

Trinity News Two **Arts & Culture Supplement** Issue 3 10<sup>th</sup> February 2004

Tim Walker talks to  
novelist **Andrew  
O'Hagan**



David White talks to  
playwrite **Anne Devlin**



**George Szirtes** on poetry and nationality



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## Editorial

I write this huddled under the campanile, waiting for the fatal bell to toll midnight and end my chances of leaving this fair college with a degree. Like all humanities finalists, I run the daily Arts Block gauntlet wearing a hunted look. Many are the days in that forest of chattering flesh that a plump and satisfied hand comes at me from the crowd. A firm hand, searching for a firm shake, happily attached to a successful and prosperous acquaintance with a bright future. 'And what are you doing next year?' their lips will glibly offer. Already I can see the warning signs; the curl of a smile playing at the edges of the mouth, a serene and financially-stable calm in the pupils. After blundering through the limitless embarrassments that I have set myself up for, I inevitably return the question with the enthusiasm of a sulky tennis player palming a return volley into the crowd. Then it begins; an unstinting litany of achievement that would have

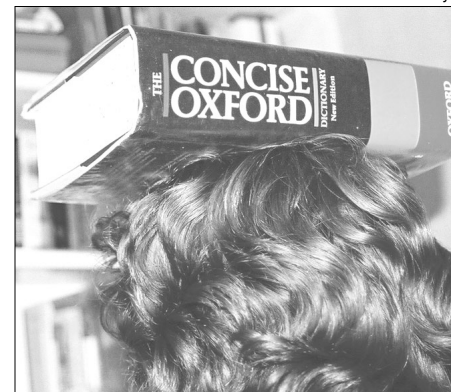
made Jesus feel inadequate. Of course I am polite, issuing the usual inanities with forced gusto: 'you're right, for that kind of work 300 million is a pittance', 'I'm sure you'll make a splendid king.' But what I really want to do is stun them with a painless karate chop to the forehead and run screaming into the nearest pub. As this is widely considered to be morally dubious behaviour, I content myself with a vision of them stuck in a lift for the rest of their lives living on plastic buttons and strips of insulating wire, having to have lift-children with their fellow inmates. Now, I can already hear a concerned member of the Student Counselling Service reaching for the telephone. Fear not Fiachra, I won't be late for my methadone clinic. And I don't really hate our fine establishment's young go-getters. I just hate hearing about their impending solid gold top hats, chanel-filled toilet bowls and free company hoverboards. It takes far less organisation to fail, and it can be so much more spectacular and rewarding. Slackers and ne'er-do-wells I commend you: when the clock strikes twelve I join your humble ranks as a satisfying failure.

## If you scratch our back...

Many thanks to Kate Burton at Faber, Gerald Dawe, Dave Ring, Katie Dickson, Tony Kiely, Matt Pitt and Tim Walker. You can all sleep soundly at night knowing that you have done good deeds. Go raibh maith agaibh.

## Dictionary Head

Jess Finney rummages through her dictionary, bringing long-forgotten words blinking and swearing into the sunlight.



Graham Mooney

### VERISM

Like Ferris Bueller, I don't much like 'isms' and this one, meaning "artistic use of contemporary everyday material in preference to the heroic or legendary" is no exception. Apparently it's usually an opera thing but I'm inclined towards giving it a vulgar Tracy Emin edge. At its most handy when on a visit home your mum decides to vent her disgust at your haphazard style of unpacking by screaming and pointing at the contents of your rucksack pouring over your bed. "Mother, its verism!" you cry. Watch her crumble as she takes this to be a sordid sexual practice. In her blind panic she forgets her Atkins Diet and seeks comfort in a piece of bread. Carbohydrates are go! Soon to come with government warning: verism makes you fat.

### ZOOPHILIA

Meaning "sexual attraction to animals" or, quite simply, bestiality. A bloody great word for spicing up those monotonous part-time jobs (especially suited for checkout workers and waiters). When the next old dear asks you sweetly what you're studying at college feel compelled to tell her "zoophilia"- yes, you love it, although the practical assignments can be a bit taxing. When this too becomes tedious simply resort back to trying to slip the words "pink fluffy bunny" into the conversation as many times as possible without raising suspicion.

### PIANISTIC

"Characteristics of a piano" apparently. An inventive adjective for maliciously boosting the ego of the man on your arm. When he next asks "Darling, why do you love me so?" (or something thereabouts) reply, "why, my sweet, it's your pianistic qualities I love". Picture him skipping home to consult his Oxford dictionary and with a smile on his face concluding that this means he's like music to your ears, an instrument of joy. Unlikely it will ever cross his little mind that you actually think him wooden and that it's as easy as pushing a button to get him to do whatever you want.

### GIGOT

Quite boringly this means "a leg of meat". Certainly not exciting but may help over-eager, under-loved gay men. True story time. A young male acquaintance of mine was approached by a balding sweatpatch one evening who, as an introduction, told him he had nice legs- especially his "third leg". To further intensify the look of horror on the young man's face the sweaty individual asked

if he could see this hidden limb. Swearing and raised fingers ensued. So anyone now enticed to use this remarkable chat-up line may do well to remember that asking to see their "gigot" could put off the hurricane abuse otherwise likely to commence immediately. Instead, if you strike lucky, your victim may take you to be talking about some magical Tolkien creature who was vanquished with a barrage of quivering arrows. Conversation may ensue. El vino may flow. Get the poor bastard drunk enough and he'll probably consent to anything.

### CRAPULOUS

"Suffering from the effects of excessive drinking of alcohol". Not only does it give us an important sounding, scientific-type word for a hangover it also begins with the usual reply for the question "so how do you feel this lovely Sunday morning". A fantastic excuse for being late, lazy, unprepared and grouchy as it has the added bonus of actually sounding like a real ailment. Just pretend it's spreading about the college like foot and mouth. "Sorry Dad, I can't go for tea at Uncle Berty's as I'm in bed feeling rather crapulous today. I'm afraid it may be contagious and you know how weak old uncle's heart is." The only slight draw back is some may think you have made this word up. If such hurdles are encountered simply scoff at other people's stupidity. Apparently that's what we Trinity students do best anyway.

### ZOSTER

A useful euphemism for herpes, or shingles, which can be fearlessly unleashed when that old flame rolls into town and you really don't want to know. Regardless of your gender if you head to a pub, act as if all's well and then point at your crotch mid-pint screaming something along the lines of, "my god I'm on fire! I've got a touch of the old zoster! Douse me!" After flinging their pint over yourself run for the door. Foolproof.

### UXORICIDE

The act of killing one's wife. Could be usefully employed in an impressive double-team with the above. For example: "she gave me the auld zoster, so I had to indulge in a spot of uxoricide. Ho ho." They'll think it's a new type of exercise. Brilliant. Not to be confused with peroxide, infanticide, pesticide, suicide or five-a-side football. Apparently someone managed to confuse all six in West Meath in the early seventies.



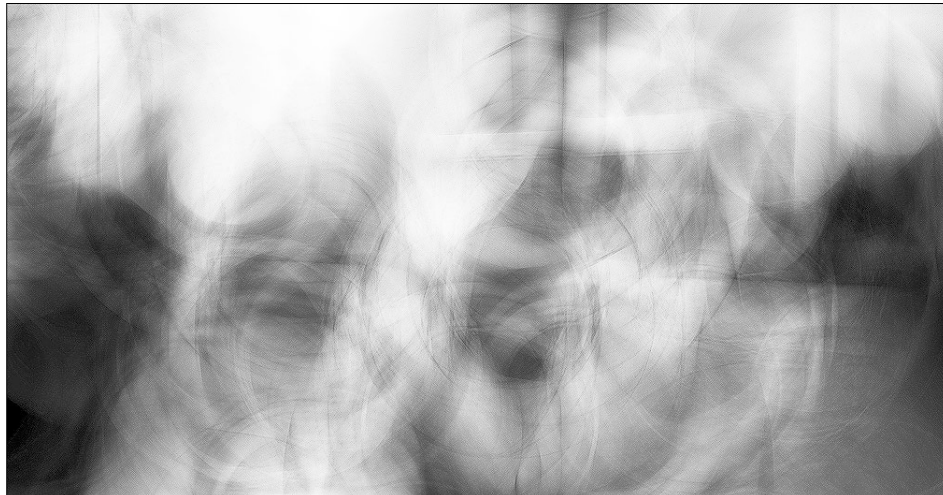
# Spooks

**Valerie Flynn gets in touch with the dark side. Kind of.**

Jim Morrison may not be dead. Official reports said that The Doors' frontman choked on his own vomit at the age of twenty-seven. However, it is widely known that the only two people to glimpse the body were his wife and a French doctor who was never seen again. The coffin was closed for the funeral. Many authorities on the subject now believe that he faked his own death so that he could leave stardom and drugs behind and go to Africa where he lives among a primitive tribe and writes terrible poetry. For a good many years now there have been calls for an expedition to the erstwhile Dark Continent, the better to substantiate this theory; nay-sayers have argued for comprehensive spiritualist investigation to confirm that Morrison is in fact on the other side. As of last Sunday night I can personally vouch for the fact that this latter is a foolish exigency that should be dropped at once.

Spiritualism, for the benefit of the unacquainted, is the belief that the dead manifest their presence to people, usually through a sensitive medium or "channel". Adam Higgs is one such medium. After going along to see a psychic with his mother ten years ago he was invited to attend a Spiritual Circle. Did he know straight away that he too could talk to dead people? "The harder you work, the better you get", says the clairvoyant from London who now hosts his very own Spiritual Circle in the House of Astrology, Parliament Street. He also reads palms and tarot-cards and looks in crystal balls. He says there's not much of a psychic scene in Dublin, compared with England, though things have started to take off in the last three years or so. Contrary to popular perceptions of spiritualism, the Circle is only contacted by friendly dead people and by spirit-guides, who give helpful advice to the living. In the words of well-known Dublin Aura Reader, Keith Kavanagh, séances are "a bit last century".

The Spiritual Circle takes place of a Sunday night in the basement of the House of Astrology. You get in through the back door, which opens onto the spectacularly seedy looking Crane Lane. I was kicking myself I hadn't inquired as to a secret handshake or something as I made my (unlit) way up past the dumpsters and drainpipes and damp walls last Sunday, but needn't have worried since they're very nice about new people coming along. There was another girl there who'd never



Is it mist? Is it an x-ray? No, its a ghost. We know. Honestly.

been before – a holistic healer. Two middle-aged gentlemen, one from Dublin and one from down the country, a cheerful man of about thirty, an older lady and a stunning yummy-mummy type made up our number. We laid out some plastic chairs and sat in a little ring – man, woman, man, woman – and chatted while we waited for Adam Higgs to arrive, though the conversation was not entirely general. By way of introduction one of the older men told me that there are two paths to knowledge and insight, that of analysis and that of intuition, the latter being what we would concern ourselves with that evening. You don't have to use or apply your intuition to day-to-day life, but it is a part of the mind that he thinks we should all try harder to develop. We cleansed our auras by waving some smouldering sage about ourselves.

Mr. Higgs arrived and we turned off the electric lights. There was a candle in the middle of the ring. The session got underway with some deep breathing and medi-

tation. We imagined ourselves walking on high mountains and being warmed by the stone and then our individual spirit guides appeared to us and gave us helpful advice ("if you book them...") and led us down some more mountain paths. The second leg of the evening was to practice our clairvoyance on one another. We held hands with a partner and concentrated on reading the other person's vibrations. My vibrations told a lot of things.

"You have a brother... he needs your

help...you should talk to him."

"You have a secret admirer who will approach you."

"Your grandmother is dead? You were close to her... she's watching out for you."

"You work very hard...you're very diligent...you should take some time to reflect."

"You have a poor attention span. This is interfering with your studies. You should eat a good breakfast... porridge."

A revised history of my grandmother (with whom I spoke on approximately two occasions) and the non-extant brother aside, it was all quite easy on the ears and true about the breakfast. When it was my turn to read the vibrations I got real into it and saw all sorts of things that provoked encouraging response like a castle and a stain on a wall and I thought that the person was a hard worker too and that he has travelled far but has to travel further and so on.

Now it was time to contact the dead. Strictly speaking, though, the dead con-

tact you, not vice-versa. Each person in turn stood in the middle of the circle with their eyes closed and described the spirit that appeared to them. When someone else recognised the description they would ask questions of the medium about names and appearance and type of death and so on, to check if it really was the person they thought it was. This invariably led to difficulties because nobody could get the names, though one medium did hit on a first name that was the name of the sister of the person she was connecting with. This matter of concrete evidence out of the way, the medium communicated a really lovely message from the other side about trust and self-worth. The real excitement of the evening was provided by the holistic healer whose first night it was.

"A man... from the North...he's young. I'm getting something in the chest...I think he was shot."

Higgs told her that if it wasn't a helpful spirit to thank it and tell it to go back and change her vibration, the better to contact a more innocuous spirit, I suppose.

"...I think he was shot...he has brown hair. I don't know, I'm getting I.R.A.; I think he was shot by the –"

"Thank you, sit down."

She was very upset as she took her seat and a few pats on the back from Yummy Mummy.

The evening culminated in Higgs going into a trance in order that his Spirit Guide could possess him and give us helpful advice from the spiritual plane. He inhaled and exhaled noisily for ten minutes and just as feet were beginning to be shuffled his spirit guide took hold of him and spoke to us in a jerky, gravelly voice. The spirit, who was highly articulate and of a philosophic bent, told us all about the year ahead, how some paths would be fruitful and others barren, how circumstances may portend a future of stones and thorns but how we can never despair if we only realise that harmony's life blood is not only truth but acceptance of that truth and so on. The evening drew to a close when the spirit guide croaked that his time ran short.

"Yes", said the middle-aged man from Dublin, "It's twenty-five past."

The woman next to me scratched her knee and murmured "good-bye".

As Jim Morrison would say, "people are strange..."

**Question:** What do the Pav, Trinity Ball, The Hist, the Boat Club, Islandbridge, a beautiful Trinner named Fiona, a certain Marxist professor, and the U.S. Military, top secret smart bombs, a one year exchange student from Georgetown, the CIA and an East European terrorist cell all have in common?

**Answer:** *The One Year*, a new novel from the States that takes you from a Parmalat-like working military defence contractor on Long Island, New York to the heart of Dublin and Trinity itself, written by TCD graduate Brian J. Gorman.

**Murphy's Review:** "Page turner conclusion. Well worth your read time."

**Independent:** "Ambitious/ Serious/ Engaging/ Informative/ and timely, especially as Ireland becomes a bigger player in the European Union."

Available at: Alan Hanna's (Kevin St & Rathmines Rd), Greene's Bookshop (Clare St), Book Bargains (Middle Abbey St), Portobello Books (Rathmines), Dubray Books (Swan Mall, Rathmines Rd) and Impressionbooks.com



# The novel novelist

**Andrew O'Hagan was chosen last year by Granta as one of the ten best young novelists in Britain. Tim Walker talks to him and finds out why.**

**W**hen is a novelist not a novelist? How much of his own life can a writer invest in his work before he calls it autobiography? How much of someone else's can he fictionalise before he calls it non-fiction? Well, the obvious answer is: as much as he (or she) damn well likes. But these, nonetheless, are the kind of fatuous questions that have been bothering Andrew O'Hagan ever since he published his second novel, 'Personality', last year. And never one to stray too far from the fold, I'm going to ask them all over again.

'Personality' is the story of Maria Tambini, a little Scottish-Italian girl with a big old voice thrown into the media spotlight when she wins television talent show 'Opportunity Knocks' seven weeks on the trot. Her overnight success brings her into close contact with the cream of the light entertainment community, from Les Dawson to Dean Martin, and sees her filling theatres from Vegas to the West End. Celebrity life is not all wine and roses, however, and Maria becomes estranged from her family, obsessed with her weight, and pursued by at least one psychopathic stalker on her way from the bottom to the top and back again. Much of the fuss surrounding the novel's publication centred round its inspiration, the life of seventies child star Lena Zavaroni, who died in 1999 as an indirect result of her recurrent anorexia. O'Hagan makes no bones about the novel's conception: "From the very beginning, I was happy about the way Lena Zavaroni's life influenced 'Personality': if I hadn't been happy with the connection I could have erased all signs of it from the novel as opposed to making it explicit as I did." Right from the opening chapter of 'Personality', there is an overwhelming sense of tragedy looming over the Tambini family, and the novel

assigns them a hefty measure of suffering, but Maria does not share Lena Zavaroni's fate. "I knew from the beginning this was not going to be an exercise in faction: Lena's life inspired me but I did not want to remain within her story all the way," O'Hagan explains. "One of the things I wanted the novel to explore is the way narrative itself can create victims - women like Anna Karenina and Emma Bovary come to mind - whose destruction is colluded in by the reader. 'Personality'



O'Hagan: critic turned creator

has a 19th-century shape, and I wanted the novel to play with the reader's expectation of disaster, and that meant dramatising a reversal of fortune...so I knew early on that Lena's sad end could have nothing to do with the novel." Instead, Maria is offered the chance of salvation in the arms of her lover, Michael, who shares a number of superficial similarities with O'Hagan himself. Like Michael, O'Hagan moved to London from Scotland after graduating from university, and found himself editing the magazine of a charity for the war-blind. "Michael is the most directly autobiographical character I've written," the author admits, "but Michael is a better person than I am, and that is

the point of him really - it was an attempt to create that rare thing in modern writing, a good man."

But 'Personality' is not merely a cautionary tale about the perils of celebrity. If the novel is at all flawed, it is because Maria's compelling performance is at times drowned out by her vivid supporting cast. O'Hagan movingly describes the potentially damaging effects of childhood and family strife, and likewise deals with the social divides that simmer beneath the surface of a multicultural Scottish society. The private recollections of Lucia Tambini, Maria's grandmother, betray an extramarital indiscretion that makes a revealing footnote to the sickening treatment of Italian and German immigrants during World War Two - a dirty national secret that makes her personal shame seem forgivable. "The question for Maria all her life is 'who am I?' and she has very powerful, celebrity-based reasons for finding it difficult to answer," O'Hagan argues. "But I wanted the book to show that she wasn't the first of her own kind to ask such a question. 'Who are we?' could be understood to have been the main question asked by her Scottish-Italian forebears, and, indeed (for my money) one of the main questions asked by British people at any time."

Last year, O'Hagan was named as one of Granta magazine's Best Young British Novelists 2003. He already has a Booker prize nomination, for his fictional debut, 'Our Fathers'. However, it was 'The Missing', a meditation on the theme of missing persons, which first thrust O'Hagan into the literary spotlight. A hybrid of courageous first-person journalism, social history and cultural commentary, O'Hagan's first book was conceived in a language that had recently acquired a new euphemism for horror: Fred West. O'Hagan's Glasgow childhood was punctuated with a number of unexplained local disappearances, and the ugly history that unfolded at West's home in Gloucester provided a catalyst for the writer to revisit a subject that had long preoccupied him. "When I was starting out, and contemplating [the events in] Glasgow and Gloucester, I realised there was a tone to my thoughts - a signature to them - which is another way of saying the material helped me to find my writing voice," he

recalls. "There was something in all that business of missing persons that made me see who I was, including what kind of writer I was...It's an old-fashioned word now, but I have to say there is something metaphysical in the notion of missing persons, something that alerts us to the first principles of life - existence, loss, home."

In focusing on the lives of the victims - West's victims, their fellow 'missing' and the families they leave behind - O'Hagan's first book provides an antidote to the kind of 'true crime' pulp that indulges in the pathological details of killers and their crimes. "'The Missing' came into being when I realised that the British press's way of covering the initial investigation of the Wests was pornographic and point-missing and almost salivating, not only degrading to women but degrading of society. I hated it." The book also never shies away from O'Hagan's personal memories, of his Glasgow childhood or his encounters with the missing and their families. "I don't think I ever found it embarrassing or intimidating to write personally," he says, "seeing as that's what writers must do in one way or another. I don't believe in impersonality in art - it's a fraud...I came from a non-literary background, so when I published 'The Missing' I was pleased to see there was something of that life in the book, something of what I knew for myself."

O'Hagan's non-literary background has obviously been a spur to him in the past. In 'Personality', Michael defends the literary canon from his progressive university professors, and whilst Maria is learning to apply foundation, her best friend is reading Mervyn Peake. So does O'Hagan feel as strongly about literary education as his fiction suggests? "A certain kind of dumbing-down took hold in the Eighties. I saw it up close at my own university, Strathclyde, where the philosophy department was dismantled during my time, and I've watched it happen to television drama and a thousand things besides. I'm very strongly against it: in some ways I'm an old-fashioned reactionary who imagines children should be reading their English Primer at the breakfast table, and I worry that too many of the new pursuits - such as Play Station 2 - only teach children how to obliterate things and get anxious. Don't good books offer something else?" Indeed.

**JAZZWEEKJAZZWEEKJAZZWEEKJAZZWEEKJAZZWEEKJAZZWEEK**

## WEEK 8 : 24-27 FEBRUARY

*Tuesday 24th* : The Company at Gubu – live jazz, funk and soul excitement (9pm, Capel St., D.1, Free Admission).

*Wednesday 25th* : The Alessandro Martinetti International Quartet: Alessandro Martinetti (Italy, drums), Ciaran Wilde (Ireland, alto clarinet), Phil Ware (England, piano), Tapani Toivanen (Finland, double bass).  
(8.30pm, J.J.Smyth's, 8: non-students, 6: students, 4: members)

*Thursday 26th* : Jazz Workshop with Alessandro Martinetti (3pm, Jazz Room, Goldsmith Hall, J.C.R., 2): Jazz Double-Bill: Polrytmi (Finland) and The Lombard Dukes (Dublin). (8pm, The Westmoreland Bar, D.2, 3 or 2 for members)

*Friday 27th* : Jazz and Funk double-bill: Polrytmi and The Company (9pm-2am, The Mezz, Eustace Street, D2., free admission)

**JAZZWEEKJAZZWEEKJAZZWEEKJAZZWEEKJAZZWEEKJAZZWEEK**

# Five minutes Max

**Audrey Scott catches up with Max Stafford-Clark.**

**M**ax Stafford-Clark is currently one of Britain's most respected and influential directors. He is Artistic Director and founder of Out of Joint Theatre Company which has challenged audiences and critics alike and has given a forum for many young and new writers to show their work. His work was seen here in Dublin's Peacock Theatre recently with *Duck* a play which received much critical acclaim for both Stafford-Clark's direction and Stella Feehily's first script. He holds the honour of being the longest running Artistic Director of the Royal Court Theatre in London and his exciting and controversial time there has been well documented. I met with him recently in London, where he gave his opinion on *Duck* by Stella Feehily, his approach to Directing and what he sees as the role of theatre today.

*Shopping and Fucking* is a play that "titillates the middle-classes... it is part of a long tradition in which liberals enjoy to be publicly spanked" he announced. *Shopping and Fucking* was one of the huge success stories of Out of Joint and



Max Stafford-Clark was director of the Royal Court for years

launched the career of playwright Mark Ravenhill. Stafford-Clark is renowned for encouraging new writing and was pivotal in the success of many famous playwrights. He believes that while it is important to produce classics from time to time that new writing is what is important today. Rather than discovering new ways to direct classical plays he finds more excitement in new writing - "It is

new - it's fresh". However, he is a fan of new writing only as long as it follows quite a traditional, narrative structure. As Mark Ravenhill said of his own first play, which was directed by Stafford-Clark, "it's almost classical in structure". Whilst Stafford-Clark believes that "theatre is at its best when it captures change", he refers to the content of a piece rather than to its form.

*Shopping and Fucking* was produced two years after Sarah Kane's *Blasted*, and is very similar in its themes of confused sexuality, violence, rape and the breakdown of society. While *Blasted* caused huge controversy and was largely criticised in the press, *Shopping and Fucking* was generally well received. Ravenhill thinks that "*Blasted* softened up the critics" but Stafford-Clark affords it no such position. He believes that *Shopping and Fucking* was simply a better play and that its form was easily recognisable to the audience. While it is only natural that he would show a bias towards his own work, it does seem a little dubious that all of his support for new theatre and new writing is only that which fits into a classical mode.

This could be explained, however, by his opinion that the duty of theatre today is to "hold up a mirror to society". A perfect example of this is Stafford-Clark's most recent project, directing David Hare's new play *The Permanent Way* which toured the UK ending up at the National in London. Hare's play was inspired by the Hatfield

train crash on 17 October, 2000 and is composed in part of actual witness reports.

Stella Feehily's *Duck* was the last Stafford-Clark production to be seen in Dublin. The play was well received both in Edinburgh where it premiered and here in Dublin where it was shown in October. *Duck* does indeed attempt to hold a mirror up to Dublin society, exposing the trends of violence and sexual conflict that underlie modern society. The latter two themes have dominated so much of the work of Stafford-Clark that some regard it as his trademark. The director feels that as sex and violence are common occurrences in our everyday society, they should be represented on stage as such. He believes that violence alone on stage has no impact today, instancing the grisly gore of Jacobean plays, but that combined with sex it can still be shocking.

While it may be commendable that he is still exploring subjects that, to some, may be considered taboo, that does seem to be negated by the fact that he does so in exactly the same way as ten years ago. He expounds the importance of the "freshness of perspective" yet has produced similar work for the last decade. Throughout the 80's, Stafford-Clark was one of the leading exponents of a new kind of theatre that challenged conventions and he was often accused of courting controversy. It seems that he is now content to rest idle on past glories.

# A life of language

**David White talks to Anne Devlin, International Writer Fellow for 2004.**

**A**nne Devlin is a Belfast born short story writer and playwright. Her published work includes a collection of short stories, *The Way-Paver*, and the plays *Ourselves Alone*, *The Long March*, *A Woman Calling* and *After Easter*, as well as work for television, radio and film. She is the resident Writer Fellow in the Oscar Wilde Centre.

Well, resident is a bit misleading. "You have to have very low self-esteem to live in those rooms. They haven't plumbed them since 1760. I'd love to do the next writing fellow a favour and say, 'please, you have to do something about the plumbing'." It's a question of funding, because third-level education should be open to everyone, "University is a laboratory, a chance to become a thinking, seeing self." Among other things. "I went to university to get laid", she laughs, adding, "as well as to do English."

She is full of praise for the writers she works with, "the people here are young and very creative and I learn a lot." She sees writing as a continuing journey and the challenges that she faces in her work are reflected in the problems of the people she works with: "it's as if they come to me with a mirror." She doesn't see writing as an elite club, "I think everybody can write. It's like having something that got overdeveloped. Some people will never go to university and will write anyway." And after

university? "After that you can join the circus, that's basically my view. Though if you want to be a writer that wouldn't be a great idea. Unless you want to write about

what's interesting to me is what happens to it when it appears in various forms. It's to do with the voice, how the voice emerges, how it shows itself. I've written a series of pieces which are to do with different characters who tell the story in their voice and their voices are entirely different."

Anne Devlin is very interested in the

manding them for a period of time and that's quite extraordinary really that someone would do that for you."

She looks thoughtful for a moment, and then, slowly, choosing every word carefully, says, "you don't live the life you think you're going to live. That's the first thing. And we are not the people we think we are."

With her interest in language and voices, it's no surprise that Anne Devlin's ideas "come from a conversation." The inspiration is a problem of sorts, "it's like a knot and I have to find my way through it. That's a new piece of work when you get a knot, and that's a good thing to get." And when you unravel the knot? "You're through, that's it."

She is suddenly animated, relating a story about a hurried taxi ride back to Westland Row to retrieve her keys. Finding them on the top floor she is surprised by a voice on the stairs, accompanied by the sound of receding footsteps. "Obviously it's a security man pulling my leg", she explains, "but on the other hand it's also Oscar Wilde shouting to me 'I'll leave all the lights on for you as you go down the stairs.'" It is this apparent contradiction - the conflict between a practical, level-headed world view and an open-minded, eager spirituality - that enriches Anne Devlin's work.

What advice would you give aspiring writers? "This is such a difficult question because this is such a cliché, okay? Never give up. You're in for the long run if you're going to be a writer. It's worth it, it's absolutely worth it if you stay with it. No matter how hard it gets, just never give up. And the earlier you start the better." Clichéd though that may be, it cannot be repeated enough times to the aspiring writer.



Anne Devlin tries to explain just how bad the plumbing really is

a circus. In which case it would be wonderful."

Language "eventually gets written down and that's what holds it, that's what puts the energy on the page and that's what's new." She hints at her current project: "there's a continuing story unfolding but

power and versatility of theatre. "My work got better when I realised what actors did to it. That's why I'm so interested in language and performance. I think actors are the bravest people. There's nothing between them and the text. Your text is living in them, is com-



couturestain? corset gain!



shot by dave ring  
styled & sewn by sarah casey  
make-up by emma weafer  
hair by dorncha o dea



modelled by  
anne dair  
& sophie motley





# Making landscapes from debris

**John Hollingworth talks to the Hungarian-born poet George Szirtes about writing and national identity.**

On Monday of last week I interviewed George Szirtes, a man whose poetry has always awed me. On Wednesday I sent him a draft of the article, as we had arranged. Unfortunately Mr Szirtes took offence. I thought that some of the remarks that he had made during the interview were supercilious and sneering and I said as much. He felt that my whole article was supercilious and sneering. Consequently Mr Szirtes asked that I remove any comments made by him. Although not legally bound to do so, I have consented as a mark of respect for the poet. I think that Mr Szirtes mistook my description of some of his comments for a description of himself. I would sincerely like to thank the poet for taking time out to give us a very detailed interview which provided a rare insight into his work. I would be glad to email the text of the interview to anybody interested in his poetry. The following has been edited in order to remove any comments that may be misconstrued as sneering on my behalf and to make it coherent after removing large chunks of the author's speech.

Poor George Szirtes. He's sick of being asked about cultural identities. He's tired of postcolonial critics and academics discussing his work as a space for creating and modifying national identities. In fact, Szirtes is wary of talking about his work at all, explaining that discussing it runs the risk of sounding self-important, self-pitying or self-conscious. Throughout the interview he is occasionally condescending but then, in fairness, the author is tired and some of my questions, upon reflection, seem facile. It is nine thirty in the morning and he returned only the previous evening from an arduous working trip to Germany. I realise, with a sinking feeling, that he's been asked all this before.

Szirtes hasn't done himself any favours in the postcolonial critic-baiting stakes by agreeing to his publisher's suggestion that he divide selections from his oeuvre into two collections, one dealing with Hungary, one dealing with England. In the introduction to 'The Budapest File', his hand-picked collection of poems dealing with his formerly estranged homeland, Szirtes describes the process of re-acquaintance with Hungary as 'trying to master a kind of inner cartography.' The geographical metaphor aptly describes his poetic project. Szirtes' poems function as maps in which he defines his own identity by cataloguing his surroundings, 'making landscapes from debris./ constructs of self-reference./ a grammar' ('Low Tide').

The poet tries to steer clear of sentimental attachment to a particular geographic locale. Although he admires the work of Heaney and Harrison, writers who champion regional identities, Szirtes prefers to write from a nation-less perspective

allowing him to be more objective and critical in his poetry. That said, in 'The Budapest File' the author acknowledges that 'poetry is always local.' Many of his poems do deal with first-hand experiences in England and Hungary, but they are free of romanticised bias. His project reverses that of Heaney and Harrison, whose writing stakes a claim for a neglected identities. The Hungarian-born

say to cups./ Go there and they go without question.' He sketches more of the country in 'An English Apocalypse', a collection of recent poems concerning England which accompanies an anthology of similarly-themed older work in a volume of the same name. Fittingly, given the author's attempt to distance himself from nationality by cataloguing it, most of the collection was written whilst he was here

Portrait: Clarissa Upchurch



Szirtes: one of Britain's most talented but least recognised poets

author stakes a claim for his own identity by recording the idiosyncrasies of national and regional identities, distancing himself from them in the process.

Szirtes' poetry does not focus on himself. He wants to describe the world itself, unfettered by personal bias, like a kind of poetic recording machine. Whilst he enjoys poetry centred on the self, such as Plath, Lowell and the Romantics, he feels that the central figure of the poet can get in the way of the poem. When he emigrated as an eight year old boy from Stalinist Hungary in 1956, Szirtes took with him an understandable suspicion of the cult of the self. As a result of this effort of self-erasure, many of his poems read like an eloquent, detailed, and strangely loving survey or census of England.

He lists 'mothers working in hot factories/ between the first rain and the latter rain,' points to too-young girls who sit talking as 'each nurses a genius at her breast.' With sharp humour he muses on the deadening legacy of English etiquette; 'custom is our guiding light- we make rules/ For chairs and tables to obey. We

in college as an International Writer Fellow.

England, a 'far, flat/ kingdom with its glum farmers' looks bleak and anachronistic; 'we're years behind. Even our vowels sag/ in the cold wind.' He observes a stagnating country, citing 'cups of tea at the Regency café/ and cod and chips on the tables covered in dust' as evidence of the decay, further instanced by the bland inanities of 'the WI stall. Jams. Flowers.' The poems are full of 'the sadness of the English.' He concludes that 'we're at the end. It might simply be of weather/ or empire or something else altogether.'

If poetic skill connotes capturing images with such exquisite, surprising precision that we feel we are seeing a familiar thing for the first time, then George Szirtes is certainly skilful and was well on his way the moment he stepped onto the wet Heathrow tarmac fresh from a Swiss refugee camp. To an immigrant in the 1950's the country must have seemed bizarre. The discrepancy between newsreel image of brisk, bright-eyed World War II victors and the reality of dingy post-war London, scraping itself together and lick-

ing its patriotic wounds after the Suez debacle would have been stark. In one poem, Szirtes describes knowing both Hungarian and English as like living 'between two kinds of sound.' In the first few years after arriving, and maybe still today, Szirtes must have felt like he was living between two kinds of world. In 'Travel Book', a highly accomplished sonnet sequence and one of Szirtes' most autobiographical poems, the narrator flatly states that 'it feels odd being in a world like this.'

His poetry reads like a man looking in on English society with a puzzled smile and occasional grimace, seeing 'odd' things that the natives would miss the beauty of. A girl has 'smooth outrageous breasts' and 'there's a touch of gold in the gutter/ running with beer.' A man sits, 'fingers/ parked on the table.' People on the train are paradoxically 'sitting still, waiting for it to stop.' He frequently writes with exquisite beauty. Stood by the sea, a narrator senses that 'something under/ the water, under the skylight, in the dry/ cabin under the ocean is quietly playing/ a music of muted bells in soft thunder.' Snow falls 'upward, downward, like a dream of war.' At a swimming pool two lovers meet; 'our eyes touch/ across the room. They flare at the point of contact/ as if one of us had suddenly lit a match,/ as if meaning had shrunk to this single act, as if time had begun to stop but hung there/ at the edge of the pool flattening our hair.' Szirtes' poems are peppered with obscure nouns ('hobbledehoy's', 'boskage'), colourful verbs ('squitter', 'scumble', 'skedaddle', 'riffle') and playful colloquialisms ('cheeribye'). A love of offbeat, interesting, palate-teasing words pervades his work.

For all his linguistic dexterity, impressively regimented technical skill and grace of observation, George Szirtes remains less famous than his contemporaries. This is despite winning the Cholmondeley Award, the Geoffrey Faber Prize and shortlist nominations for both Whitbread and Forward prizes. Possibly this is due to his extensive work as a translator of poetry, fiction and plays from Hungarian into English, for which he has received a clutch of prestigious awards. Somehow that sounds unconvincing: his diversification as a writer should surely introduce him to a much wider audience. More likely his name remains less famous because the popular media devote scarce column-inches to poetry, repeatedly discussing a handful of over-lauded stars and ignoring their talented contemporaries. If Szirtes were a musician, he'd be an indie act consistently producing original and diverse material, occasionally mentioned by the mainstream press when they wanted to sound in the know.

Whilst hunkered in the Ussher Library re-reading his work for this interview I stumbled across a book of his that hadn't ever been read since it was acquired on the 19th April 1982. Your mission (and you should really accept it if you like good poetry) is to avert the 22nd anniversary of George Szirtes not being read by students of Trinity College. Go forth and enjoy.



# The royal Dubs

**Fionnuala Finnerty catches up with the lads from FKOS.**

Along with Aran jumpers, Guinness and plastic leprechauns, 2003 saw Dublin band The Future Kings of Spain become one of Ireland's most prevalent exports. Although they didn't catch the same high-velocity catapult to international fame as The Thrills and Damien Rice, their pot is on the slow burner, simmering slowly and gradually approaching boiling point. And as the moral of the tortoise and the hare parable teaches us, slow and steady wins the race...

The band formed in 2000 when childhood friends, drummer Bryan McMahon and bassist Anton Hegarty, joined with a mate of Bryan's, guitarist/vocalist Joey Wilson. They were signed by independent London based label Red Flag Records and things progressed from there. Their first release was the E.P. "A place for everything and everything in its place" in September 2002 was released to a flurry of national and international interest. With the help of such industry legends as producer Ted Nicely who has worked with Fugazi and Eli Janney (Girls vs. Boys), they recorded their fervently anticipated self-titled debut album in New York, which was unveiled in August 2003 to rave reviews from such rock cornerstones as NME and

Kerrang! In November, an old friend, guitarist Karl Hussey was added to turn the trio into a quartet and alleviate pressure from vocalist Joey, the sacrificial multitasker. Joey was working harder than a

single mother juggling his role as the energetic screamer, while being the sole guitarist in a band that relies on complicated riffs to give them their layered, heavy sound – a bit like trying to pat your head and rub your belly at the same time! Both Bryan and Joey

concede that the four piece sounds better and Joey is relieved that he can concentrate more on singing/screeching!

Another advantage is the band's live performances, which are blisteringly fast-paced, though all that guttural shrieking does take its toll on Joey's voice. I had the fortune to witness their volcanic live show in Cuba, Galway during their Irish tour in December. Afterwards, I discover Joey guzzling greedily from a bottle of Benylin. When I advise him to measure it out using



Do they wear crowns during live sets?

a spoon, he laughs indulgently, "ah sure, this is only the soft stuff, over the counter – it's grand!" His voice is husky, and it's probably going to take more than Benylin to fix that up, although he does seem to be subscribing to the quantity rather than quality school of self-medicating!

When asked where the name Future Kings of Spain originated from, in a recent interview, Bryan laughs, "Well, it's better

than the original name anyway, 'Brains in the Nervous System'". I try very hard to suppress a giggle and make an unattractive snorting noise in its place. "Joey was reading a paper one day and on one page he read the words 'future kings' and on

the other page he read 'of Spain' and that's it". Not very mysterious...

Before FKOS, Bryan and Joey both made brief forays into the working world as postmen! "Great job for a hangover," says Bryan, "You stay up, deliver the letters and then go home for a sleep, get up and deliver the evening post. Brilliant!" When asked if he ever screwed up on a serious postal mission, he admitted to being accosted by an irate middle-aged lady. In error, he had delivered her daughter's let-

ter regarding a job interview to the wrong house and by the time she received the letter, it was too late, the interview date had passed. "What did you do then?", I asked Bryan innocently. "I ran off, she was scary!"

They are currently touring Japan, to record a session to be shown on MTV Japan and to play the Sonic-mania festival. When I enquired if they expect to excite the Japanese ladies into a frenzy a la David Beckham, Bryan laughs "maybe not quite as big as David Beckham... not just yet anyway". He proceeds to tell me about a time when a female fan asked him for an autograph and pulled up her top so that he could put his John Hancock on her bra. A bit apprehensive because of his girlfriend's presence in the room, but nonetheless flattered, he performs his public duty with an extravagant flourish. He later discovered that his "groupie" had asked to have her undergarments autographed at his girlfriend's request! "She's that secure in our relationship!" Bryan adds fondly.

Bryan admits that they don't like staying in anonymous hotel rooms but it sometimes has its advantages: "You can steal the pillows and bring them on the tour bus, you know – for extra cushioning!" They have just been nominated for two Meteor awards – Best New Act and Best Irish Band. Also in the pipeline are upcoming American and Australian tours, and a possible Kerrang! Tour. Lots of time on the tour bus – at least they won't get pressure sores...

# The art of Mozart

**Lisa McGonigle sums him up.**

A perfunctory stroll around HMV and its ilk will soon reveal that any music involving an orchestra or piano, generally sung in a foreign language (that foreign aul' muck) is simply bunged into a category called 'Classical'. This is something of a misnomer given the great diversity in so-called 'Classical' music, consider how inadequate the term 'pop' would be to describe everything from Bob Dylan to Girls Aloud. The herd of 'Classical' composers range from Baroque to Romantic and, without going into overly technical terms, they are very, very different, unified only by their perceived distance from the 21st century. However, I do not intend to become all donnish about this, stick a pipe in my mouth, and shuffle about in slippers muttering, "Harrumph, young people and their new-fangled LPs – they don't know what real music is at all." Rather, I'll help you bluff way through university by providing a brief guide to one of the most prominent of these figures – Mozart.

Before we get started, those of you "lucky" enough to take any course involving Cultural Theory may remember the figure of Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist. Bourdieu's argument – put rather crudely – was that it ain't just what you know, but how you learned it. In other words, in displaying your knowledge of classical composers, you have to give the

impression that oh, it's something you've known all along, coming as you do from an arty background where the whole family gather around the piano every evening for light entertainment. Don't let on that your "internalised cultural capital" (yer wha'?) has been gleaned from fervently trying to memorise this article, chanting "Born 1756, born 1756" over and over again. A lofty wave of the hand and lackadaisical "Oh Mozart – of course", should do the trick. Cultural theory, where would we be without it, eh?

But enough of that. To eighteenth century Salzburg! Born on 27 January 1756, this particular bundle of joy was rather snappily christened Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart. Commonly known as Wolfgang, he didn't take long to make an impression on the world. He began playing the harpsichord at the age of three, and composed his first piece when he was five. His progress was watched carefully by his father Leopold, who knew a good business opportunity when he saw one. So, shortly

after his sixth birthday, the family set off on Wolfgang's first tour. My First Tour - isn't that sweet? Despite the fact that his still had his milk teeth, young Wolfgang performed an average of two concerts a day, as well as composing his early work. Daddy Leopold himself recognised that his son was wearing an "iron shirt" of discipline, and perhaps inevitably

Wolfgang came down with scarlet fever soon after. He was to suffer ill-health all his life, until his death at the early age of 35. (Oh no! Did I ruin the ending for anyone?)

The family continued to travel around Europe, from Vienna to Paris to London to Italy. Wolfgang, however, suffered from that perennial problem of child stars: he was starting to grow up, but Leopold, in a magnificent publicity stunt, deducted a year or two from his age on posters. A series of appointments followed, such as being appointed concert master for the Archbishop of Salzburg at the age of 13, and a commission to write an opera the following year. Refreshingly enough though, the letters the teenage Wolfie wrote were filled with "crude jokes, puns, and obscenities", proving his mind was not always on matters musical.

As a grown up, Mozart didn't enjoy the

same success he had as a child prodigy. Despite penning over 600 works, he found it hard to earn money for his compositions, saw four of his six children die during infancy, and died in debt in 1791. Bizarre speculations abound concerning the cause of death, including one theory that he was poisoned by Antonio Salieri, a rival composer. Given his history of ill-health, however, either scarlet fever or kidney failure is seen as the most plausible cause.

Hmmm. Now here's my problem. How can I possibly describe Mozart's work on paper? "La ci darem la mano from Don Goavanni – it goes lah lalah la la LAH la. Well you'd know it if you heard it". No, that's not going to work. If this article has sparked off any interest in Mozart (no? oh well, can't blame me for trying) then his operas such as The Magic Flute or Figaro are as good a place as any to start. For the rest of you though, it will suffice to know that Mozart's style is best described as 'Classical'. "Now hang on there missy", I hear you complaining, "you started off by saying what a blanket term that was!" Indeed it has come to be misused as such, but 'classical' rightly refers to a particular style of composition practised by the likes of Mozart, Beethoven and Hadyn during the eighteenth century. It blended emotional fullness with clear and succinct style; one therefore wasn't going to be drowned in thunderous trumpet blasts. The enormous impact of Mozart and his posse can be seen in the fact that 'Classical' as a term has reached such prominence, referring to such a huge wealth of music. His father would have been proud.



# Hostels!

**Sadb Nic Fhionnbhairr shares her tips on avoiding hostel-related mental trauma**

Hostelling in Ireland has emerged from the Dark Ages, making now the time to shed the prejudices of your Scouting or youth club days. Clean, well-equipped establishments are to be found all over the country, at decent prices affordable to the average student.

As a rule of thumb, it's best to have a look at the rooms before parting with your hard-earned cash, as outward appearances can sometimes be deceptive. Avoid hostels with large communal showers and no cubicles or curtains (they do exist!), dirty bed linen and strict curfew rules. I always bring a huge sleeping bag and plenty of food, due to severe emotional scarring from bloodstained bedding in a Wicklow hostel at the tender age of 11. I've even carried my huge Arctic sleeping bag around Europe in summer. Food is essential when in scenic, isolated spots, as it's amazing how hungry going for walks and generally doing nothing makes you. In cities, it's less necessary, seeing as peo-

ple usually steal your food from the hostel fridge anyway.

Barnacles on Temple Street in Temple Bar, Dublin is everything you'd expect from a European hostel, with a central location, Internet access, television lounge, breakfast etc. The bedrooms are all en suite, and while the bathrooms are on the small side, it beats communal showers every time (unless you enjoyed that sort of thing at school).

Be wary of hostels that promote themselves on the Internet as luxury palaces with free laundry and Internet access. When you arrive and are told that the Internet is broken today and it's illegal to hang your clothes on the line, it's time to reconsider where you'll spend the night. My experience of such a hostel, where the rickety beds and queue to make tea in the microwave in the corridor (otherwise known as the kitchen) were features only surpassed by the realization that there were only two showers for the entire hostel. Only in Rome...

What you want in a hostel is a free breakfast. As you're budgeting (otherwise you'd be livin' it large in a B&B), one meal a day is taken care of, and there's the possibility of sly sandwich making. The very central Kinlay House in Eyre Square in Galway is a fully equipped hostel which serves a nice breakfast (ok, it's never amazing, but it's



Matt Pitt

Travel before you stagnate

free!) and is a nice place, with en suite rooms available. Breakfast is part of the bonding process with your fellow bleary-eyed backpackers. The staff are friendly, and didn't mind the serious session that went on when I stayed there, where ran-

dom musical instruments were hauled out and the alcohol flowed freely.

Some hostels frown on the consumption of alcohol, so it's best to check their policy if you want to indulge. Being Irish in a foreign hostel guarantees you a place in any drinking games. That particular hostel, Hostel Alessandro Downtown in Rome had free breakfast and unlimited drinks and bread all day, as well as free meals in local restaurants. Something Irish hostels could aspire to.

In Belfast, the Linen House Hostel on Kent Street, also called Paddy's Backpackers, is another nice place to stay. It's very central to the shopping district, with friendly staff and larger, dormitory rooms. Although you don't get breakfast, their 24-hour opening is a definite advantage. Kinlay House and Barnacles are also open all night, which is a godsend, as you won't end up walking the streets or sleeping in a random garden after missing the curfew. Which isn't nice as it's always wet here. You're there to explore the area, not to be in bed, lights out by eleven.

So remember; browse around before you book, keeping your eyes peeled for a late curfew and free breakfast. And, if all the nice places are full and you have to make do with a sub-standard one, your best bet is a warm sleeping bag and lots of food.

# Down and out in Paris

**Our man in Paris Beautrellis O'Grady has been drinking and drinking and drinking. Here are his top spots.**

Hitting the Paris hotspots, you'll be spoiled for choice if you start off from Odeon. It's teeming with cafés, brasseries, bars, and it's right in the centre of town. But you've got to look around before choosing, as prices can vary greatly. Neo Café isn't the best place to begin, for example. Its being dimly lit inside by orange and red lampshades won't stop you noticing that E4.80 is the cheapest you'll pay for a half pint (just a plain bière blanche; familiar names are dearer). Plenty of people will pay that much for a drink thinking it's unavoidable, 'what would you expect in Paris?' etc. But this isn't true.

The nearby Le Comptoir du Relais is more what you'd imagine when you think French cafés, offering you "vins de propriété & petits plats & tartines 'maison'". Prices are better here. A beer is E3.70 which, only a half pint, works out much dearer than anywhere in Dublin, but you drink more slowly here and there's no pressure to leave once you've finished; you could stay on for another half an hour without feeling that they want you to pay up. You're given a little saucer of peanuts to nibble on while you're chatting (a lot of places do this). Drink prices are based on whether you want to be at the counter or sitting down, the latter being costlier. There are quite a few mirrors on its walls, helping the small triangular floor space look a little larger (there are only ten tables in all), and there are plenty of prints of 1920s and '30s ads for coffee. You can sit outside too, where their row of tables is warmed by those tall mushroom-

like heaters, and the heat is kept in by a creamy canopy.

Les étages is always busy. It's pretty dear, kir and Martini are both E4, or E3.50 a short walk away. It specializes in cocktails, which are usually about E8.50. Heineken (50cl) is E6.80. They give you green olives to snack on while you drink, or maybe caramel-coated nuts. Seating isn't the best, chairs and tables are very low and you can find yourself sitting around a little stool-sized table trying to look comfortable. There's an upstairs too, and a well-heated space outside, which is nice, as it's on a very busy street with plenty happening: ice-cream shop, book stalls and postcard stands.

Across the river is the Marais, one of the oldest quarters in Paris, where streets are still narrow and winding. Le Rendez Vous des Amis is on the corner of Rue Croix de la Bretonnerie and Rue des Archives and is well worth checking out. Four lamps throw light onto the well-polished brass counter, winedark on the outside, in tone with the wall paint. The barman chats to a customer. Its stone and wood frame, its walls mostly obscured by posters for the theatre across the road, the Point Virgule, (some signed) its few photos, give the impression that it is a solid part of life on the street, not host to a rapid turnover of onceoffs. Most customers are eating as well as drinking, so every once and a while plates appear from the kitchen, clear white porcelain, glistening lettuce leaves, a bit of tomato here and there, some cheese, the hidden centre: meats or further salad. Wine to go with this, and bread



Get an eye-full of beautiful Paris

baskets. All customers are French. The music is unobtrusive, low playing jazz. Later the lead instrument changes from clarinet to harmonica. At 3.80 café crème isn't cheap; hot chocolate is the same. But for the relaxed, intimate setting it's well worth paying it a visit.

If you're going out for a big one Bastille is the place. For a few hours each evening you can enter happy hour land, E3 to E3.50 for a pint. Then on to one of the many nearby clubs. Like Que pasa a Cuban bar on Rue de Lappe. This street's full of bars: Latino, French, Onanist, an Egyptian shisha café and a club called the Titty Twister. Que pasa's got a happy hour that runs from 18ht to 21h30 with beers E2 and cocktails E4, but no food and louder music. It's got a Che Guevara poster thing going on, where every angle of his face is photographed with the never-absent cigar. Castro's there too, having a laugh. A few pictures of old cars and poor Cubans.

If you're going for suave there's La Merenda, just five minutes away. It's tiny, with room for only eighteen or twenty, but looks amazing inside. Redone after new management took it over in the last year it's run by a super-friendly bandanna and waistcoat wearing Italian, a cheese master and glad-hander, who will actually remember your name if you come a second time; a man who will refill your glass when you're about to pay your bill and charge you no extra. The music can start off a little dodgy, a bit of techno, which doesn't suit the surroundings, but then settles down to some Spanish guitar, sometimes live music, two French lads, harmonica and guitar, Django Reinhardt style. You're served a plate of bread with a creamy olive based spread or little biscuits kostenlos. With a bottle of wine costing E14 upwards it's ideal if you're in a small group.



# Dublin sober: is it worth it?

**Laura Fergusson does the capital on a shoestring**

Having just had a friend visiting from London for a weekend, followed by another friend's birthday the next week, I know quite a lot about entertainment in Dublin. I know that it involves dancing maniacally with people to whom one has not been formally introduced. I know that it involves Rick's Burgers, Apache Pizza or Zaytoon at hours of the morning when more respectable members of society are thinking about cornflakes. I know that it creates a fiery hole where once upon a time there was a wallet. And that it demands paracetamol in enough quantities to knock out a manatee.

On neither of the past two weekends have I experienced more than ten hours of daylight, so I have been spared the futility of wandering around town in search of an alcohol-free activity. Instead I have taken advantage of my decimated brain cells by finding it possible to derive entertainment from a day spent lying on a sofa watching my boyfriend play Playstation. Fortunately neither the visiting friend nor the suddenly older one seemed to require anything of the capital other than that it should provide a range of venues in which to imbibe dangerous amounts of behaviour-changing liquids, a demand which it more than succeeded in fulfilling. The result of this was that London friend was satisfied with a full Irish, a brief stroll around town, and the viewing of the digital evidence of the previous night's excess-

es as his Sunday activities, and as for Saturday, well, Friday having ended at 6am it didn't really feature.

So what is there to do in Dublin should your liver, your mother or your bank balance advise, heaven forbid, against alcohol? Well, there's always food. Although Dublin shows no sign of shunning the tradition that wherever God closes a

dent in my finances than alcoholism and can lead to obesity and gout, definite rivals of liver failure in the list of decidedly un-sexy medical complaints.

Free entertainment that does not involve consumption (of either definition, TB isn't particularly sexy either, except to fans of Victorian literature like myself, but we're weird), is slightly harder to come by.

Matt Pitt



In an extraordinary display of willpower, Laura ignores a Guinness

bank/school/post office, there He shall open a pub, it is now as likely to be a restaurant. Eating out is an addiction that I have cultivated to a disturbing degree since becoming a student, which is a bit worrying as it creates a far larger

There are, as described in previous issues of TNT, the buskers of Grafton Street. Trying to work out whether the screaming urchins are attempting a rendition of "Fields of Athenry", "Wild Rover", or "Father and Son" (by Cat Stevens, but

mysteriously established as Irish through its hijacking by Boyzone) can take up hours of your life, but you don't get them back and you'll quickly realise it doesn't make any difference anyway. Scary Blue Man, who kicks the bucket or whatever it is he does at strategic moments whenever I walk by off guard, always has a bizarrely avid crowd around him, so if you fancy finding out what illicit substance he's dosing them with I won't stop you (I'm too busy trying to run past before he stamps). Alternatively you can choose to be insulted by Dave Savage - the best results, it appears, are to be obtained by wearing hot pink and pushing a buggy.

Another option, which I discovered last summer, is to make yourself invisible by wearing a bright orange ISPCC bib and asking people for money. Although you miraculously reappear when American tourists confuse you with a talking map. It provides hours of appreciation of how it feels to be a lamppost, and can result in interesting conversations if you allow your mind to wander, as one acquaintance discovered when he asked an unsuspecting member of the public with a polite smile "Do you have a minute for sex?"

And if you get really bored you could join the ranks of sign writers. They fall into two categories: the official street sign creators, who do not deem it necessary to point out in which direction a particular city or motorway lies, but, I have it on good authority, are filling county Wicklow with arrows pointing out hedges of special interest; and those who assume the boundless stupidity of their fellow man, such as the sign currently displayed in the Screen cinema which reads "In the interests of hygiene please do not put tickets in your mouth". I leave the elucidation of my next equally complex transaction up to you, and if I keep using up my brain cells at this rate, I'll need it.

## The set list

**Ruth Patten ponders the mystery of the list'ching**

This time of the year, the inclination to leave your bed in the morning has generally left the country for a holiday in the sun. If, however, you are stuck with a New Year's resolution to do something a little bit cultural, here we give you something for most tastes to curb that annoying guilty feeling. First off, Parkinson favourite and young jazz impresario Jamie Cullum is playing the Olympia on Thursday 19th of February, which will not only provide ample entertainment but will also impress your Dad.

Singer David Kitt is in love. But as his new album shows, this does not make him either sappy or love-struck. His live experience is always something special and Saturday 13th of March at the Olympia will be no exception. For those of us vaguely sick of Scarlet Johansson's near constant presence on the silver screen these last few weeks, relief was found at the IFI (formerly IFC) cinemas. Japanese director Yasujiro Ozu's "Tokyo Story" is considered a masterpiece and rightly so. If nothing else, the subtle cinematography showed up Tom Cruise's much-lauded "The Last



We sift the layers of listings for gems

Samurai" to be the Hollywood fodder that it is. Sadly screenings ended Thursday 29th of January so if you missed it, a DVD or video replacement will have to do. Stock up on the sake and popcorn and make a night of it!

For those who wish to go all out and be ultra-civilized, the Project Theatre is currently staging the Irish premiere of David O'Hare's play "Skylight", a feast of reasonably well-known Irish talent with a fabulous script. Until February 7th, you can laugh and cry with the best of the Dublin literati and be the envy of all your friends. French electronic duo Air play the Olympia on the 15th of February. Their new album "Walkie Talkie" has a much more intimate edge than their last albums. The pair has definitely moved on from their heady synth days replacing the synthesizer with acoustic instruments and organic sounds. A fan or not, the concert looks to be the best of the year so far.

Louise Bourgeois is in her nineties but is still an impressively productive artist. Her new exhibition "Stitches in Time" at IMMA (Irish Museum of Modern Art, Kilmainham) is on until the 22nd of February. An insomniac, several of her drawings are nocturnally inspired, showing a sense of solidarity with many students' term essays.

Boston born but adopted Dubliner Josh Ritter plays yet another concert on Friday 13th of February, following close on the

heels of his Vicar Street gig before Christmas. This time his ever-growing legions of fans will fit into the Olympia Theatre on what's considered a very unlucky day, and for trivia hounds, the same day as Michael Jackson's next court hearing.

Unless you have been asleep for the past month, have no TV or radio or have just arrived from some far off place, (which, now that I think about it, is not that unusual), you would have heard of the Abbey Theatre centenary celebrations. The great National Theatre will soon be closing its doors to move to a new location and a chapter in Irish history will close (it sounds contrite but is sadly true.). Before all that happens however, Lady Gregory's famed stage will host many a night of comedy and tragedy in salutation of one hundred years of Irish drama. The repertoire is huge so go look up the various plays on offer and enjoy a piece of history before it moves to the docks.

Lastly in 1967 a great man named Chester Beatty bequeathed a massive collection of art to the Irish people. That's right, it's all ours and while the Oriental and Western Art collection may sound boring, it is a surprisingly beautiful and interesting national treasure. So get yourself down to the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin Castle and check it out for yourself, it is partly ours after all...

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