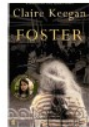


BOOKS by Irish Authors or About Irish Subjects!



Books Under Review

By Sabina Clarke



The Queen of Dirt Island By Donal Ryan Viking, New York, NY, 2023 \$27
Irish writer Donal Ryan's latest novel The Queen of Dirt Island - his seventh - is an exquisitely wrought piece of fiction tracing the lives of four generations of women in one family - the wayward women of Nenagh, Tipperary.

Ryan captures the soul of the Irish - their prejudices and hypocrisies, their petty jealousies and superstitions and their resilience. His characters are full of goodness and flawed. Their fears, their longings, their weaknesses and their strengths are laid bare enveloping us in their orbit until empathy for them is inevitable.

This panoramic tale sparkles with insight, poetry, emotional depth, raucous humor and profound truths.

Ryan style is lilting and visual and poetic - filled with symbolism and images-- a steady stream of consciousness. . . Metaphors abound like "the cherry blossom blazing pink, the grass warm under her feet" and the ever

present yet comforting sense of resignation captured in daily chatter " Haven't people the same troubles no matter what?"

The central character is Saoirse, the narrator who was born under a cloud to a single mother--one of the greatest scandals in old



Ireland. Her earliest memory when she just turned five was of "the cherry blossom tree heavily flowered at the edge of the small front garden; it was itself the

greater part of the memory." Saoirse is introspective, perceptive and a keen observer who watches the interactions between her mother and her grandmother and realizes that "her mother rarely spoke at all" and most of her speech was indirect- "flung around like fistfuls of confetti."

The plot with its many twists and turns and surprises is full

of drama. The characters are well drawn and even when they are at times unlikeable they are sympathetic and full of humanity. This is a tale that left me wanting even more.

About the author: Donal Ryan is a novelist and short story writer from Nenagh, County Tipperary, Ireland. He has won several national and international awards for his fiction and has

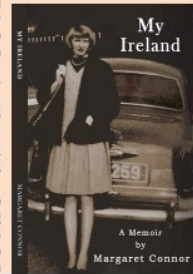
twice been nominated for the Booker Prize. His work has been adapted for stage and screen and translated into more than twenty languages. He is a lecturer in creative writing at the University of Limerick and lives in Limerick with his wife Anne Marie and their two children. The Queen of Dirt Island is his seventh book and was an instant number one bestseller in Ireland.

My Ireland by Margaret Connor

My Ireland presents a factual and descriptive account of Ireland in the 1950s from the perspective of the author looking back on her early life in the country of her birth. Margaret's captivating and charming story renders a nostalgic picture of Ireland independent of the inequalities and poverty that existed there at that time. Her story concentrates, instead, on rural life with its wonderful sense of community meitheal (an Irish word that describes how neighbors came together to assist in a range of tasks such as the harvesting of crops). To a lesser extent, the author addresses the deep cultural divide of class and money as experienced in religion, education and professional opportunities. The book is structured chronologically, from Margaret's childhood to adolescence and from leaving home for Dublin, Ireland's capital city, and later to emigration. Beginning with

family, the description of her father's passing is written from a child's viewpoint.

This leads to a narrative on her mother, a unique and forthright woman for her day. The story increases in momentum as Margaret goes to work in Dublin. The newness and wonders of the city take her on an exploratory journey through theatres, shops and the banter of the street traders. Throughout the book are special moments in nature and



traditional Irish song and verse. My Ireland is a historical and cultural walk down memory lane. It is more than a memoir. Rather, it is a loving and earnest conversation with Ireland's rural past and its people. Available at Amazon and othe fine book stores.

About the Author:

Margaret Connor grew up on a small farm outside the town of Ballina in County Mayo. She left home as a teenager to work in Dublin in the hotel business. From there, she immigrated to the United States where she earned a B.A. from Harvard University followed by an M.B.A. from the University of Chicago. This led to a career in Silicon Valley as a finance officer in the technology industry. Margaret currently lives in Greenwich, CT with close proximity to New York City for her cultural interests. She remains involved in her profession by consulting with early-stage ventures. Her curiosity about travels to distant lands continues.

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I Called Her Mary: A Memoir

By Margaret M. O'Hagan & Thomas A. Gorman, Ed.D.
Available on Amazon.com in paperback or Kindle.
https://icalledhermary.com

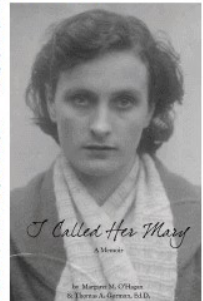
Peg Holland became pregnant as a teenager in a conservative village in 1950s Ireland. She knew her life would never be the same again. She was sent away in shame only to find courage and wisdom deep within her soul.

After her baby, Mary, is born, Peg and Mary are heckled and ridiculed by townspeople for nine months until Peg decides she must give Mary up for adoption so she can have a better life. This decision haunts Peg the rest of her life.

Having nothing left to keep her in Ireland, Peg leaves home to work in America. Mick O'Hagan is swept away by Peg and wants to marry her. She refuses due to the secret of her baby that no one knows about but eventually relents.

Fifty years after the birth of Mary, Peg receives a phone call from her daughter. They are reunited and the family only grows bigger and stronger because of their love. They share many stories of what each other missed out on but as the stories are told new details emerge. Fighting past the trauma of giving Mary up at such a young age, memories come flooding back and a new

truth of what actually happened comes to light.



Peg's tales of hardship and unconditional love carry the reader through to the end. This heartbreaking tale shares the power of faith, hope, and love.

Reviews
SP - I loved this book. It is so heartfelt. I laughed, I cried, but most of all I came away so impressed by this amazing woman and her strength, determination and love for her family. What she lived through and how she survived it all is truly a story of grit! The fact that it is a true story makes it all the more amazing. Kudos for a wonderful book. I highly recommend it.

KK - This story made me feel so many emotions. I laughed and I cried. The story is so beautifully written that I really

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