian with extracts published in Germany and China. His short stories achieved recognition through One-Voice Monologue, the Francis MacManus Awards and George A. Birmingham Awards. Creedon has worked as a radio presenter with RTE, a columnist with *The Irish Times* and has made a number of critically acclaimed television documentaries. (*The Man Who Walked Like Shakespeare* was nominated for the Focal International Documentary Awards 2009).

His works include:

Pancho & Lefty Ride Out, Collins Press 1995.

Passion Play, Poolbeg 1997.

The Second City Trilogy, Irishtown Press 2007.

'Come Out Now! Hacker Hanley' from
Pancho & Lefty Ride Out

Threats or no threats, there was no controlling us, final warnings were roared from the kitchen downstairs, and then the final solution. It was the oldest trick in the book, 'divide and conquer', oppressors of the world unite. I was put out to the guest bedroom, out in the extension, miles away from my brothers and sisters. I lay there in that strange bed, with its shampoo-smelling, hard sheets for what seemed like an eternity listening, thinking...

It never snowed down Coburg Street, but Christmas spirit was thick on the ground. Outside, a lone drunk was murdering 'White Christmas' and gangs of fours and fives hammered out a rhythm on quarter irons to the tune of jingle bells, backed by a devilish chorus of howling and roaring. In the distance, my brothers settled, I listened. My strange bed warmed.

© 1996, Cónal Creedon
From: *Pancho & Lefty Ride Out*
Publisher: Collins Press, 1996
ISBN: 978-1898256069

Louis De Paor

Reading with Ciaran O'Driscoll & Billy Ramsell

Wednesday February 17th 9.00pm



Louis de Paor was born in Cork in 1961. He is commonly considered to be a key protagonist in the 1970s–80s Irish language poetry renaissance, and he became an editor of the *Innti* journal. Initially he objected to the translation of his work into English for a number of complex reasons, including a desire to be judged solely on his own original words, not wanting his work or that of Irish literature in general to be critically assessed through the distorting prism of English. De Paor lived and worked in Australia between 1987 and 1996 before returning to Ireland.

His first bilingual collection won the Victorian Premier's Award for Literary Translation. He was also granted a Writer's Fellowship by the Australia Council in 1995. At home he has received the O'Shaughnessy Award, and has been a four time winner of the Ó Riordáin prize in the Oireachtas for collections including his first, *Próca solais is luatha*.

His works include:

Próca Solais is Luatha, Coiscéim, Dublin, 1988

30 Dán, Coiscéim, Dublin, 1992

Seo. Siúd. Agus Uile, Coiscéim, Dublin, 1996

Corcagh agus Dánta Eile, Coiscéim, Dublin, 1999

Agus Rud Eile De, Coiscéim, Dublin, 2002

Ag Greadadh Bas sa Reilig / Clapping in the Cemetery, Cló Iar-Chonnachta, Indreabhán, 2005

Cúpla Siamach an Ama, Coiscéim, Dublin, 2006

TRÉIGTHE

Nuair a bhíonn tú as baile
géaraíonn bainne úr sa chuisneoir,
dónn tósta uaidh féin,
balbhaíonn an guthán
is cailltear fear an phoist
ar a shlí chun an tí.

Cruinníonn Mormanaigh is Finnéithe Jehovah,
an minister is an sagart paróiste,
bean Avon is fear Amway
le chéile ar lic an dorais
chun m'anam damanta a dhamnú.
Ní fhéadfadh Batman mé a shlánú.

Plódaíonn sceimhlitheoirí is murdaróirí,
maoir tráchta is cigirí cánach sa chlós
ag pleancadh ar an bhfuinneog iata,
ag sceitheadh mo rún os ard
leis na comharsain chúiléistitheacha;
ní chuireann mo pheacaí coiriúla
ná mo choireanna peacúla
aon iontas ar éinne.

Sa doircheacht mheata bhalbh istigh
fáiscim do chumhracht
as bráillín fhuar,
cuardaím camán Chúchulainn
fén dtocht riasrach
cnapánach.

© 2005 Louis De Paor

From: *Clapping in the Cemetery*

Publisher: Cló Iar-Chonnachta, Indreabhán, 2005

ISBN: 1902420942

Theo Dorgan

Launch party for his new poetry collection *Greek*
Wine Reception, All Welcome
Friday February 19th 6.30pm



THEO DORGAN is a poet, prose writer, editor, scriptwriter, translator and sailor. His work includes the long poem *What the Earth Cost Us*, his prose account of a transatlantic voyage under sail *Sailing for Home* (praised by Doris Lessing as “a book for everyone”), and *A Book of Uncommon Prayer* (2007) which he compiled and edited. He is the editor of *Irish Poetry Since Kavanagh*, and co-editor of *Leabhar Mór na hÉireann / The Great Book of Ireland, An Leabhar Mór / The Great Book of Gaelic*, the anthology *Watching the River Flow* and the acclaimed collection of historical essays *Revising the Rising*. His translations of the Slovenian poet Barbara Korun (in collaboration with the poet and Ana Jelnikar), were published as *Songs of Earth and Light*. He translates from the Irish and from the French and his own work has appeared in Italian and Spanish editions. He is a member of Aosdána.

“I liken Theo Dorgan to a latter-day Aimhírgín, conjuring up the realities of existence out of the mists of the unconscious”
—Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill

“The blend of street-warrior and muse poet is extraordinarily appealing... His is an Irish urban voice which can reach far into Russia as well as into the enchanted garden of Sufi love”
—John Montague

SPIRITS

Yannis shouldn't drink in the afternoon,
it makes him dull and querulous, morose like me:

What do I care about Actaeon in your eyes,
this cultural tourism? Tell me about Ireland,
what you see when you walk the streets,
what ghosts prompt your murders, what shades
your executioners send down out of daylight?
You have your poor and your policemen,
your crime and politics and lawyers—
affliction is real, write about that.

He's right, I think, he has a point...

and Artemis bumps the table, T-shirt and blue jeans,
a diamond glinting in one ear, phone to the other.
She stalks past, imperious and aloof,
radiant in her first flush of immortality.

for Socrates Kabouropoulos

© 2010 Theo Dorgan

From: *Greek*

Publisher: The Dedalus Press

ISBN: 978 1 906614 17 1

Theo Dorgan's *Greek* is a vivid, sensual, technically brilliant new collection which transports the reader through time and space, history and myth, love and death. The Greek Gods and Goddesses walk again, as real as we are, in the islands of 21st century Greece in a poetry which is singingly alive to the pleasures of being here now. This is the language of 'undying'. Writing from "the childhood of the world" in Greece, Dorgan finds his identity as an islander, as a lover and as a poet made new again, with increased authority and a deep understanding of the power and alchemy of myth; sharing with us his relish of "the great slant freedom of our craft". He demonstrates also a real gift for the short lyric poem in the middle section, 'Islands', each poem here being utterly of its brief moment as "the stars come out on the life that I call mine".
—Carol Ann Duffy

Martín Espada

Reading with Cónal Creedon & Paula Meehan

Friday February 19th 9.00pm



photo: Sandy Taylor

Called “the Latino poet of his generation” and “the Pablo Neruda of North American authors,” Martín Espada was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1957. He has published sixteen books in all as a poet, editor, essayist and translator. *The Republic of Poetry*, a collection of poems published by Norton in 2006, received the Paterson Award for Sustained Literary Achievement and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. Another collection, *Imagine the Angels of Bread* (Norton, 1996), won an American Book Award and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. He has received numerous awards and fellowships, including the Robert Creeley Award, the Antonia Pantoja Award, the Charity Randall Citation, the Paterson Poetry Prize, the Gustavus Myers Outstanding Book Award, the National Hispanic Cultural Center Literary Award, the Premio Fronterizo, two NEA Fellowships, the PEN/Revson Fellowship and a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship. His poems have appeared in the *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *Harper's*, *The Nation* and *The Best American Poetry*. He has also released an audiobook of poetry called *Now the Dead will Dance the Mambo* (Leapfrog, 2004). His work has been translated into ten languages. A former tenant lawyer, Espada is now a professor in the Department of English at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, where he teaches creative writing and the work of Pablo Neruda.

Offering of Stones

Deserted Village, Achill Island, Ireland, May 2000

Your house greets a stranger with an offering of stones:
round stones like the eggs of a great gray bird,
flat stones the sandals of a giant, hearth stones
awaiting the next ember, gable stones that muscled the missing roof,
ledge-stones where you once curled asleep with straw.
For a mile the collar of stone studs the mountain's throat:
columns stacked for doorways by hands with Neolithic ancestors
entombed on the next hill, windows in slits where you shivered
as if the battering raindrops were volleys of British lead,
mounds of walls fallen useless as potatoes with blight
or peasants without rent, nearly a hundred houses gone to stone,
naked against the wind cantering down the slope with a bluster of battlecries.
Yet I am welcome to the hearth and kettle for the story you must tell,
so I squat between the nettles and grass sprouting from the floor to listen.

First came the fungus, mush and stink of potatoes
in the hole, then the faces cliff-gaunt or boulder-swollen,
riot of lice in the rags, dysentery's lava, delirium
or teeth spat free by scurvy, rapping on the door and no one there,
famine dead without coffins rolled into the sand
at the shoreline. Sir Richard and his bailiffs evicted the living,
hauled off the roof and confiscated the kettle so none could return.
Some walked to the shore, scavenging for seaweed and eels;
others staggered across the decks of ships bound for America,
where the steel in cauldrons boiled for them as if brewing the fever,
where the loom clacked like a skeleton dancing at the wake,
where servants labored in a stone mansion by the sea
as the master quill-penned poetry, until they slept on shelves
in a room at the top of the stairs, hanging from the wall
because potato rot birthed servants in Ireland, country of rain
that would never dampen their skin again.

Now in your village there is sheep dung fertilizing the rock.
Two child-shepherds, brother and sister, chase their flock
into the ruins, between the jagged walls smoking with fog,
through doorways standing alone in the rubble's ebb,
widows who gazed at the sea till they became stone.
One sheep has escaped, kneeling at the graves
of three drowned fishermen in the churchyard down below.
There is no dog to steer the lambs, so the girl yaps and trills.
To climb I grip the ledge of rock and find the cool of your dying hand,
and I would lift your head so you could see the shepherds
outrun by the flock, glimpse the ocean's skirt,
tell me of the pirate queen, her castle at Kildavnet.

© 2004, Martín Espada

From: *Alabanza*

Publisher: Norton

ISBN: 978-0393326215

Martina Evans

Reading with Desmond O'Grady

Reading Saturday 20th February 4pm



Martina Evans (née Cotter) is a poet and novelist. She grew up in County Cork in a country pub, shop and petrol station. After studying sciences for two years at University College Cork, she studied for a radiography degree at St Vincent's Hospital Dublin and worked for fifteen years as a radiographer, moving to London in 1988, where she also completed a degree in English and Philosophy at the Open University. Martina began writing in 1990 and has published four books of poetry and three novels. Her first novel, *Midnight Feast*, won a Betty Trask Award in 1995 and her third novel, *No Drinking No Dancing No Doctors*, won an Arts Council England Award in 1999. Her fourth poetry collection, *Facing the Public* won bursary awards from both the Irish Arts Council (An Chomhairle Eiraíon) and Arts Council England. She was a Royal Literary Fund Fellow at Queen Mary, University of London from 2003-2007. She also designed and directed a creative writing summer school at London Metropolitan University and run workshops at various literary festivals and the National Film School. She taught at the University of East London and Centreprise Literature Development Project and currently teaches creative writing at the City Literary Institute.

JAR OF SWEETS

Shelves and shelves
and ladders to climb,
a broad wooden counter,
a silver scoop for sugar
to be packed
in strong brown paper
bags, loaves wrapped
in newspaper, bread
shaped like the back seat
of a car
and once, like a monkey,
climbing high
to put my hand inside
the jar of Irish Roses.

Red-handed, shame felt
like my stomach was being
taken out, when my mother
called caught you.
But there was
no punishment,
instead she told me
how when she was a child
in her mother's shop
she took a broom,
swiped the high shelf
and knocked a jar
of acid drops to the ground.

That's where she was
found, down among
the broken glass
and sweets.
It could have been
the broom
and the fact that she was
far bolder than me,
but I couldn't help believing
that my mother was
some kind of a witch.

© 2004, Martina Evans
From: *Can Dentists Be Trusted?*
Publisher: Anvil Press Poetry, London, 2004
ISBN: 0856463760

Matthew Geden

Reading with Derek Mahon

Thursday 18th February 8pm



Born in England, Matthew Geden moved to Kinsale in 1990 and runs a bookstore in the town. He co-founded the SoundEye International Poetry Festival. His poems have appeared in several publications both at home and abroad including *Something Beginning with P*, *Poets of the Millennium* and *The Backyards of Heaven*.

His works include:

Poetry

Kinsale Poems, Lapwing, 2001

Autumn: Twenty Poems, by

Guillaume Apollinaire, Lapwing, 2003

Swimming to Albania, Bradshaw Books 2009

“A quiet and contemplative poet alive to the hours and the seasons. A true voice.” - *Derek Mahon*

Flotsam and Jetsam

Somewhere, on the edge of life,
an old man clings to the rocks
growing onto them like algae

a salty defiance even the tide
can't dislodge. What light is left
remains in his eyes, his gaze

spans decades of idle talk
carelessly tossed into the sea-
spray, washed up or drowned.

On the beach a small boy
plays on his own, digging
hopefully for coins or a story

from the past. His tiny hands
discard the mystery of sand;
the split fragments of time,

the drift of wind and bad weather.
If either of them looked up
they might notice me, poised

in the middle-distance confused
by the multiplicity apparent
in the air, the endless yawn

of the present. Everything happens
at once; we are the lost and found,
bright molecules on the shore.

© 2009, Matthew Geden

From: *Swimming to Albania*

Publisher: Bradshaw Books (2009)

ISBN 978-1-095374-02-1

Adam Johnson

Reading with Jennifer Johnston & Denyse Woods
Saturday 20th February 9.00pm



Adam Johnson is the author of the story collection *Emporium* (Viking, 2002) and the novel *Parasites Like Us* (Viking, 2003), which won a California Book Award as well as earned him a Discover-a-Great-New-Writer Award from Barnes and Noble. His fiction has appeared in *Tin House*, *Esquire*, *Harper's*, *Paris Review*, and *Best American Short Stories*. He received his BA in Journalism from Arizona State University and his MA in English as well as MFA in Creative Writing from McNeese State University. He also holds a PhD in English from Florida State University. He currently is a Senior Jones Lecturer in creative writing at Stanford University. He is at work on a new novel that is set in North Korea. In 2009 he was presented with a \$50,000 Whiting Writer's Award.

"Sometimes Johnson is quick and witty, sometimes satirical, sometimes downright literary. But always, he is smart and funny and every story says something very true about the world we choose to make for ourselves. Those things that we all know, or think, or have some inkling of way down deep, have never been presented to us quite like this."

- Joseph Rogers

'The Jughead of Berlin' from *Emporium*

There is a button-tipped joystick on the console, and Randy turns it on. Somewhere atop the boat a searchlight ignites, and it is like nothing I've seen. Through the windscreen, we suddenly see marshlands unfurl toward open water, while cloud banks drag their asses along glades of sawgrass and cane.

'This thing's made by Boeing,' he says.

The light is bright enough to leave insects stunned and turn mist into steam, so that the beam is like a smoky tube extending to the horizon. Randy hands me a pair of pale yellow binoculars, and I follow as he trains the beam on a skiff, far in the distance. On the small boat, deep in the marsh grass, I make out a man with a police flashlight and a compound bow, poaching alligators in the dark.

© 2003 Adam Johnson

From: *Emporium*

Publisher: Penguin Books, 2003

ISBN: 978-0142001950

New York Times critic Michiko Kakatuni, well known for her rather biting reviews, changed her tune when it came to Adam Johnson's debut collection of short stories, *Emporium*: His stories, she wrote, occur "in a world located somewhere between Kurt Vonnegut's sci-fi empire and that wild and crazy land of weirdos limned in T. Coraghessan Boyle's stories."

Jennifer Johnston

Reading with Adam Johnson & Denyse Woods

Saturday 20th February 9.00pm



Photo: Hodder Headline

Jennifer Johnston was born in Dublin in 1930. Her novels have been published in many countries. She has received many awards, including the Robert Pitman Award; the Yorkshire Post Award; the 1979 Whitbread Award for *The Old Jest* (*The Old Jest* was later filmed as *The Dawning*, starring Anthony Hopkins) and the Giles Cooper Award for Best Radio Play (1989). Her work was shortlisted for *Daily Express* best book of the year 1992 for *The Invisible Worm*, and *Shadows on our Skin* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. She is a member of Aosdána and lives in Derry.

Her works include:

Novels

The Captains and the Kings, Hamish Hamilton, 1972
The Gates, Hamish Hamilton, 1973
How Many Miles to Babylon?, Hamish Hamilton, 1974
Shadows on our Skin, Hamish Hamilton, 1977
The Old Jest, Hamish Hamilton, 1979
The Christmas Tree, Hamish Hamilton, 1981
The Railway Station Man, Hamish Hamilton, 1984
Fools Sanctuary, Hamish Hamilton, 1988
The Invisible Worm, Sinclair-Stevenson, 1991
The Illusionist, Sinclair-Stevenson, 1995
Two Moons, Review, 1998
The Gingerbread Woman, Review, 2000
Grace and Truth, Review, 2005
Foolish Mortals, Headline Review, 2007

from *Truth or Fiction*

She got off the bus outside the Odeon in the High Street and walked up through Holland Park. The sun was gliding down a bit towards the west, hitting the pale green leaf buds and shining in the windows of the stucco houses that backed on to the park. Some children still ran and kicked footballs on the grass and dogs snuffled round the roots of trees. In the woods a peacock cried. Even here the air was heavy with car fumes and bus fumes and, she thought, even the fumes from the planes streaking overhead. She wondered about Dublin. Rain; they always said it rained there, permanently.

Yiaooo.

Should she write to him and ask him for an interview? He might not answer the letter. Telephone? Probably more sense.

Yiaooo.

Peacocks. One of the wonderful features of Holland Park.

They could hear them from their house at night. Were they wailing for their demon lovers? Or just perhaps talking to themselves, reminding themselves of some terrible thing that happened in their past? Bet you don't get peacocks in Dublin.

© 2009, Jennifer Johnston

From: *Truth or Fiction*

Publisher: Headline Review, 2009

ISBN: 9 780755 330546

Mary Leland

Reading with Michael Coady
Friday February 19th 8pm



Mary Leland was born in Cork in 1941. A journalist, novelist, short story auteur and non-fiction writer, she has worked at *The Irish Times*, *The Irish Press* and *The Cork Examiner*, as well as making frequent contributions to *The Sunday Independent* and *The Sunday Tribune*. Leland was a prize-winner in the Munster Literature Centre's inaugural Sean O'Faolain short story competition. More recently she was shortlisted by Richard Ford for the Davy Byrne Award. She continues to live in Cork city.

Her works include:

Novels

The Killeen, Hamish Hamilton, 1985
Approaching Priests, Sinclair Stevenson, 1991

Short Story Collection

The Little Galloway Girls, Black Swan 1987

Non-fiction

Cork / Corcaigh, Collins Press, 1996
The Lie of the Land - A literary history of County Cork,
Cork University Press, 2000
That Endless Adventure - A History of the Port of Cork, Port
of Cork Company, 2001

from *The Little Galloway Girls*

The hall door shut with a satisfied slam behind her. The rooms empty of children gaped on the landing but the house was warmly ready for her, her sounds and movements animating it as she completed the small rituals of night, the patina of her contentment glazing the waiting air of her bedroom, where books took up the space of another body.

In the chilled mirrors of the bathroom she watched with equanimity the reduction to self, safe here where she was known so well, but to be feared even elsewhere, when so often as again tonight the texture of her own skin surprised and pleased her, and the thick untinted hair denied years she did not otherwise deny. It was happening: she plucked out a coiled grey hair, and sighed at the trace of blood on the toothbrush.

© 1987, Mary Leland
From: *Little Galloway Girls*
Publisher: Black Swan Press, 1987
ISBN: 978-0552993036

Derek Mahon

Reading with Matthew Geden
Thursday February 18th 8.00pm



Photo: John Minihan & The Gallery Press

Derek Mahon was born in Belfast in 1941. He was educated in Belfast, Trinity College Dublin and later at The Sorbonne in France. He has worked at various manual jobs, and professionally as an editor, screenwriter, journalist, and lecturer. He was awarded *The Irish Times* Poetry Now award in 2008 for *Life on Earth*. His other honors include the Irish American Foundation Award; a Lannan Foundation Award; a Guggenheim Fellowship; *The Irish Times*/Aer Lingus Poetry Prize; the American Ireland Fund Literary Award; The C.K. Scott Moncreiff Translation Prize for his translation of *The Selected Poems of Philippe Jaccottet*; the Eric Gregory Award; and The David Cohen Prize for Literature (2007). He is a member of Aosdána and currently lives in Kinsale.

ACHILL

im chaonaí uaigneach nach mór go bhfeicim an lá

I lie and imagine a first light gleam in the bay
After one more night of erosion and nearer the grave,
Then stand and gaze from a window at break of day
As a shearwater skims the ridge of an incoming wave;
And I think of my son a dolphin in the Aegean,
A sprite among sails knife-bright in a seasonal wind,
And wish he were here where currachs walk on the ocean
To ease with his talk the solitude locked in my mind.

I sit on a stone after lunch and consider the glow
Of the sun through mist, a pearl bulb containedly fierce;
A rain-shower darkens the schist for a minute or so
Then it drifts away and the sloe-black patches disperse.
Croagh Patrick towers like Naxos over the water
And I think of my daughter at work on her difficult art
And wish she were with me now between thrush and plover,
Wild thyme and sea-thrift, to lift the weight from my heart.

The young sit smoking and laughing on the bridge at evening
Like birds on a telephone pole or notes on a score.
A tin whistle squeals in the parlour, once more it is raining,
Turfsmoke inclines and a wind whines under the door;
And I lie and imagine the lights going on in the harbour
Of white-housed Náousa, your clear definition at night,
And wish you were here to upstage my disconsolate labour
As I glance through a few thin pages and switch off the light.

© 1985, Derek Mahon

From: *Collected Poems*

Publisher: The Gallery Press, Oldcastle, 1999

ISBN: 978 1 85235 255

Thomas McCarthy

Reading with Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin
Saturday February 20th 8pm



Photo: Patrick Cotter

Thomas McCarthy was born in Waterford but has lived in Cork for many years now where he works as a librarian. He studied at UCC and he has published many books of poetry, two novels and personal memoirs. His awards include The Patrick Kavanagh Award (1977); The Alice Hunt Bartlett Prize (1981); The Annual Literary Award, American Irish Foundation (1984); and the O'Shaughnessy Poetry Award, Irish-American Cultural Institute, 1991. He is a member of Aosdána.

His works include:

The First Convention, The Dolmen Press, 1978
The Sorrow-Garden, Anvil Press Poetry, 1981
The Non-Aligned Storyteller, Anvil Press Poetry, 1984
Seven Winters in Paris, Anvil Press Poetry and Dublin, Dedalus, 1989
The Lost Province, Anvil Press Poetry 1996
Mr Dineen's Careful Parade, New & Selected, Anvil Press Poetry, 1999
Merchant Prince, Anvil Press Poetry, 2005
The Last Geraldine Officer, Anvil Press Poetry, 2009

from

THE DYING SYNAGOGUE AT SOUTH TERRACE

Chocolate-coloured paint and the July sun
like a blow-torch peeling off
the last efforts of love:
more than time has abandoned this,
God's abandonment, God's synagogue,
that rose out of the ocean
one hundred years from here.
The peeling paint is an immigrant's
guide to America – lost on the shore
at Cobh, to be torn and scored
by a city of luftmenshen,
Catholics equally poor, equally driven.

To have been through everything,
to have suffered everything and left
a peeling door. Yahweh is everywhere,
wherever abandonment is needed –
a crow rising after a massacre,
wearing the grey uniform
of a bird of carrion, a badger
waiting for the bones of life
to crack before letting go:
wishing the tenth cantor to die,
the synagogue to become a damp wall,
the wailing mouths to fester.
Too small. To be a small people
aligned to nothing is to suffer blame
like a thief in the night. Some activist
throws a bomb for the suffering PLO:

the sky opens and rains a hail
like snowdrops. Flowers for memory,
petrol for the faraway.
To define one's land is to be a cuckoo
pushing others, bird-like, into a pit,
until at the end every national gesture
becomes painful, soiling the synagogue
door, like the charcoal corpses
at Mauthausen Station, 1944.

© 1978, Thomas McCarthy

From: *Mr Dineen's Careful Parade - New and Selected Poems*
Publisher: Anvil Press Poetry, London, 1999
ISBN: 0 85646 320 5

Paula Meehan

Reading with Cónal Creedon & Martín Espada

Friday February 19th 9.00pm



Paula Meehan was born in Dublin where she still lives. She was educated at Trinity College, Dublin and at Eastern Washington University. She has published six collections of poetry and received many awards for her work including the Denis Devlin Award of the Irish Arts Council (An Chonchairle Ealaíon) for *Dharmakaya*, which Carcanet published in 2000. She has also written plays – for stage (for both children and adults) and for radio – and held a creative writing fellowship at University College, Dublin. Meehan has also worked with inner city communities and conducted workshops in prisons.

‘Paula Meehan is that rare and precious thing—a vocational poet of courage and integrity. Already much-loved and admired far beyond the shores of her native Ireland, Meehan advances her claim on our hearts and minds with *Painting Rain*. From present-day Dublin to Ancient Greece, the myths and flawed heroes of her poems give back to us our own lives, counted out in illuminated moments of joy, pain, love and memory.’

— Carol Ann Duffy

‘In *Painting Rain* Paula Meehan makes music that is a powerful confluence of themes: a field lost to a housing development, a north wind that whines through the dunes, an Irish mother whose daughters ‘taught their mother barring orders and legal separation’. Each poem is powerful on its own, demanding and holding the white space of each page, but the cumulative effect is one of great wisdom and authority. Meehan had that special grace from the start, but now immensities have crystallized around each lyric she writes. Don’t miss this work: *Painting Rain* is her finest book yet.’

— Thomas McCarthy

DEATH OF A FIELD

The field itself is lost the morning it becomes a site
When the Notice goes up: Fingal County Council – 44 houses

The memory of the field is lost with the loss of its herbs

Though the woodpigeons in the willow
And the finches in what’s left of the hawthorn hedge
And the wagtail in the elder
Sing on their hungry summer song

The magpies sound like flying castanets

And the memory of the field disappears with its flora:
Who can know the yearning of yarrow
Or the plight of the scarlet pimpernel
Whose true colour is orange?

And the end of the field is the end of the hidey holes
Where first smokes, first tokes, first gropes
Were had to the scentless mayweed

The end of the field as we know it is the start of the estate
The site to be planted with houses each two or three bedroom
Nest of sorrow and chemical, cargo of joy

The end of dandelion is the start of Flash
The end of dock is the start of Pledge
The end of teasel is the start of Ariel
The end of primrose is the start of Brillo
The end of thistle is the start of Bounce
The end of sloe is the start of Oxyaction
The end of herb robert is the start of Brasso
The end of eyebright is the start of Fairy

Who amongst us is able to number the end of grasses
To number the losses of each seeding head?

I’ll walk out once
Barefoot under the moon to know the field
Through the soles of my feet to hear
The myriad leaf lives green and singing
The million million cycles of being in wing

That – before the field become solely map memory
In some archive of some architect’s screen
I might possess it or it possess me
Through its night dew, its moon white caul
Its slick and shine and its prolificacy
In every wingbeat in every beat of time

© 2005, Paula Meehan
First published in Poetry International.org

Patrick Moran

Reading with Liz O'Donoghue & Mary O'Malley
Thursday 18th February 9.00pm



Patrick Moran was born in Templeuohy, County Tipperary, where he still lives and works as a teacher. His poems have been widely published. A winner of the Gerard Manley Hopkins Poetry Prize, he has also been shortlisted for the Hennessy / *Sunday Tribune* poetry award. Additionally, he has been a winner at both the Listowel Writer's Week and in the 2008 Éist Poetry competition. His work is featured in many anthologies, including the inaugural *Forward* anthology.

His works include:

The Stubble Fields, Dedalus Press, 2001
Green, Salmon Poetry, 2008

"In poem after poem in his new collection *Green* (Salmon Poetry) he brings absolutely to life the vanished world of small town and rural Ireland."

— Kevin Higgins, *Galway Advertiser*

"As death comes for humans in *Green*, decay has come for the land. Like many of his contemporaries, environmental change is a concern for Moran. What's interesting is that he approaches the issue as someone who prefers a traditional life close to the land, rather than claiming a new age moral superiority. 'It's not that I'm so engagé / that I'd keep vigil in crude shelters, or/ chain myself to an at-risk tree.' This approach is both disarming and accessible."

—Jennifer Matthews, *Southword Online Journal*

FOR SALE

Weedy Gravel, neglected lawns;
gutters clogged, sashes showing rot.
Inside, the dresser: quaint, austere.
Squat pots, two blackened frying-pans.
A wardrobe door that will not shut.
The shadow-hoarding corridor.

A sense, too, of memories stored,
of clinging yet to what had been:
a tea-cosy, a china doll;
the mute clock, the scorched ironing board;
a child's sketch (green trees, splotchy sun);
the gaunt housecoat, its pockets full.

And photographs. There, the young couple.
Here, a girl in communion white.
And here he is the referee:
the crowd expectant, the players set
as he is throwing in the ball
to start some big match, years ago...

© 2008, Patrick Moran

From: *Green*

Publisher: Salmon poetry

ISBN: 978-1 903392 95 9

"Moran does not know what's next for small-town Ireland, but that confusion is his greatest resource; it forces him to scrutinise the end of everything he knows and he responds, often beautifully though simply, with a poetry of curates, candles and contrition. Eluded by the future, or at least by the language necessary to articulate it, Moran moves metaphorically into the 'century-old mansion' of the parish priest's house and takes it on himself to grimly officiate at the interment of an older Ireland. 'Were these the pieties we clutched?' he asks, 'So absolute. So long ago.'" — Val Nolan, *Poetry Ireland Review*

Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin

Reading with Thomas McCarthy

Saturday 20th February 8pm



Photo: Paul Sherwood & The Gallery Press

Ní Chuilleanáin was born in Cork in 1942, and was educated there and at Oxford before spending all her working life up to the present as an academic in Trinity College Dublin.

She has won numerous awards, including the Patrick Kavanagh Award and the prestigious O'Shaughnessy Poetry Award by The Irish American Cultural Institute, which called her "among the very best poets of her generation." As well as a poet in her own right, Ní Chuilleanáin has been crucial as a periodical editor on the Irish literary scene. Since 1975 she has been an editor and publisher of *Cyphers* – Ireland's longest established literary periodical, and more recently she has been editor of *Poetry Ireland Review* – the publication of national record.

She has translated poetry from Irish, Italian and Romanian. Her *Selected Poems* was published by Faber and the Gallery Press in 2008. Her latest book is *The Sun-Fish*.

THE CLOISTER OF BONES

I begin from the highest point,
Best of all a belltower.

I see the tops of heads, cobbles,
Terraces all scuttling down
As if they hunted something buried
Between ledges where tables are set in the morning,
Under plants that grow over walls and pergolas,

The slopes of sheds, the stashed pruning-shears,
Under the measured walk of cats.

I am searching for a shape, a den, watching
For the cloistering blank of a street wall,

A dark reticence of windows

Banked over an inner court,

Especially rooves, arched and bouncing

Naves; a corseted apse,

And always, even if the chapel sinks

Deep inside, lit from a common well,

I search for hints of doors inside doors,

A built-in waiting about

Of threshold and washed floors,

An avid presence demanding flowers and hush.

If I guess right I hope for

A runner of garden, the right length

For taking a prayerbook for a walk,

A small stitching of cemetery ground,

Strict festivals, an hour for the tremble

Of women's laughter, corners for mile-high panics:

And to find the meaning of the women's

Christmas.

© 2001, Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin

From: *The Girl Who Married The Reindeer*

Publisher: The Gallery Press, Oldcastle, 2001

ISBN: 1852353031

Eugene O'Connell

Reading with Bernard O'Donoghue & Gerard Smyth

Wednesday February 17th 8pm

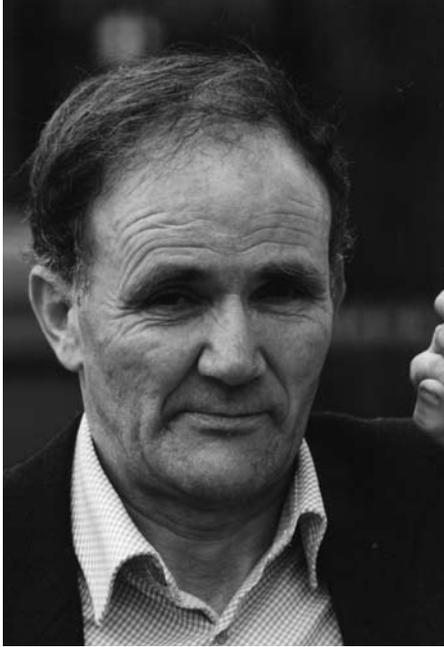


Photo: John Minihan

Eugene O'Connell was born near Kiskean in North West Cork. He is a primary school teacher by profession and has published four poetry books including *One Clear Call* and *Flying Blind*—translations of the Latvian poet Guntars Godiņš. He contributes interviews, literary articles and reviews to magazines and newspapers—including *The Irish Times*. He is editor of *The Cork Literary Review* and is working on a book of memoirs entitled *A Far Country*. His most recent collection of poems is *Diviner* (Three Spires Press, 2009).

“*Diviner* secures Eugene O'Connell's place as a particular kind of poet. His poems have an attractive consistency of language and focus in which a specific world accumulates and which is all the better for being assessed in understated terms. He is not given to exaggeration nor does he indulge in celebration. He prefers to record through exact delineation, disguising pain, compassion, and loss behind an ironical manner. O'Connell is a realist with a sense of humour that emerges in broad strokes, sharp wit, and scorn for human foolishness. Sebastian Brant's satirical *Ship of Fools* provides a model for this twenty first century perceptive unmasking.”

— Maurice Harmon

MAPPING THE INTERIOR

Imagine that you had a dishcloth
Bigger than the one mothers put on the bread
To slow its cooling, that you could spread
Over the whole kitchen floor to bring up its face
As clearly as the features on the cake.

You'd have a print you could lift up
To the light and examine for individual traces
Of people who came to swap yarns, and sit on
Sugan chairs that bit into the bare floor, leaving
Unique signatures on concrete that creased
Over time into a map you could look at and

Imagine what those amateur cartographers
Were thinking when their eyes fell, in the silence
Between the stories, that was broken only by
The sound of the fire and whatever it was that
Was calling in the night outside.

© 2003, Eugene O'Connell

From: *One Clear Call*

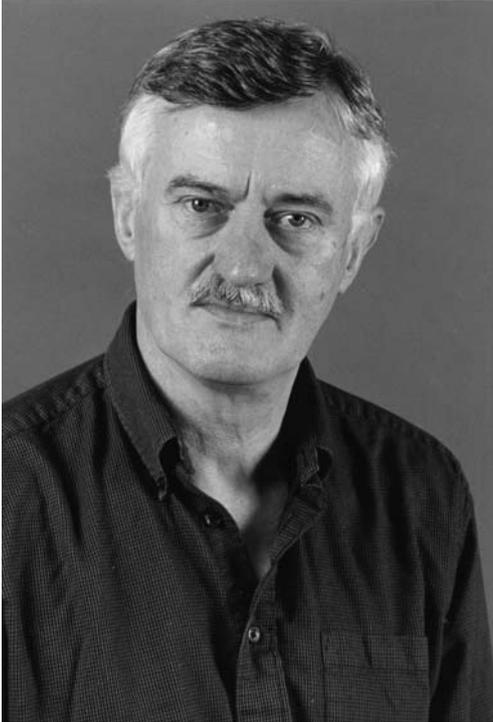
Publisher: Bradshaw Books, Cork, 2003

ISBN: 9780949010872

Bernard O'Donoghue

Reading with Eugene O'Connell & Gerard Smyth

Wednesday February 18th 8pm



Bernard O'Donoghue was born in Cullen, County Cork, in 1945, later moving to Manchester. He studied Medieval English at Oxford University, where he is a teacher and Fellow in English at Wadham College. He is a poet and literary critic, and author of *Seamus Heaney and the Language of Poetry* (1995). His poetry collections are *Poaching Rights* (1987); *The Weakness* (1991); *Gunpowder* (1995), winner of the 1995 Whitbread Poetry Award; *Here Nor There* (1999); and *Outliving* (2003). His latest works include a verse translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (2006) and a *Selected Poems* (2008). He received a Cholmondeley Award in 2009.

“Clever and self-conscious, but blessedly uncontaminated by the abstract language of ideas or by brittle academic rhetoric, O'Donoghue's best poems are “at home” with this unease about origins.”
- The Guardian

“O'Donoghue's poems have long captivated readers with their lyricism, grace and scrupulous honesty. These are accessible poems, full of characters and keen sense of place, that explore memory and a sense of exile.”

THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS

It couldn't have been written in our neck
of the woods, because – misnamers of everything –
we called them salleys and used them magically
to divine water or, not sparing their rods,
improve children. We had no moles, nosing up
from their sweet below-ground homes. The stoats, yes,
that invaded the big house, but we called them
weasels and abetted their vicious forays
down rabbit-holes. Good old squirely Mr Badger
with his pipe and slippers we suspected
of giving the cows TB and breaking
people's legs. The first badger I ever saw
was dead, thrown on a ditch near the monastery
of Timoleague, by the grey shining seashore:
a colour photograph in black-and-white.
On that same March day I also saw
a Mass-rock for the first time, and a
leprosarium, facing across the bay
towards Courtmacsherry, at the haunted house
where the poltergeist or poltergeists
cooked sausages at the mid-hour of night

Westward along that road, near Clonakilty,
there still leans on its side the great boat-skeleton,
where waders beak-poke at the silver mud.
There is nothing, simply nothing, quite so worth doing
As messing about with waterside debris.

© 2003, Bernard O'Donoghue

From: *Outliving*

Publisher: Chatto

ISBN: 0701174811

Liz O'Donoghue

Reading with Patrick Moran & Mary O'Malley

Thursday 18th February 9.00pm



Born 1960 in North Cork, Liz O'Donoghue attended UCC in late 1970s/early 1980s where she ran the poetry workshop and was first published in *Quarryman*, edited by Greg Delanty. She went on to be published in journals such as *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Stet*, *The Shop*, *The Cork Review*, *The College Green*, *Southword*, *The Stony Thursday Book* and *Volume*. In 1991 she founded the "Live Poets Society" - a pub-based live poetry performance group which anticipated the open-mic movement of the 21st century. In 1995 she published the chapbook *Waitress* at the Banquet with Three Spires Press and had work included in the Cork University Press anthology *Jumping Off Shadows - Some Contemporary Irish Poets*. In 1998 a poem of hers was translated into Hungarian and published in Magyar Naplo. Between 1999 and 2000 she worked on directing a filmed anthology of Cork poets called *In the Hands of Erato* which was screened at the Cork Film Festival. In 2004 she received an artist's bursary from Cork City Council. In 2005 she translated the work of Sigitas Parulskis, a Lithuanian poet for the Cork Year of Culture translations project. Her debut collection, *Train To Gorey* was published by Arlen House and launched in Dublin in November 2008. She has one son and lives and works in Cork city.

Lovesong of Bethalize

My sins are huge
toothed ones
committed from
spire to spire
from Pine Street
to Cathedral Row
roaring love
between the domes
and crosses
clawing at a metal door.

My wails are whipped
by an ill-natured wind
through the gutters
Of the soul
and I mewl
like a poet
ignored.
What have I learned?

I have learned
how painful it is
impaled on the
punishing
spires of a cathedral
that down below
the prowling streets
can name my sins
that there is little
to redeem now
there is nothing
behind that metal door.

© 2008, Liz O'Donoghue
From: *Train to Gorey*
Publisher: Arlen House
ISBN: 9781903631560

Ciaran O'Driscoll

Reading with Louis De Paor & Billy Ramsell
Wednesday 17th February 9.00pm



Photo: Limerick City Arts Office

Ciaran O'Driscoll was born in Callan, Co. Kilkenny in 1943, and lives in Limerick. He is a member of Aosdána and a committee member of Cuisle Limerick City International Poetry Festival.

Gog and Magog, his first collection, was published by Salmon in 1987. His *New and Selected Poems, Moving On, Still There*, was published by Dedalus in 2001. In the same year, Liverpool UP published his childhood memoir, *A Runner Among Falling Leaves*.

He has been awarded the James Joyce Literary Millennium Prize and the Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship in Poetry.

'Ciaran O'Driscoll is a poet of the first order.'
— Pearse Hutchinson, *RTE Guide*

'O'Driscoll is a deft artist whose sobriety makes his occasional anger or bitterness all the more affecting. Many poems leave you with an intimate sense of humanity. One or two made me laugh out loud, though the cleverness is usually illuminating, not just smart.' — Tom Clyde, *Fortnight*

GIRL AT STATION EXIT IN THE SNOW

She's reading a poster about works and closures at the station gate, in a flurry of snow. As she reads, she frowns and runs her fingers along a strand of her chestnut hair.

'Welcome to Godstone' a platform sign proclaims, snow in a generous scattering all around, each flake at play in the abundance of time, taking its own time to reach the ground,

or watching for their proper port of call, they hesitate and levitate and cross; intent the eyes of snowflakes as they fall, eyes only for the homing place.

And a girl running her fingers through a strand of hair as she takes the notice in now turns her head to go, then looks again, her dark eyes moving among flakes of snow.

© 2009, Ciaran O Driscoll

From: *Life Monitor*

Publisher: Three Spires Press

ISBN: 9781873548547

Desmond O'Grady

Reading with Martina Evans

Saturday 20th February 4pm



Desmond O'Grady was born in Limerick in 1935. Among the major figures of contemporary Irish poetry, he has taught in Paris, Rome and the US and was, for a time, amanuensis to Ezra Pound. He had a part playing himself in Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* from which the still-shot above is taken. He is well-known as a translator of poetry and his publications include some sixteen collections including *The Road Taken: Poems 1956-1996* (1996), *Trawling Tradition: Translations 1954-1994* (1994), *Selected Poems of CP Cavafy* (1999) and *The Wandering Celt* (2001), a poetic history of the Celts and Celtic influence.

In February 2006, to mark the 50th anniversary of his first collection of poems, the Dedalus Press published his collection, *On My Way*. Most recently he has published a collection of poems about his native city. He currently lives in Co. Cork and is a member of Aosdána.

The County Mayo

Now with the spring
the days will stretch,
then after the Feast
my feet will itch,
and I'll shuffle and shunt
till I rise and go
and plant myself down
in the County Mayo.

At first in Claremorris
I'll stay, I'm thinking,
and in Balla below it
I'll start my drinking;
from there on to Killty
for a month or more,
then the last few miles
to Ballinamore.

Well honest to God
my heart whips up –
like the windwhips up
and scatters the fog –
when I think of Carna
or Balla below,
of the Gap o' the Bushes
or the plains of Mayo.

In Killaden town
There's everything good,
rich produce and fruit
and all kinds of food;
and now if I stood
among my kin
I'd feel, not old,
but young again.

© 1978, Desmond O'Grady
From: *A Limerick Rake*
Publisher: The Gallery Press
ISBN: 0902996681

Mary O'Malley

Reading with Patrick Moran & Liz O'Donoghue

Thursday 18th February 9.00pm

Mary O'Malley was born in Connamara and educated at University College, Galway. She spent many years living in Portugal before returning to Ireland in the late 1980s and beginning a poetry career in 1990 with the title *A Consideration of Silk* from Galway-based publisher Salmon. She has since published six other books including a *New and Selected*. Her latest books have all been published by British house Carcanet. She is a popular reader of her own work and is frequently invited abroad to read or to teach. Her poems have been translated into several languages.

As late as 1990 it was practically impossible for an Irish woman poet to publish a first collection with any Irish publisher other than Salmon. Salmon is not a feminist press but has always proved a good home for women and male poets who write outside the patriarchal tradition. In spite of this, O'Malley's work has sometimes been appropriated by Feminist ideologues, even though she has always showed herself as sensitive to the trials of some men as to those of women.

O'Malley's early work reflected the struggles between modernity and tradition in Irish culture which prevailed at that time. At the vanguard of such struggles were women because many of the issues surrounding the establishment of a modern society (such as divorce, contraception and gay rights) were perceived by a political intelligentsia to affect women more than men. For generations most progressive individuals in Irish society emigrated, leaving a modernising rump continuously outnumbered by an aging, conservative majority. As emigration slowed through the 1990s, the culture wars came to a head and O'Malley's early work details the lives of those restricted in their personal and public freedoms, itching to break free while valuing some of the traditional aspects of the disappearing heritage.

O'Malley's latest work from the volume, *A Perfect V*, reflects the new reality of a woman reborn and self-actualised not only in her private sphere but in the public sphere. Many of the poems are set in Paris and treat the city not as an endstop for economic and liberal asylum, as it would have been twenty years earlier, but as a metaphor for the freedom and new-found identity of a free-travelling, twenty-first century Irish person, who just so happens to be a poet and a woman.

ARRIVAL IN PARIS

Fluent gesture. Already on the Beauvais bus a man strokes his son's head with a palm cupped.
The child's black hair responds like a young cat.

A boy is sulking beautifully,
legs crossed at the ankles. The girl
ignoring him is reading Kafka – *La Procès*.
He utters soft plosives, little plumes of indignation
astonished at her cruelty for at least ten kilometres.
When they make up, she rubs the side of his face
With slow fingers for another five before he defrosts.

There are banks of hawthorn along the motorway.
By Paris, the lovers are reconciled. Outside
open-pored sandstone drinks in the south.
I think of Bláithín, her skin made of flowers,
the touch of sun opening them.

© 2006, Mary O'Malley

From: *A Perfect V*

Publisher: Carcanet

ISBN: I-85754-839-6

Billy Ramsell

Reading with Louis De Paor & Ciaran O'Driscoll

Wednesday 17th February 9.00pm



Photo: John Minihan

Billy Ramsell was born in 1977 in Cork, where he was educated in the North Monastery and at University College, Cork. His debut collection *Complicated Pleasures* was nominated for an Eithne Strong Award in 2008 and he has also been shortlisted for the Hennessy Award. Ramsell has declared, "[In my work] I try to avoid the following: my family, my childhood, a certain type of rural idyll, a certain way of writing about history, poems that explicitly concern themselves with Ireland and Irishness, local characters."

Ramsell is of a younger generation which finds many of the established themes of Irish poetry thoroughly exhausted. Technically, Ramsell's long loose lines would be a comfortable fit with contemporary American mainstream poetic practice. In the Irish tradition, where ideas of what can constitute a technically good poem have been shaped by a hegemony of conservative academics for decades, Ramsell's forms are an affront to the decorum of a poetic old order.

Yet no matter how hard Ramsell may intend to stray from overt expressions of Irishness, a sense of Irish place often asserts itself in his work, organically, unforced. Encounters with nature in Ramsell's work such as in 'An Otter' are more likely to happen on an urban quayside than in the rural ditch or bog of tradition. The increased urbanisation of Ireland and the peculiar alienation that goes with it (rural life, especially in a depopulated countryside, produces an already well-documented form of alienation) is reflected in its new literature; it is an alienation often accompanied by material wealth and a poverty of the spirit as in Ramsell's poem 'Gated Community'. Ramsell has spent long periods abroad, particularly in Iberia, but he continues to use his home city as a base to live in and work from.

AN OTTER

Christmas day, 4 o' clock,
Stumps of cloud, like yellowing tower blocks,
Lean over
The failing glimmer of Christmas lights
And the quays, that are utterly empty,

Except

For one dark otter, slick with river slime,

A shape

Made of dark Lee water,
Of thick fluid,
Of rippling muscle,

Swaggering, like any pedestrian,
Up the steps from the dry riverbed,
Across the silent street,
Past dim shop displays, shuttered windows,

Toward a car parked skew on the footpath,
Its engine idling, its front door open,
Its headlights ploughing the gloom,

And a girl, its solo driver,
Standing alone on the pavement.

She is innocent, beautiful.
She leans over the otter.
Her long hair hangs down

As a second slinks up the steps from the riverbed,
Like a hand sliding slowly
From a hip to a breast.

© 2007, Billy Ramsell
From: *Complicated Pleasures*
Publisher: Dedalus, Dublin, 2007
ISBN: 9781904556756

Gerard Smyth

Reading with Eugene O'Connell & Bernard O'Donoghue

Wednesday 17th February 8pm



Photo: Karl Smyth

Gerard Smyth was born in Dublin where he still lives and works as a poet and as a journalist for *The Irish Times*. His poetry has been published widely in literary journals in Ireland, Britain and the United States since the late 1960s. He is the author of six poetry collections, including *Daytime Sleeper* (Dedalus Press, Dublin 2002), and *A New Tenancy* (Dedalus Press, 2004). His most recent book, *The Mirror Tent* (Dedalus Press), was published in 2007. Dedalus Press will publish his *Selected Poems* in 2010. In 2009 he was elected as a member of Aosdána.

'At his best he can set images ringing with life and make them resonant with significance' — *Books Ireland*

'Daytime Sleeper is a refreshing and invigorating testament to a true poet at work in the world'
— Eugene O'Connell, *Cork Literary Review*

'Gerard Smyth has a painstaking eye for the telling detail... in his hands the impact of simplicity is extraordinary' — Philip Casey

'He may do for Dublin in verse what Joyce did for it in prose' — Michael Hartnett

IN DRUMCLIFF CHURCHYARD

where we stopped to find the epitaph,
it seemed just right that we were lost
in rain that pounded the car bonnet

and sounded like a horseman passing by,
his destination further on where sea-wreck
and sand-castle each cast a cracked shadow

and the ocean learned to dance like Crazy Jane
between the shores of here, there
and the islands where John Synge
walked on air, heard the true vernacular.

© 2007, Gerard Smyth

From: *The Mirror Tent*

Publisher: Dedalus, Dublin, 2007

ISBN: 978-1904556596

Editor's Note:

Drumcliff Churchyard: final resting place of WB Yeats in Ireland, having been originally interred in France.

His epitaph is taken from the last lines of 'Under Ben Bulbin', one of his final poems:

*Cast a cold Eye
On Life, on Death.
Horseman, pass by.*

Denyse Woods

Reading with Adam Johnson & Jennifer Johnston

Saturday 20th February 9.00pm



Denyse Woods, who also writes as Denyse Devlin, was born in Boston in 1958 and is the daughter of an Irish diplomat. She studied Arabic and English at University College Dublin, and subsequently worked in Iraq. She has travelled extensively in the Middle East, and has also lived in the USA, Belgium, Australia, Italy and the UK before settling in Cork with her husband and their two daughters. Denyse has published five novels including the critically acclaimed *Overnight to Innsbruck* (Lilliput Press, 2002), the best-selling *The Catalpa Tree* (Penguin Ireland, 2004), *Like Nowhere Else* (Penguin Ireland, 2005) and *Hopscotch* (Penguin Ireland, 2006). Her most recent novel is *If Not Now* (Penguin Ireland, 2008). She is a winner of *The Irish Times* short story award.

“I selected *Overnight to Innsbruck* by Denyse Woods by chance from the reviewing shelf and discovered a real treat of a read. It is pleasantly old-fashioned in having a strong, page-turning plot, and credible characters who panic and fret in recognisably authentic ways, yet bristling with smart, contemporary dialogue and psychological insight.”

— *The Spectator*

The compartment door slid open with a clunk.

The train had stopped. The night-time rumblings of a large station had replaced the mumble of the undercarriage. Florence, already. Midnight, then. There was commotion in the corridor as fresh passengers boarded; someone was looking into our compartment, but thought better of joining us and moved on, only partially closing the door. I turned into the dark corner. It was comforting to be one of those already ensconced, and it was even better to know that I had slept deeply for the first time in three nights. I waited to slip back into that glorious blank, and might have done so but for the station master shouting on the platform and our steward directing human traffic at the end of the corridor.

‘You, you,’ he called. ‘Here. Bed in here.’

A young woman passed our door. ‘Grazie. Thanks.’

© 2007, Denyse Woods

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The Gregory O'Donoghue Poetry Competition 2010

The Munster Literature Centre is pleased to announce a new international poetry prize for single poem, named in honour of a late Irish poet long associated with the Centre. The Gregory O'Donoghue International Poetry Prize will have a first prize of €1,000 (on 1 October 2009 approx. US\$1400 or UK£900) and publication in *Southword Literary Journal*. The winner will have the opportunity to travel to Cork, Ireland in February 2010 to receive their winnings and read their poem at the opening of the Cork Spring Literary Festival. The MLC will subvent travel costs for the winner up to €600 and provide hotel accommodation and meals for three days during the festival. There will be a second prize of €500, third prize of €250, and ten runners-up will each have their poems published in *Southword* and receive *Southword's* standard fee of €30.

The winning poem will be read by the poet at the opening of the festival on Wednesday February 17th at 7.30pm

SLAM COMPETITION — €200 PRIZE!

Saturday 20th February, 2.30PM, Metropole Hotel

€5 entry fee for participants and free to audience,

20 entrants maximum (first come, first served)

Poetry and fiction welcome; limited to 3 minutes per performer.

Judge: Ian Wild

Ian Wild is a popular performer of his own work, being a short story writer, poet, playwright and composer. He received his second Fish Short Story Prize in 2009 for "Ted Pint Ted" and was recently awarded and Arts Council Bursary. His most recent collection, Intercourse with Cacti (2003), published by Bradshaw Books. English ex-patriate, Wild resides in Enniskean, West Cork.

Workshops

Saturday Morning February 20th 2009 11am to 1pm
at the Munster Literature Centre
Frank O'Connor House
84 Douglas Street
Cork

Fiction Workshop

A rare opportunity to learn from Adam Johnson, a lecturer in Stanford University's English Department - one of America's most prestigious writing institutes. See page 9 of this brochure for more information on Adam Johnson.

"Place in Fiction."

Including a short lecture on the use of landscape in fiction and an exercise on how to create better settings for your stories.

Maximum places 8. Cost: €30 each

Masterclass Poetry Workshop with Martín Espada

Limited to six places for poets who have already published in respected literary journals. An opportunity to have your poem critiqued by one of America's leading contemporary poets and teachers of poetry in the company of accomplished peers. See page 6 for more information on Martín Espada.

Participants must submit one poem, which they require improved, in advance of the workshop.

Maximum 6 places. **SOLD OUT**

To Book

To confirm whether or not a place remains for the workshop of your choice please email info@munsterlit.ie



Take a bow!

The arts really matter to us in Ireland; they are a big part of people's lives, the country's single most popular pursuit. Our artists interpret our past, define who we are today, and imagine our future. We can all take pride in the enormous reputation our artists have earned around the world.

The arts play a vital role in our economy, and smart investment of taxpayers' money in the arts is repaid many times over. The dividends come in the form of a high value, creative economy driven by a flexible, educated, innovative work force, and in a cultural tourism industry worth €5 billion a year.

The Arts Council is the Irish Government agency for funding and developing the arts. Arts Council funding from the taxpayer, through the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, for 2009 is €75 million, that's about one euro a week for every household.

So, when you next turn the pages of a great book or hear a poem that inspires you or attend an enthralling reading, don't forget the role you played and take a bow yourself!

Find out what's on at:

www.events.artscouncil.ie

You can find out more about the arts here:

www.artscouncil.ie