

05 Using creative arts practice to help children

Deirdre Madden

Like more traditional forms of research, fiction extends our knowledge of ourselves and society. It has been noticeable during the Covid-19 Pandemic how many people have had recourse to the arts, including literature, to help them process and assimilate the situation.

I am currently working on a book for children about serious illness. I have several aims in writing this novel. I believe it is helpful for children to see their own experience reflected in fiction, and that that in itself is reassuring and validating, even when the outcome is not what one would wish for. I am trying to keep the terms of reference as open as possible, so that the novel will accommodate the different values of different readers, and in this way might serve as a template to talk to children about these subjects, including children who are themselves seriously ill. I also, of course, very much hope that children will simply find the novel engaging and enjoyable, and to that end have used a strong narrative line and as much humour as I can manage. I believe strongly in the resilience and wisdom of children and that it necessary to respect this when writing for them.

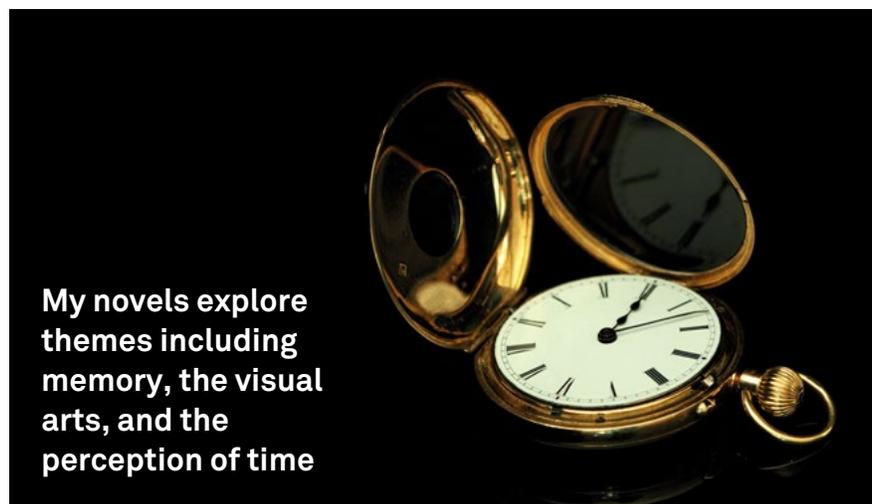
This book, and its concern with the medical humanities, will form a new strand to the work I have already produced – eight novels for adults and three for children, all published by Faber and Faber. My novels explore themes including memory, the visual arts, and the perception of time.

In the past ten years I have published two books. *Time Present and Time Past* (2013) is a novel, a family story which is concerned with early colour photography and how it can be an imaginative portal to the past. In 2015 I was commissioned by Faber and Faber to edit 'All Over Ireland' an anthology of new Irish short stories. This book included work by established writers, such as Colm Tóibín and Frank McGuinness, and also new and emerging writers, including Andrew Fox and Eileen Casey, both of whom were students of mine on the MPhil in Creative Writing in the Oscar Wilde Centre.

As a writer working in the School of English, I have for many years found myself in the position of both

teaching and having my work taught at undergraduate and postgraduate level in Trinity, as colleagues have included some of my novels on the curriculum.

Although Creative Writing has been taught in Trinity since 1997, the idea that the writing of fiction might be considered as research is a relatively recent idea in the College. Creative Arts Practice is now a recognised research theme, and is closely intermeshed with more traditional critical practice in the university. This fusion of the critical and the artistic is evidenced in undergraduates in the School of English now being able to present creative writing for their Capstone project, and in the School's new PhD in Literary Practice.



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Deirdre Madden studied English at Trinity College Dublin and has an MA in Creative Writing from the University of East Anglia. In 1997 she was Writer Fellow in Trinity and she is a member of Aosdána. She has won many awards for her work including the Rooney Prize, the Somerset Maugham award and a Hennessy Lifetime Achievement Award. Since 2004 she has been teaching in Trinity, both at undergraduate level and on the MPhil in Creative Writing in the Oscar Wilde Centre. Deirdre was elected Fellow of Trinity College Dublin in 2021. Contact: dmadden@tcd.ie



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