

## All Over Ireland: New Irish Short Stories

**Deirdre Madden, Editor**

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*The focus on Irish themes proves the adage that the local is the universal. These are stories that concern us all.*

*All Over Ireland* features fourteen short stories by contemporary Irish writers, stories in which emigration is a recurring theme and relationships are dislocated by illness and death, social inequality, and family secrets. In short, the collection covers the full human catastrophe.

Characters gather at funerals and garden parties, in front rooms, and at faded beach resorts. Or, like the woman who becomes increasingly unbalanced in the aftermath of her husband's murder in Frank McGuinness's haunting "The Widow's Ferret," they're isolated by politics.

Kathleen Murray's "They'll Best You with Fun," about a crew cleaning up a protest against clerical child abuse, is also political, though her tone is darkly comic. Family history repeats itself in Michael Gilligan's "Absent" when a young teenager deals with his father's death, and again in Selina Guinness's "The Weather Project" when an Irish woman on a trip to London with her grown daughters recalls secrets from her life in that same city over a half century earlier.

While many of the stories are contemporary, the moving final story, "The Journey to Galway," by Colm Tóibín, is set during World War I and is based upon events in the life of Lady Gregory, a friend of Yeats's and a cofounder of the Abbey Theatre. A mother learns of her son's death and travels to Galway to inform his wife. The story is a meditation on the before and after in a time of grief: "It came to her as a story that had been told and retold rather than a brutal single fact."

*All Over Ireland* includes a mix of new and established writers, and each of its stories are published for first time in this volume. Not all stories reach excellence, but the focus on Irish themes proves the adage that the local is the universal. These are stories that concern us all.

KAREN ACKLAND (Winter 2017)

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