The Id In Skiddy

Johnny Gogan

I BELIEVE YOU know Sam Beckett?

Professor Paddy Jenkins turned on his heel with nothing like the style he had demonstrated to the meeting and looked at the young man addressing him in such familiar terms with scant recognition even though it was only five minutes since they had parted company. Skiddy knew a narcissist when he saw one and prided himself on the timing of his ambush, on the traffic island corner of Parnell Street and Square. Jenkins looked surprisingly spooked. Maybe he thought Skiddy was some knacker about to mug him.

— Well yes in fact I have had the acquaintance of Mister Beckett.

Skiddy was aware from press reports of the Beckett biography in hand.

— Of all your books, this sounds the most promising.

— It does?

Jenkins was clearly not used to being summed up by one of such youth and low standing in the world of poetry. Skiddy had to watch his step. Jenkins looked anxious for the green man to let him off the island in the direction of the Gate Theatre where he was to attend a pre-performance drinks reception for the celebrated author of Jaded! a West End hit the London critics had hailed as a masterpiece of political satire and which was now being rolled out to provincial outlets. Jenkins feared in the tendencious title a diatribe against a failing leader for whom he held a creeping if unfashionable regard. For reasons of profile he needed to attend . The premature resolution of the bizarre affair he had just escaped had left him in a quandary: run the gauntlet of drug addicts and general undesirables on O'Connell Street back to Trinity or arrive unfashionably early for the reception? Suddenly, the entreaties of this insolent youth to enter Conway's Public House appeared attractive.

— I'd say he's a cranky get. You'd have to be to write with that spleen.

— Excuse me?

— Beckett?

— Au contraire. One must not confuse the artist with the art.

Spare me that duality nonsense, Skiddy thought, and considered saying so when the prowling barman caught his eye at 20 paces.

He couldn't help notice how shy of this same contact the well-heeled professor proved. Never mind. Skiddy would be paid the morrow for the hatchet job on the tax-dodging property hoarding proprietors of the poetry collective building. "The Ceaucescus of Georgiana" he had dubbed the unwitting Overend family. Serves them fucking right.

Perhaps he had primed Jenkins too well with the Beckett prompt. The man didn't draw breath on the subject of Beckett for another 15 minutes, nor did he drink very much, which was even more worrying because Skiddy was down to the dregs. He realised he needed to be a little more attentive and this distracted him from the pint issue. The more he listened the better the idea he was getting about the mind-set of Professor Jenkins who he was damn sure, despite mention of "a jury of eminent professionals", would be the final arbiter of the Martin Meaney Memorial Medal+Money.

The above is an extract from Ghost Writers published in 2010

Abstract

Dublin 1988

Against the backdrop of a city approaching the end of a long decline, the impoverished poets of the Dublin Poetry Collective are preparing to do battle for a paltry poetry prize commemorating recently deceased poet Martin Meaney.

Rosa believes that the abandoned Hi Brasil hotel, which serves as home for herself, Jack and the rest of the Collective, is being targeted by supernatural forces, possibly the ghosts of Jack's recently deceased parents. Jack remains unaware of the sleepwalking this loss has inspired in him. He is more concerned with the grief from local small time criminal Terry Crowe.

Meanwhile, fellow poet S K Dee has designs on the prize and on Rosa. When he sends Jack out on a wild goose chase to the edge of the Pale in search of a sulking and elusive west of Ireland poet, the scene is set for a shake-out among poets.

Johnny Gogan is a writer-director of many fiction films and documentaries including the feature films The Last Bus Home and Mapmaker. For the past ten years he has been active in developing film activities in Leitrim through Cinema North West and has more recently become a director of the Irish Film Board, the national film promotion and development agency

DROMAHAIR'S ALL IRELAND FINALISTS

Two Dromahair people were All-Ireland finalist at this year's Tullamore Show held in August.

Michael McGoldrick of Kilcoosey, Dromahair has already been crowned the Bord Bia All Ireland Potato Growing Champion on three occasions. Having ended his reign he was delighted when he was awarded the runner up position at this year's show.

Michael explained that this was a very difficult year where horticulture was concerned due to the wet season we had.

Elisabeth Sanwo from Dromahir was also at Tullamore. She was representing the area in the Centra Home Baking Championship. Dromahair is very proud of their two champions and we will have our eyes firmly fixed on their progress at next year's all Ireland events.