



### Taking Liberties by Leontia Flynn (Cape Poetry)

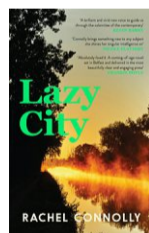
A lecturer at Queen's University, Leontia's powerful, humane poetry has been a favourite of the shop for quite some time. Her latest collection, *Taking Liberties*, is already a firm favourite, and is sure to be for a while. Themes of motherhood, travelling, urban life, anxiety and more are explored in meticulously crafted prose. In a collection full of highlights, the stunning *Nina Simone Is Singing* has pushed all other thoughts aside to set up a residency in my mind. Needless to say, if you are a fan of poetry, you owe it to yourself to give this a go.



### Lazy City by Rachel Connolly (Canongate)

Richly detailed, and full of a glorious sense of place, Rachel Connolly's debut novel lit up 2023. Erin returns to Belfast from London after the death of

a close friend. Estranged from her mother, she takes a job as an au pair and spends her nights trying to hide from her grief. Starting a relationship of sorts with a visiting American academic, things get complicated by the return of Mikey, an old flame who harks back to simpler times. Written in clear, precise prose, and full of a quiet longing, *Lazy City* captures beautifully that feeling of alienation when nowhere seems like home.



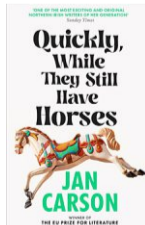
**Close To Home by Michael Magee (Hamish Hamilton)**  
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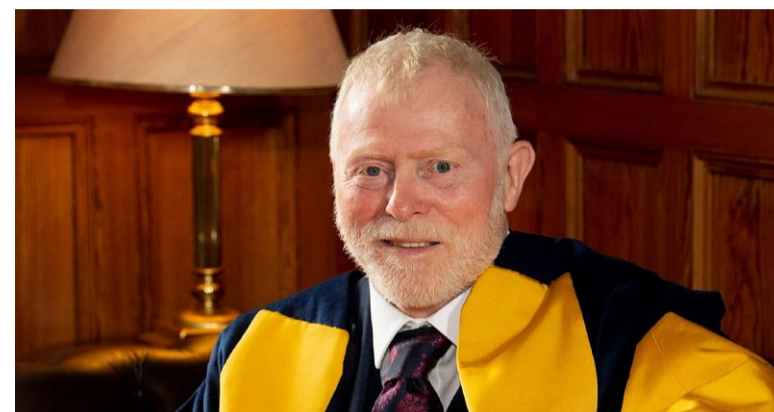
a supposed means of escape, Sean is drifting through a world of drink, drugs, and dead-end jobs. Sean is trying to hold things together, but the spectre of a moment of violence hangs heavy over his head. Instantly engaging, and beautifully crafted, *Close To Home* is one of those rare beasts, in that it is a book which every single staff member loved.

### Quickly, While They Still Have Horses by Jan Carson (Doubleday) Forthcoming April 2024

A new book by Jan Carson is always received with glee here at No Alibis Bookstore. Her new short story collection, *Quickly, While They Still Have Horses*, is another case in point. The book's sixteen stories feature distracted parents, a troubling rumour at a swimming pool, a father who loses his sons at an adventure park, and lots more. Out in April 2024, this is already promising to be one of 2024's must reads.



## MY LIFE IN BOOKS: FRANK ORMSBY



### THE CHILDHOOD BOOK THAT I CANNOT FORGET

At primary school we had a number of periods of silent reading each week and that is when I first came across *The Diary of Anne Frank*, a book that has never lost its power. The silence of the classroom evoked the tension and fear of Anne's Amsterdam attic and, over fifty years later, inspired me to write a poem, *Silent Reading*, in which I recall how Anne, whose "name was half my own", cast a youthful shadow over my imagination.



### MY FAVOURITE CLASSIC READ

For plotting and characterisation, for skill in drawing in the reader, for complexity on every level it would be hard to beat *Middlemarch* by George Eliot. It is subtitled *A Study of Provincial Life* and it is a formidable portrait of a whole community in Victorian England.



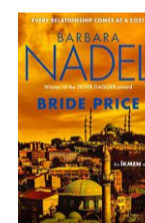
### THE BOOK I RECOMMEND TO OTHERS

The book I recommend to others is *The Great Gatsby* by F Scott Fitzgerald which portrays the hedonistic excesses of American society in the years preceding the Wall Street Crash. It is compact, beautifully written and in its use of imagery reads like a prose poem.



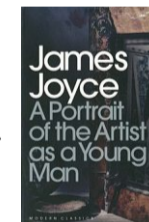
### FAVOURITE AUTHOR

I am a voracious reader of crime fiction, particularly novels with foreign settings as they also immerse the reader in the culture and mindset of their environments. For example Barbara Nadel's books, set in Istanbul, Donna Leon's novels, set in Venice and James Lee Burke's books, set in Louisiana.



### THE BOOK THAT'S MADE THE MOST IMPACT

I read James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* when I was an undergraduate at Queen's, beginning to lose my faith in Catholicism and to find my way to poetry. I wrote several chapters of a novel in direct imitation of Joyce, but later abandoned it when I realised that it was mere pastiche.



### MY COMFORT READ

As an agnostic I cannot turn to the Bible for comfort, but there is a rich tradition in many languages of poems about death, and at times of bereavement I believe that poetry can provide solace and a sense of shared experience. The anthology *Do Not Go Gentle: poems for funerals* edited by Neil Astley is a wonderful compendium of poems about loss, including classics by Christina Rossetti, Dylan Thomas and John Donne and the anonymous *Do not stand at my grave and weep*.



### THE BOOK FROM WHICH I TAKE INSPIRATION

The early collections of Seamus Heaney and Michael Longley inspired a whole generation of Ulster poets, myself included. Heaney's *Death of a Naturalist*, with its emphasis on 'digging' as a metaphor for exploring family relationships and local history, gave me the confidence to write about my own rural background, while Longley's *No Continuing City*, with its connections to such diverse subjects as classical literature, the natural world and his father's experiences at the Somme, encouraged me to look beyond my immediate experience for inspiration.

Seamus Heaney  
*Death of a Naturalist*



In *The World Unmade: Writings from the Ireland Chair of Poetry* (UCD Press), Frank Ormsby explores the poetic diversity of Northern Ireland, with a particular focus on the poetry of the Troubles. He draws on his own experience as editor of a literary magazine and a number of anthologies. He also explores the structuring of his next collection, *The Tumbling Paddy*, which extends the range of his most recent poems. He retains a sharp eye for the absurdities and fragilities of history, as well as its impact on the present.