



**A SHOWCASE OF WRITING
FROM NORTHERN IRELAND**

FOREWARD

Northern Ireland embodies a unique sense of place, culture and identity, with a significant history that is reflected through our arts. Artists tell our stories, and they do so with a distinctive and original voice. In telling our stories, they help not only the rest of the world but also those of us who live here in Northern Ireland to understand ourselves and each other a little better. In the past year, we have shared a common global experience, which has reminded people everywhere of the importance of the arts in our lives; and people have been turning increasingly to literature, of all the arts, as a source of solace, enjoying, sometimes rediscovering, the power of the written word to enrich, enlighten and entertain.

With the continuing growth of online and digital platforms, we are becoming accustomed to alternative ways of consuming and of producing art, and of a new ease of cultural and creative exchange across the globe. At such a time, when opportunities to share work and ideas are evolving at pace, the current showcase and symposium of writing from Northern Ireland feels timely, indeed, prescient. The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is delighted to support this important literary event by EastSide Arts through our emergency Covid-19 funding programme for organisations, with funding from the Department for Communities Northern Ireland. This is an opportunity not to be missed to dig a little deeper into Northern Ireland's rich literary landscape.

Roisín McDonough
Chief Executive
Arts Council of Northern Ireland

INTRODUCTION

I'm incredibly lucky. Over the last five years, writing has allowed me to travel extensively throughout the world, meeting and spending time with writers in other countries. Much as I've enjoyed my adventures, I'm always grateful to return home to Northern Ireland, not least because I'm yet to discover a community of writers to rival the one I have right here on my doorstep.

There's never been a more exciting time for literature in Northern Ireland. I am constantly astounded by the variety, quality and sheer quantity of writing being produced by my friends and colleagues. Being part of this community is both an encouragement to keep writing and a constant incentive to 'up my game;' there's nothing like being surrounded by talented people to keep you on your creative toes.

It's been both a privilege and a joy to curate this day-long symposium showcasing just a little of the rich literary talent which has emerged from Northern Ireland over the last few years. I hope you'll discover some writers you've never come across before, revisit some of the writers who've shaped our literary landscape and leave freshly enthused about writing from Northern Ireland and its ongoing relevance within the contemporary world.

Jan Carson
Curator



Supported by the Organisations Emergency Programme

Prophets, Makers and Risk Takers: A Showcase of Writing from Northern Ireland is produced by EastSide Arts with support from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's Organisations Emergency Programme and the Department for Communities' Covid-19 Social Enterprise Fund.

- 9:15am **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**
Rachel Kennedy, EastSide Arts. Jan Carson, Curator
- 09.30am **PANEL: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN
NORTHERN IRISH WRITING**
Emma Warnock, No Alibis Press (Chair)
Nandi Jola. Mícheál McCann
- 10.30am **15 MINUTE BREAK**
- 10.45am **PANEL: NEW APPROACHES TO THE
NORTHERN IRISH STORY**
Susan McKay (Chair). Darran Anderson. Michelle Gallen
- 15 MINUTE BREAK**
- 12:00pm **WORKSHOP: HOW TO INCREASE YOUR
PRESENCE OUTSIDE NI**
Jan Carson
- 30 MINUTE BREAK**
- 2:00pm **PANEL: PROMOTING WRITERS IN NORTHERN IRELAND
INTERNATIONALLY**
Peggy Hughes, National Centre for Writing (Chair)
Nora Hickey M'Sichil, Centre Culturel Irlandais
Jim Hinks, British Council. Paul McVeigh
- 3:00pm **KEYNOTE ADDRESS: THIS MUST BE THE PLACE -
MAPPING CONTEMPORARY WOMEN'S WRITING FROM
NORTHERN IRELAND**
Dr Dawn Miranda Sherratt-Bado
- 15 MINUTE BREAK**
- 4:00pm **VIDEO SHOWCASE OF WRITERS IN
NORTHERN IRELAND**
Sharon Dempsey. Wendy Erskine. Kelly McCaughrain
Raquel McKee. Stephen Sexton. Shannon Yee
- 4:30pm **PANEL DISCUSSION AND Q&A**
Jan Carson. Cathy Brown, Seamus Heaney HomePlace
Damian Smyth, ACNI
- 5:15pm **THANKS AND CLOSE**
Rachel Kennedy, EastSide Arts

SPEAKERS



JAN CARSON

Jan Carson is a writer and community arts facilitator based in Belfast, Northern Ireland. She has a novel, *Malcolm Orange Disappears* and short story collection, *Children's Children*, (Liberties Press), two micro-fiction collections, *Postcard Stories 1 and 2* (Emma Press) and a short story collection, *The Last Resort* (Doubleday). Her novel *The Fire Starters* (Doubleday) won the EU Prize for Literature for Ireland 2019, the Kitschies Prize for Speculative Fiction 2020 and was shortlisted for the Dalkey Book Prize 2020. Jan won the Harper's Bazaar short story competition in 2016 and has been shortlisted for the BBC National Story Prize and Sean O'Faolain Short Story Prize.



EMMA WARNOCK

Emma Warnock is the commissioning editor at No Alibis Press, a small publisher of exceptional fiction and offshoot of Belfast's No Alibis Bookstore. In 2019, Emma edited an anthology of short stories *Still Worlds Turning*, two of which were subsequently shortlisted for national prizes (UK and Ireland). From 2019-20, she was a British Council international publishing fellow and is currently commissioning a chapbook of stories in translation with funding from this initiative. Emma studied literature at Queen's University Belfast, where she gained a PhD in contemporary fiction and literary theory (2006).



NANDI JOLA

Nandi is South African born, she came to Northern Ireland in 2001 and has since worked extensively in the arts as a poet, facilitator, writer and storyteller. Nandi is a cultural ambassador and works in schools throughout Northern Ireland delivering cultural awareness workshops. In 2018 Nandi co-founded She-Wolf Theatre Collective, following a sold-out performance of the *Vagina Monologues*, giving a platform for female writers and performers and speaking up about issues women face today. Her one-woman verse performance, *The Journey*, was featured in the International Literature Festival Dublin in October 2020



MÍCHEÁL MCCANN

Mícheál McCann is from Derry. His poems appear in *The Manchester Review*, *Poetry Ireland Review* and *The Stinging Fly*, and were shortlisted in the 2020 Oxford Brookes Poetry Competition. He was a grateful recipient of an ACNI ACES award in 2019, and his first pamphlet of poems – *Safe Home* – was published by Green Bottle Press.



SUSAN MCKAY

Susan McKay is a Derry born author and journalist. She is currently writing a book about borders called *Outside in the Navy Dark*, (from a poem by Leontia Flynn), for which she received an Arts Council NI major individual award in 2019. Her book, *A Thought Might Grow*, will be published by Blackstaff in spring 2021. It is a sequel to *Northern Protestants - An Unsettled People*, (Blackstaff, 2000) and will also be re-issued. Her books also include *Bear in Mind These Dead* (Faber, 2007) about those bereaved in the NI conflict. Her journalism appears in the *New Yorker*, *New York Times*, the *Guardian*, the *Observer*, the *London Review of Books* and the *Irish Times*. She also works for WAVE Trauma Centre on its *Stories from Silence* podcasts.



DARRAN ANDERSON

Darran Anderson is the author of *Inventory* (Chatto & Windus), a Georges Perec-inspired memoir about growing up during the Troubles. It was recently selected as a book of the year by the Belfast Telegraph and the Irish Times. “Anderson has an uncanny ability to draw image from object, to turn matter into a point of ingress into the past — so much so that you feel your own memory coming alive in tandem with his,” writes David Keenan in the *New York Times*. Anderson is also the author of the acclaimed *Imaginary Cities* (Influx Press), which was a book of the year in *The Guardian*, the *FT*, the *A.V. Club* and others. He grew up in Northern Ireland and currently lives in London



MICHELLE GALLEN

Michelle Gallen was born in Northern Ireland in the mid-70s. She grew up on the border between Ireland and the United Kingdom. Her debut novel *Big Girl, Small Town*, was published by John Murray in the UK and Ireland and by Algonquin in the US. It was shortlisted for the Comedy Women in Print Award, an Irish Book Award and the Costa book award.



PEGGY HUGHES

Peggy Hughes is Programme Director of the National Centre for Writing (NCW), a literature house and place of discovery, exchange, support, ideas and learning for writers, translators, and readers based in Norwich, England’s first UNESCO City of Literature. NCW delivers programmes, residencies, workshops, and events, regionally, nationally, and internationally, online and in person at their HQ, a Grade I listed medieval building, Dragon Hall.

Peggy is from Northern Ireland, and before moving to Norwich worked in literature in Scotland, at the University of Dundee, the Scottish Poetry Library and the Edinburgh International Book Festival, among other organisations



NORA HICKEY M'SICHILI

Nora Hickey M'Sichili has been the Director of the Centre Culturel Irlandais, Ireland’s Cultural Flagship in Europe, since 2013 and Chair of FICEP, the Forum des Instituts Culturels Étrangers à Paris, the organisation that represents the 60 international Paris-based cultural centres. Previously she held positions in Mermaid Arts Centre (Director), the Lewis Glucksman Gallery (Curator) and the Hunt Museum (Curator).



JIM HINKS

Jim Hinks is a Senior Literature Programme Manager at the British Council, the UK’s cultural relations organisation. He works with overseas colleagues to devise literature activities that respond to local opportunity and context. He currently resides in NI, but is based at the British Council’s Manchester office.

Jim joined the British Council from Comma Press, an independent publisher based in Manchester, UK, which specialises in short stories in translation. He has over ten years of experience in the UK publishing industry, and for three years led the editorial module on the MA in Publishing at UCLan. He’s a graduate of Nottingham Trent University and The University of Manchester, and has a PhD from Edge Hill University, where his research specialism was narrative mechanisms in the short story.



PAUL MCVEIGH

Paul's debut novel, *The Good Son*, won The Polari First Novel Prize and he is twice winner of The McCrea Literary Award. He has written plays and comedy, with his shows touring the UK and Ireland including the Edinburgh Festival and London's West End. His short stories have appeared in *The Irish Times*, Faber's *Being Various* and Kit de Waal's *Common People* anthologies, on BBC Radio 3, 4 & 5 and Sky Arts. He co-founded the London Short Story Festival. His work has been translated into seven languages. Paul was fiction editor at *Southword Journal*, co-edited the *Belfast Stories* anthology, and is editor of *The 32: An Anthology of Irish Working Class Voices*.



DR DAWN MIRANDA SHERRATT-BADO

Dr Dawn Miranda Sherratt-Bado is Visiting Research Fellow in the Institute of Irish Studies at Queen's University Belfast. She specialises in Global Irish Studies, with a focus on Irish women writers. Dawn also has expertise in Postcolonial and Post-Conflict Studies more broadly. She has taught at Maynooth University, the University of Edinburgh, and the Scottish Universities' International Summer School.

Dawn currently holds an Arts Council of Northern Ireland award for her work as a literary and cultural critic. She is co-editor of *Female Lines: New Writing by Women from Northern Ireland* (New Island Books, 2017). Dawn has published recently in *Éire-Ireland*, *Irish Studies Review*, *Review of Irish Studies in Europe*, *The Literary Review*, *The Stinging Fly*, and *Open Library of Humanities*. Dawn contributes frequently to the *Dublin Review of Books*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, and *The Irish Times*, and she has appeared on BBC Radio Ulster and RTÉ Radio to discuss her research. She tweets @drdawnmiranda



CATHY BROWN

Cathy Brown has been the Arts Programmer at Seamus Heaney HomePlace since it opened in September 2016. An experienced arts programmer, Cathy has worked in Clotworthy House & The Old Courthouse in Antrim, Belfast Waterfront Hall, Belfast Festival at Queens and the Belfast Book Festival. She plans the events at HomePlace, encompassing music, song, poetry, talks and drama, with appeal to all ages and cultural tastes. She sits on the Advisory Board of the Seamus Heaney Centre at Queen's University and writes for the cultural website, *No More Workhorse*.



DAMIAN SMYTH

Damian Smyth is Head of Literature & Drama at the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.