

Boy joins Collins's loyal inner circle

Writer Dermot McEvoy has gathered a great deal of information about Michael Collins over the years. For instance, did you know that the Big Fellow met in 1915 a certain Swiss-based Russian émigré named V.I. Lenin at an economics conference in London.

All of this knowledge is the reason he wrote "The 13th Apostle," a novel.

"I didn't want to take to the grave with me," said McEvoy, who has spent most of his career in publishing, both as a publicist and a journalist. "It took me four years, but 600 pages later it's here and I'm so happy I did it."

"The 13th Apostle," which draws on his mother's family's story, is a look at Michael Collins through the eyes of a Dublin boy who first meets him as a 14-year-old in the GPO in 1916. Eoin Kavanagh and his family are rescued from the slums by Collins in 1917, when he becomes the Big Fellow's secretary. Eoin is the leader's side until his death in an ambush in West Cork on Aug. 22, 1922.

"Eoin also has an afterlife. He becomes the congressman representing Greenwich Village and the West Side of Manhattan," said McEvoy, who himself left Dublin at age 4, grew up in the Village and graduated from Hunter College. "After JFK's death, he returns to Ireland and is elected to Dáil Éireann, thus becoming the only person in history or fiction to serve in both chambers. He dies in Dublin in 2006 at the age of 105, a rebel to the very end."

DERMOT MCEVOY

Date of birth: Oct. 7, 1950

Place of birth: Hollis Street Hospital, Dublin



Dermot McEvoy.

Spouse: none

Children: none

Residence: Jersey City, N.J.

Published works: "Terrible Angel: A Novel of Michael Collins in New York" (2002), "Our Lady of Greenwich Village" (2008), "The 13th Apostle" (2014), "The Little Green Book of Irish Wisdom" (2014), "Irish Miscellany" (2014).

What is your writing routine? Are there ideal conditions?

I can write anywhere. I like to write early in the morning and I like to be finished by noon, if possible – something that Kurt Vonnegut was fond of saying. I find the secret to writing is to get words on paper and don't let roadblocks stop you. If you come to a roadblock, write

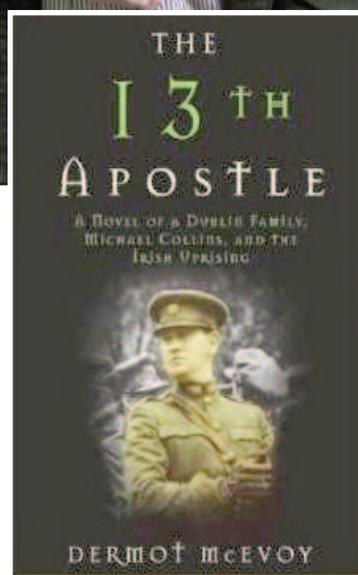
around it. The solution to your roadblock will eventually come to you, but don't let it delay you.

What advice do you have for aspiring writers?

I find that my life experience was essential to my writing. All writers are different, but I found that I needed more life experience to finally write the novels I wanted to write. I started my first novel when I was 32 and couldn't finish it.

Novel writing, particularly, is a learning experience. Luckily, I had great mentors, like Joe Flaherty of the Village Voice, and friends like Vince Patrick ("The Pope of Greenwich Village"), Lanford Wilson, who won the Pulitzer Prize for his plays, and David Markson, one of the best novelists of the 20th century. I met all these guys at the Lion's Head saloon on Christopher Street and it was like a graduate course in writing. The thing I miss most is not having writer friends to commiserate with at the end of the writing day.

One of my fellow "writing acolytes" at the Lion's Head was a schoolteacher named Frank McCourt. I knew Frank from the middle-'70s. He would sit around with the rest of us as Flaherty, Markson and Pete Hamill talked and you could tell he ached to be a writer and get his book on the Lion's Head's famed writer's wall.



'70s. Joe's novel "Fogarty & Company," still stands up and there's a laugh and tear on every page.

What book are you currently reading?

David Markson's "The Last Novel," a wonderful experimental work, different than most novels in that it is made up of historical vignettes.

Is there a book you wish you had written?

That's a tough one, but how about Richard Ellman's bio of Joyce, simply a brilliant book—and it reads like a novel.

Name a book that you were pleasantly surprised by.

"All in the Blood" by Geraldine Plunkett, the sister of Joseph Mary Plunkett, shot in 1916.

If you could meet one author, living or dead, who would it be?

Oliver St. John Gogarty. Not only was he the avatar for "Stately Plump Mulligan" in "Ulysses," but he was a personal friend of Griffith and Collins and, in fact, embalmed both of them. Plus he knew every creative mind in the first part of the 20th century. He was involved in all kinds of scandals and spent the last 20 years of his life in New York City. Just a fascinating character

What book changed your life?

Maybe "Ulysses." I first read it in college and it opened up much to me about novel writing and also about Dublin, my hometown.

What is your favorite spot in Ireland?

The early morning streets of Dublin where I retrace the footsteps of not only Michael Collins, but of my mother's family. The amazing thing about Dublin, even with all the new construction, is that the extant Dublin of Collins, and Joyce, is largely intact. After the walk, I like to sit in Collins's snug at the Stag's Head and drink, quietly.

You're Irish if...

You are outraged by social injustice and root for the underdog. Anyone with the terrible history of the Irish – poverty, immigration, famine, occupation, revolution – who can't root for other people in similar situations should be ashamed of themselves.

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The Irish Echo Quiz Answers

1. Strongbow
2. Soccer
3. Flatiron
4. Kosovo
5. Washington
6. John Grisham
7. Gold
8. Bolivia
9. 1963
10. Maeve Brennan.