

Where did the love go?

It began with a 'Be-in' and ended with violence: the inside story of 1967 and the so-called 'summer of love'

HISTORY

John Walsh

In Search of the Lost Chord 1967 and the Hippie Idea by Danny Goldberg Icon £14.99 pp317

It was, famously, the year of love and peace: when the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco drew a multitude of young groovers seeking an "alternative lifestyle", when 30,000 stoned hippies filled the Golden Gate Park for a "Human Be-in", when the Beatles' All You Need Is Love became the first global broadcast, when everyone wore flowers in their hair and smoked pot in the sunshine, and the Man of the Year cover of Time magazine went to the whole generation of "Twenty-five and Under".

But 1967 was also the year when race riots shook America, the Vietnam War escalated despite constant protests, Muhammad Ali was stripped of his world heavyweight boxing title for refusing military service, gun-toting Black Panthers invaded the state capital building in Sacramento and Charles Manson set up his homicidal "family". The best of times, then, and the worst.

For Danny Goldberg, despite the dark forces, it was a golden era. A successful record company boss at Warners and Atlantic, he was 16 in 1967, a kid "mesmerised" by the nascent subculture, fired by the music, giddy with drugs and entranced by "the invisible force" behind the tie-dyed clothes. He detected a tribal intimacy, a "communal sweetness", among young people looking for a better value system than capitalist success and suburban

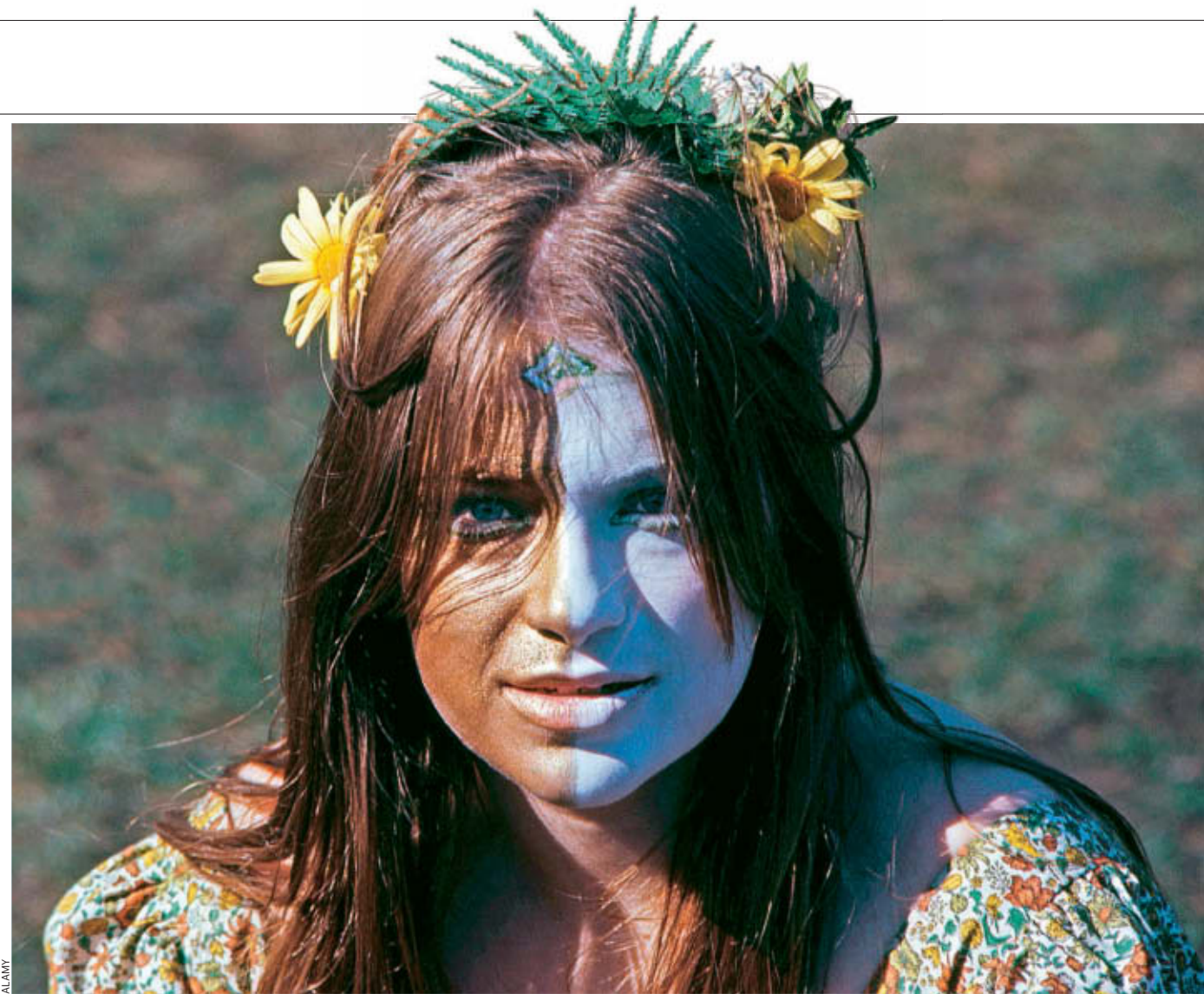
conformity. He talks of a "lost chord" of energies that together formed the "hippie idea". This book sets out to identify its constituent notes.

In doing so, he ranges far from 1967, delving into American "change-agents" since 1954 and key figures of music, politics, religion and philosophy from all over the place. In a few pages he co-opts Elvis, James Dean, Marlon Brando, Marilyn Monroe, JD Salinger, Jack Kerouac (who hated hippies), Alfred Kinsey, Aldous Huxley, Bertrand Russell, Dylan, Jean-Luc Godard, Federico Fellini and Alec Guinness. We're not finding a "chord" of notes here, more a Babel Tower of cacophonous voices.

The word "counterculture" dings through this book as Goldberg teases out the rise of disparate socio-artistic tendencies: anti-authority films such as *Alfie* and *Bonnie and Clyde*, "freak"-friendly TV shows and radio DJs; wiggled-out music from the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane and Jimi Hendrix; a fervour for Hinduism, Buddhism, indeed any mysticism that wasn't embraced by one's parents; "underground" magazines for the groovy faithful; a fascination for Native Americans' way of life; and above all, a devotion to LSD.

One unsung hero of the year is Augustus Owsley Stanley III, a chemist, who helped the January "Be-in" go with a swing by supplying 300,000 free LSD tablets to the crowd, and 75 turkeys from which free sandwiches would be made – a contemporary Jesus with the 1967 equivalent of loaves and fishes.

Goldberg likes to include everyone in his "hippie idea" even when the fit is awkward. Concerning the Beatles' Sgt Pepper album, he writes:



Flowers in her hair Easter Be-in, Central Park, above, and Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco, 1967, below

"She's Leaving Home was the definitive song about hippie runaways, written from the idealistic point of view of a teenage girl looking for life's meaning." Really? I thought she was meeting a man from the motor trade.

But he's slyly subversive about the apocalyptic notions of self-styled "hippie elders". In February 1967, Allen Ginsberg, Timothy Leary and the British Zen master Alan Watts held a summit on



Watts's houseboat in Sausalito, to discuss "the whole problem of whether to drop out or take over". Leary predicted that when enough young people had dropped out, there would "be deer grazing in Times Square in 40 years". Meanwhile, several hippie weeklies united to form the Underground Press Syndicate among whose "statement of values" was: "Warn the 'civilised world' of its impending collapse... Prepare the American public for the wilderness... Fight a holding action in dying cities."

Running counter to the hippies, with their dreams of communal living, were the palpably un-dreamy antiwar movement and the civil-rights organisations that flourished, argued, marched and rioted throughout 1967. Goldberg is fascinating on the origins of political activism, from the Cold War peace movement and the fallout from the Korean War (in which US youth were drafted 15 years before Vietnam) to the black-power struggles of Malcolm X (pro-violence) and

Martin Luther King Jr (very much anti-) and the birth of organised protest in Students for a Democratic Society and the National Organisation for Women.

Protest became as much part of the zeitgeist as long hair, but the activists, black and white, split into chronically argumentative cabals. Political discussion was never as effective as personal testimony or televised action. Ali's refusal to fight legitimised the antiwar movement, as much as the Beatles legitimised the ingesting of LSD. And the only time that liberals, radicals and counterculture hippies joined forces was in the march on Washington on October 21.

As hundreds continued to pour into Haight-Ashbury, the summer of love degenerated. "Love burgers" went on sale. Sightseers took snaps of the stoned youth as though visiting a zoo. Drug dealers proliferated. Girls from the provinces found the hippie dream meant being pumped with drugs and gang-raped. In October, a fake funeral for

"Hippie, devoted son of Mass Media" saw a coffin full of beads, incense and flowers carried through the streets and ritually burnt. New York intellectuals shook their heads over "the inability of pathetically unequipped children to create a community in a social vacuum" (Joan Didion).

Goldberg ends his compendious, if unfocused, *tour d'horizon* of 1960s culture with defiance: the premise that justified the Vietnam War was wrong, the back-to-the-land movement led Steve Jobs to develop a global network, environmentalism was a product of the late 1960s etc. It's cheering to read, though, that his final summing-up retains a dreamily wistful note: "The hippie idea of prioritising peace and love above all else was bigger than money, bigger than fear, bigger than sex, bigger than drugs, bigger than war, and bigger than the Beatles, but it wasn't a gateway into a new age; just a flash to indicate that something different was possible." Absolutely, man. ■

Unsung hero of Dev's state

John Hearne's pragmatism is credited with liberalising de Valera's vision of a Catholic republic in the 1937 constitution

HISTORY

Richard Pine

John Hearne Architect of the 1937 Constitution of Ireland by Eugene Broderick Irish Academic Press €29.99 pp362

If you thought John Charles McQuaid dictated the 1937 constitution with a papal encyclical in one hand and Éamon de Valera in the other, this account of its real creator, the barrister John Hearne, will be a sobering, instructive and cautionary tale.

McQuaid did make strenuous efforts to influence the draft, which was seen by the Pope, who did not approve. Yet Eugene Broderick shows that Hearne's "liberal Catholicism" ultimately held sway. While McQuaid and Rome might have written a declaratory constitution, Dev and Hearne made a more exploratory, aspirational statement of a society in flux.

Broderick has described, in detail, every stage of the Irish constitution from conception to referendum. He makes it clear this was a joint effort by Dev and Hearne, a legal adviser in the Department of External Affairs. In fact, Dev privately acknowledged Hearne as "architect in chief" while publicly taking sole credit for the political achievement of rescinding the Anglo-Irish treaty.

Born in 1893, Hearne came from a commercial, pro-treaty Waterford family involved in local politics. Educated by the Christian Brothers, he spent six years studying for the priesthood before switching to law. As a product of a conservative, provincial, Catholic bourgeoisie, he might seem a strange choice of workmate for Dev. Yet, as Jeffrey Prager showed in

his 1986 study *Building Democracy in Ireland*, there was an intelligent recognition by this "middle Ireland" that anti-treaty republicans led by Dev had to be accommodated within the state. Hearne's political turning point was his acknowledgement that the 1922 constitution was not "by Irishmen for Irishmen" and therefore not a reliable basis for a new sovereign state.

In the 1950s Hearne stated: "We adopted the most comprehensive code of Christian political principles and Christian social doctrine ever erected into a system of government." Broderick comments that this was "the encapsulation of the essence of a people by virtue of enshrining their philosophy of life". A romantic claim, perhaps, in light of the judicial reviews of the constitution that followed.

A constitution is only as successful as it is amenable to change. There were no substantial amendments until 1972, which may say more about the tensions building within Irish society than about the document itself. Insofar as articles 40-45 describe "the democratic foundation of the state" – Dev's words – many constitutional cases pinpointed problems with "fundamental rights" which have had to be identified and debated ever since. While "enumerated" rights include individual liberty, and freedom of expression, assembly, association and conscience, others are "unenumerated" and had to be

Hidden hand

De Valera took the credit for John Hearne's work

considered by judges in the X case of 1992, on abortion, and the trial of Gail O'Rourke in 2015, on assisted suicide.

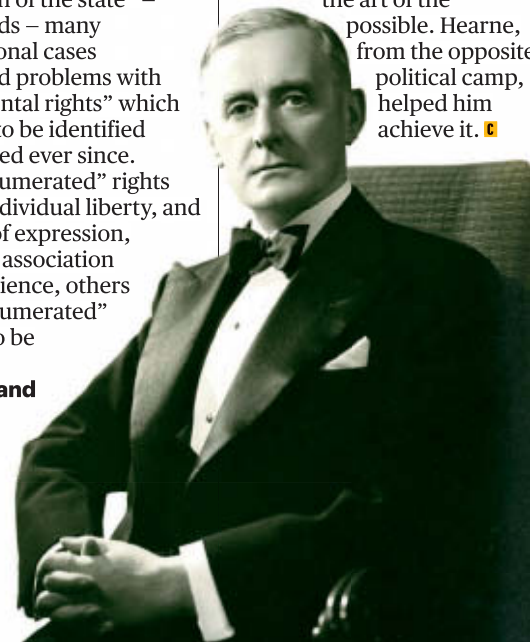
There are grey areas that can never be legislated for. The right to die and the right to be born – pillars of our existence – continue to elude us. Broderick stresses that Hearne saw the constitution as reflective of social change; one of his big achievements was to turn the original idea of a constitutional court into article 26, which allows the president to refer bills to the Supreme Court.

In recognition of his work on the constitution, Hearne was appointed Irish high commissioner to Canada in 1939-49 and Irish ambassador to Washington in 1950-60. He died in 1969. This is not a biography and it could have benefited from more detail about his family life and interests. He appears to have been an eloquent public speaker – much of his commentary on drafting the constitution was contained in speeches in Canada and the US.

The judges Gerard Hogan and Susan Denham have recognised the previously unsung heroism of Hearne in taking instruction from Dev while assisting him in constructing a document which achieved a middle ground characterised by a liberal, nationalist ethos, rather than by the extremes of religion and republicanism.

In effect, 1937 marked a seismic shift in Irish polity. In dismantling the state born in 1922, Dev achieved his vision of an independent republic, but he and McQuaid had to concede to

the art of the possible. Hearne, from the opposite political camp, helped him achieve it. ■



MUST READS OUR CHOICE OF THE BEST RECENT BOOKS

Your Life in My Hands

by Rachel Clarke (Metro £16.99): a junior doctor's clear-eyed account of life in the NHS

The Force

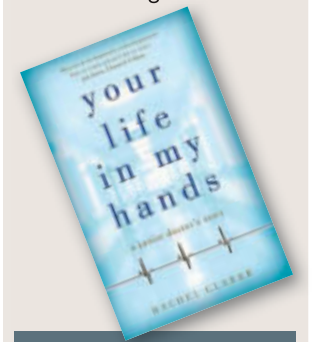
by Don Winslow (HarperCollins £18.99): a superlative cop thriller tracing the downfall of an NYPD detective

Do Not Become Alarmed

by Maile Meloy (Viking £8.99): the children of two families taking a luxury holiday cruise go missing in this compelling literary thriller

I Found My Tribe

by Ruth Fitzmaurice (Chatto £14.99): wild swimming and family trauma in one of the year's most arresting memoirs



BOOK EVENTS WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE LITERARY WORLD

Harrogate Theakston Old Peculier Crime Writing Festival, July 20-23; with Lee Child, Ian Rankin and Kathy Reichs. For details, telephone 01423 562 303

Heswall Carol Drinkwater presents her new novel, *The Lost Girl*, at Lingham's, Telegraph Road, July 27, 6.30pm, £5 (0151 342 7290)

St Andrews Bernard MacLaverty talks about his new novel, *Midwinter Break*, at The Bookshop, Greyfriars Garden, August 15, 8pm, £5. For details, visit toppingbooks.co.uk

Good lovin' soul man

Michael Harding wrestles with faith and storytelling but finds solace in his beloved

SPIRITUALISM

Richard Pine

On Tuesdays I'm a Buddhist by Michael Harding Hachette Ireland £13.99 pp227

Michael Harding and I have a few things in common. We both write a column for The Irish Times. We both spent several years in psychotherapy. We both live in rural villages and share a distrust of shopping malls. The similarities stop there.

Harding was ordained in 1981 at the age of 28 and left the priesthood four years

later. He is the author of important plays and works of fiction of a spiritual insistence. He claims he was defeated not by loss of faith in God but loss of faith in the church's refusal to embrace liberation theology. He has been liberated for 24 years by an unnamed woman he calls "the beloved".

His purpose in this book is "to confront the question of faith", something he started with a collection of stories, Priest (1986). Harding is, and always has been, a deeply spiritual person. As a record of an ex-priest's searching for his own soul, this is a disturbing and passionate

book. But as an example of a 64-year-old writer giving us his views of the modern world it is a string of banalities. "Nothing is ever what it seems," he says. My neighbour Vangelis comes out with platitudes like this but nobody asks him to compile them into a book entitled On Thursdays I'm a Swami.

It is clear that Harding recognised his psychotherapist as a fellow "priest" to whom he confessed his longings rather than his sins; the ex-priest and the pseudo-priest in symbiotic captivity. But he never got the absolution he craves and stopped therapy because he couldn't get the therapist to talk to him. He should have met Ivor Browne, who might have done the same service he did for the playwright Tom Murphy in 1987 – just when Harding was in most dire need of a priestly figure he could actually trust.

As a child, Harding suffered the fear "of being alone, isolated and unloved". At the centre of his life is a gaping hole where love and God ought to be. He still suffers from "the enduring loneliness

I feel about God", even though he has a wife, cats, a beautiful place to live, an icon his wife brought back from Poland, and the haunting presence of the chalice used at his ordination.

At one point Harding tries to throw the chalice into the sea, believing this would consummate his liberation from the priesthood, but fails. He could not throw it away because it symbolises the myth of transubstantiation – the metaphor necessary for the ritual of Jesus the storyteller. So he recommended therapy sessions.

Harding combats his loneliness and lack of love by telling stories. Nothing original in that. Jesus also made sense of the world in stories, which we know as parables. We all invent stories to make life livable. Harding didn't make it as a priest because he found himself on the wrong side of the confessional. His role in life is as a storyteller.

Lonely avenue Harding has a hole in his life where God and love should be



“If I were Harding's wife, I'd whack him with the icon

“Every time we are healed, there will arise another itch beneath the surface gnawing at us,” he says. Brian Friel put it better when he said: “You delve into a particular corner of yourself that's dark and uneasy and you articulate the confusions and unease of that particular period. When you do that, that's finished and you acquire other corners of unease and discontent.” Writers, priests, teachers – all have this sense of vocation and this inner need to confess.

If Harding is still in search of a god, it seems that god must be a woman. Women “understand other people without inquiring or asking blunt questions. They know things men don't. And they always know how movies will

end”. Women – and not just “the beloved” – have been “the warp and weft of all my spiritual longing”. So it wasn't the lack of liberation theology that forced him out of the priesthood, but the prison of celibacy? “The beloved” becomes a substitute for God, “a shelter where joy becomes plausible for a short while”. If I were Harding's wife, I'd whack him with the icon for such arrogance.

He calls Donald Trump's tweets “the distorted rhetoric of a poet manqué”. Little does he realise how well the description fits himself. “Surely there are just three great questions in life: Who am I? Who are you? Who are we?” Harding says, as if he had made a big discovery. Didn't Aristotle try that one a while ago? Didn't RD Laing write a manual about it?

This book merely confirms that everyone has the same difficulty in giving voice to their anxieties. “After all this is said and done, I must confess that I have found neither wisdom nor truth in this life. Only stories.”

Not a bad answer. Not a bad vocation. **■**

THE SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLERS

Lists prepared by and data supplied by and copyright to Nielsen BookScan, taken from the TCM for the week ending 16/12/17. Figures shown are estimated sales for the seven-day period followed (in brackets) by the estimated total sale since BookScan records began in 1998.

*Includes sales of more than one edition in the same format and at the same RRP.

GENERAL HARDBACKS		Last week	Weeks in top 10
1	Blue Planet II / <i>James Honeyborne and Mark Brownlow</i> (BBC £25) A view of the oceanic world; accompanies the television series 33,325 (134,600)	1	7
2	Only Fools and Stories / <i>David Jason</i> (Century £20) Actor looks back on some of the best-loved characters of his career 26,845 (141,770)	2	11
3	Me. You. A Diary / <i>Dawn French</i> (M Joseph £20) Entries covering ageing and life through the seasons 24,410 (76,560)	6	5
4	Ask an Astronaut / <i>Tim Peake</i> (Century £20) Astronaut's guide to life in space, based on his time in orbit 20,690 (102,375)	4	9
5	Reveal: Robbie Williams / <i>Chris Heath</i> (Blink £20) Portrait of the musician and entertainer 17,500 (60,900)	3	5
6	Women & Power: A Manifesto / <i>Mary Beard</i> (Profile £7.99) Classicist examines how history has treated powerful women 15,885 (50,540)	9	6
7	Jenson Button: Life to the Limit / <i>Jenson Button</i> (Blink £20) British racing driver lifts the lid on his 17 years in Formula One 12,340 (86,690)	8	9
8	The World Cup of Everything / <i>Richard Osman</i> (Coronet £14.99) From the best Disney film to the best crisps 12,075 (46,770)	5	4
9	Paul O'Grady's Country Life / <i>Paul O'Grady</i> (Bantam Press £20) The author's life in the country with his animals 12,040 (64,500)	7	7
10	How to Be Champion / <i>Sarah Millican</i> (Trapeze £20) Comedian confronts life's challenges in her autobiography 11,325 (60,365)	13	9

GENERAL PAPERBACKS		Last week	Weeks in top 10
1	Sapiens / <i>Yuval Noah Harari</i> (Vintage £9.99) A history of humankind and our cognitive development 16,635 (471,195)	1	84
2	Homo Deus / <i>Yuval Noah Harari</i> (Vintage £9.99) Examines our future and the challenges we face 10,025 (178,815)	2	39
3	Prisoners of Geography / <i>Tim Marshall</i> (Elliott & Thompson £9.99) Ten maps that tell you all you need to know about geopolitics 6,955 (274,585)	3	71
4	The Best of Matt 2017 / <i>Matt Pritchett</i> (Orion £7.99) A look at the past year through the eyes of the award-winning cartoonist 5,685 (28,240)	4	7
5	Giles: The Collection 2018 (Hamlyn £8.99) Cartoons on the quirks and foibles of British holidays 5,270 (25,595)	5	6
6	How to Tell If Your Cat Is Plotting to Kill You <i>Matthew Inman</i> (Andrews McMeel £9.99) Humour book about crazy cat behaviour 4,570 (83,280)	6	3
7	The Hidden Life of Trees / <i>Peter Wohlleben</i> (Wm Collins £9.99) The complex life, death and regeneration of trees and forests 4,460 (39,710)	9	12
8	Milk and Honey / <i>Rupi Kaur</i> (Andrews McMeel £9.99) Poetry and prose about love, loss, pain and survival 3,980 (126,425)	7	18
9	Test Your Cat / <i>EM Bard</i> (HarperCollins £5.99) Fun and easy tests to measure your cat's intelligence 3,750 (240,165)	10	10
10	Test Your Dog / <i>Rachel Federman</i> (HarperCollins £5.99) Find out just how smart your dog really is 3,545 (72,830)	11	5

FICTION HARDBACKS		Last week	Weeks in top 10
1	Origin / <i>Dan Brown</i> (Bantam Press £20) A professor's quest to unearth a truth that will shake the world 29,370 (373,705)	1	11
2	The Midnight Line / <i>Lee Child</i> (Bantam Press £20) A pawnshop ring will lead Hack Reacher down a criminal trail 23,550 (168,610)	2	6
3	Mythos / <i>Stephen Fry</i> (M Joseph £20) Presenter and actor retells the greatest Greek myths and legends 16,230 (60,860)	3	5
4	Why Mummy Drinks / <i>Gill Sims</i> (HarperCollins £12.99) Humorous diary, written from an exhausted mum's point of view 11,365 (70,130)	4	9
5	Munich / <i>Robert Harris</i> (Hutchinson £20) Thriller set around the 1938 Munich conference 9,715 (89,595)	5	9
6	Damaged / <i>Martina Cole</i> (Headline £20) A serial killer must be caught before more innocent schoolgirls die 7,590 (79,710)	8	11
7	Uncommon Type / <i>Tom Hanks</i> (Heinemann £16.99) Seventeen short stories from the Oscar-winning actor 7,410 (54,160)	7	9
8	The Rooster Bar / <i>John Grisham</i> (Hodder £20) Students aim to expose a hedge fund operator involved in a law-school scam 7,400 (55,680)	6	8
9	A Legacy of Spies / <i>John le Carré</i> (Viking £20) A retired intelligence officer is called to London to answer for his past 7,360 (90,555)	9	10
10	Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine / <i>Gail Honeyman</i> (HarperCollins £12.99) One act of kindness will change a lonely woman's life for ever 6,470 (63,015)	10	12

FICTION PAPERBACKS		Last week	Weeks in top 10
1	Darker / <i>EL James</i> (Arrow £7.99) The world of Fifty Shades Darker through the eyes of Christian Grey 28,820 (161,610)	1	3
2	The Thirst / <i>Jo Nesbo</i> (Vintage £7.99) Harry Hole returns to catch the killer that got away 16,360 (16,470)	—	1
3	Then She Was Gone / <i>Lisa Jewell</i> (Arrow £7.99) Can a woman learn the truth behind her daughter's disappearance? 13,765 (13,790)	—	1
4	Murder Games / <i>James Patterson</i> (Arrow £7.99) A serial killer known as The Dealer is on the loose in Manhattan 13,145 (39,810)	2	3
5	Dangerous Games / <i>Danielle Steel</i> (Pan £7.99) A TV reporter probes allegations at the heart of the White House 10,265 (10,290)	—	1
6	The Keeper of Lost Things / <i>Ruth Hogan</i> (Two Roads £7.99) An editor leaves a collection of lost objects to his assistant to fulfil a legacy 9,325 (110,785)	10	3
7	The Mistletoe Seller / <i>Dilly Court</i> (Harper £7.99) Can a young woman survive on the streets of Covent Garden? 8,770 (80,795)	4	7
8	Maggie Murders / <i>Anthony Horowitz</i> (Orion £7.99) An editor receives a manuscript from a writer containing a hidden story 8,705 (36,890)	9	4
9	The Fix / <i>David Baldacci</i> (Pan £7.99) A unique special agent uncovers a plot that will shake the world 8,280 (87,200)	5	7
10	Need You Dead / <i>Peter James</i> (Pan £7.99) Detective Roy Grace faces his most mysterious and sinister case 7,950 (116,695)	7	9

IRISH BESTSELLERS 2017	
1	Bad Dad <i>David Williams</i> A high speed cops-and-robbers adventure (Harper Collins £10.99) 39,466
2	The Couple Next Door <i>Shari Lapena</i> (Corgi £7.99) 28,856
3	Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Getaway <i>Jeff Kinney</i> (Penguin £12.99) 26,888
4	The World's Worst Children 2 <i>David Williams</i> (Harper Collins £12.99) 23,606
5	Oh My God What a Complete Aishling <i>Emer McLysaght & Sarah Breen</i> (Gill Books £12.99) 22,647
6	Guinness World Records 2018 (£20) 22,609
7	Into the Water <i>Paula Hawkins</i> (Doubleday £14.99) 21,177
8	The Break <i>Marian Keyes</i> (Michael Joseph £14.99) 20,536
9	The Handmaid's Tale <i>Margaret Atwood</i> (Vintage £8.99) 17,576
10	Operation Trumpsfornation <i>Ross O'Carroll Kelly</i> (Penguin Ireland £13.99) 17,027

Genius? He thought so

Flann O'Brien's letters give fresh insight into his brilliant but complex mind

LETTERS

Richard Pine

The Collected Letters of Flann O'Brien
by Maebh Long
Dalkey Archive \$26 pp603

On a recent visit to Dun Laoghaire, and having just begun to read Flann O'Brien's collected letters, I found myself outside the headquarters of the Irish Underwater Council. This, I thought, is nature imitating art, since in O'Brien's final novel, *The Dalkey Archive*, the conversation between St Augustine and De Selby is held subaqueously. I wondered, do the members of

the Irish Underwater Council hold their meetings in similar fashion, snorkelling their way towards enlightenment?

Maebh Long hopes to rescue "Flann" from his "man in the pub persona" which makes him resemble "one of his own bores". However, reading the letters following his ill-tempered resignation from the civil service in 1953 at the age of 42, we find an increasingly insecure, impecunious, anxious and, above all, repetitive writer, convinced of his own genius but beset by alcoholism and all the accidents and misfortunes into which it pushes him.

Although the letters are attributed to Flann O'Brien, Long uses his real name,

Brian O'Nolan. His choice of Flann O'Brien as a pen name in 1938 was characteristic in that "it contains an unusual name and one that is quite ordinary".

Another nom de plume, Myles na gCopaleen, was created in 1940. O'Nolan's combination of the exotic with the mundane, of the elusive with the commonplace, was at the heart of his writing skill.

Unfortunately, the editor is ill-served by the poor layout of the text. Worse, she has been heavy-handed in explanatory footnotes, assuming for example that we need to know who Yeats, Wordsworth, Dickens and Hitler were, and that Ulysses was written by James Joyce.

One of the redeeming features of Flann's unremitting brilliance is the juxtaposition of a profoundly disturbing imagination with incisive but frighteningly cynical humour, as if, in displaying his innate pessimism, he was going always for the jocular. His punning was excruciating: nuns in Liverpool are "the



Sisters of Mersey". His dismissal of public figures was scathing: cabinet ministers "know nothing or care nothing about books and the people who write them". The Revenue Commissioners were "a very special shower of bastards".

The Irish Times published his Cruiskeen Lawn column for 14 years, but he had a violently on-off relationship with the newspaper which, he said, had become "a dive of Masonry". One wonders whether these coruscatingly blunt opinions are the

fulminations of a sober but irascible citizen, or those of a drunken writer frustrated by life's misery.

He had scant regard for his contemporaries, with the sole exception of his sparring partner Niall Montgomery, architect, wit, part-author of

Sober reflection O'Brien's work was fuelled by alcohol

Cruiskeen Lawn, and his best critic. Seán Ó Faoláin was "the most unspeakable boob possible, without a glimmer of humour". Brendan Behan was "a great character but as a writer he was a phoney". His opinion of writer John Jordan could have been a self-portrait: "an absolutely intolerable ballocks [sic] when he takes drink".

O'Nolan is unpretentious, except in praise of his own genius. Early arrogance ("as a genius, I do not expect to be readily understood") can be excused; later claims, such as "my book completely revolutionises the English novel", cannot. Who did he think he was? James Joyce? Well, yes, in a way he did. Writing *The Dalkey Archive*, O'Nolan declared: "I'm going to get my own back on that bugger."

There was disappointment all the way. *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939) had to wait until after the Second World War for any kind of appreciation. Its successor, *The Third Policeman*, was rejected everywhere and remained unpublished until a year after his death, in 1967. Its

non-appearance must have been the greatest tragedy of O'Nolan's life. His genius in imagining the atomic symbiosis between a policeman and his bicycle has to be one of the most mordantly brilliant comic conceptions in Irish writing. He knew that, but few others did.

As a compulsive writer-drinker, O'Nolan needed outlets to supply his inlets. After the civil service, he solicited work from every provincial newspaper in Ireland, and some abroad. He wrote successfully for RTE Radio and for its fledgling television channel, where his credits included the series *O'Dea's Your Man*, starring Jimmy O'Dea. He read publishing proposals for Allen Figgis's Riverrun imprint, and also applied unsuccessfully for jobs, including an administrative post at TCDC.

The idea in *At Swim* that "it was undemocratic to compel characters to be uniformly good or bad", and that they should be allowed "self-determination", was a precursor of the possibilities of a novel-within-a-novel and

the interchangeability of characters one finds in much later fiction such as Paul Auster's 4321. Although O'Nolan himself came to dismiss *At Swim* as "schoolboy juvenilia", at the time of publication he wisely saw it as "either pretentious high-class stuff or a fiesta of belly laughs".

He could be erudite, irreverent, painfully funny and profoundly philosophical. Much of his work was conceived in drunkenness and rewritten in semi-sobriety, a process that somehow gave it brilliance. But with drunkenness came garrulity, offensiveness, repetition, whingeing and denial. Since most of the letters in this collection come from the period 1960-66, this is an unfortunate imbalance.

As his publisher Timothy O'Keefe said: "Mr O'Brien often suffers from drink; yet nonetheless, in a remarkable way, he can still write most people into the ground." O'Nolan himself summed up Flann, Myles and all the other identities running around inside him in two pithy words: "bitterly funny".

THE SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLERS

Lists prepared by and data supplied by and copyright to Nielsen BookScan, taken from the TCM for the week ending 02/06/18. Figures shown are estimated sales for the seven-day period followed (in brackets) by the estimated total sale since BookScan records began in 1998. *Includes sales of more than one edition in the same format and at the same RRP.

GENERAL HARDBACKS		Last week	Weeks in top 10
1	First Man In / <i>Ant Middleton</i> (HarperCollins £20) Autobiography from the special-forces soldier and TV personality 15,180 (15,195)	—	1
2	Arnhem / <i>Antony Beevor</i> (Viking £25) A detailed account of the ill-fated "battle for the bridges" in 1944 6,720 (19,725)	1	3
3	12 Rules for Life / <i>Jordan B Peterson</i> (Allen Lane £20) Psychologist offers principles for a meaningful life 3,515 (89,600)	2	20
4	Factfulness / <i>Hans Rosling</i> (Sceptre £12.99) Highlights the power of facts in a post-truth world 2,955 (27,965)	3	9
5	Natives / <i>Akala</i> (Two Roads £16.99) Artist, writer and activist tackles race and class in the UK 2,465 (7,940)	7	3
6	On Leopard Rock / <i>Wilbur Smith</i> (Zaffre £20) Memoir by the bestselling South African novelist 2,135 (8,700)	4	3
7	Spitfire / <i>John Nichol</i> (Simon & Schuster £20) A rich tribute to Britain's greatest warplane 2,040 (5,425)	6	2
8	The Secret Barrister / <i>The Secret Barrister</i> (Macmillan £16.99) Stories of the law and how it's broken from an anonymous insider 1,855 (24,915)	8	11
9	Everything I Know About Love / <i>Dolly Alderton</i> (Fig Tree £12.99) Author on growing up, growing older and navigating love 1,845 (35,410)	5	17
10	The Last Hedgehog / <i>Pam Ayres</i> (Picador £6.99) Illustrated poem about the last hedgehog on Earth 1,580 (10,130)	12	3

GENERAL PAPERBACKS		Last week	Weeks in top 10
1	This is Going to Hurt / <i>Adam Kay</i> (Picador £8.99) Comic and former junior doctor's account of life on the NHS front line 13,310 (101,935)	1	7
2	Recovery / <i>Russell Brand</i> (Bluebird £8.99) Actor and comedian reveals how he broke free from addiction 6,970 (14,280)	3	3
3	Sapiens / <i>Yuval Noah Harari</i> (Vintage £9.99) A history of humankind and our cognitive development 5,430 (626,065)	2	108
4	Painting the Sand / <i>Kim Hughes</i> (Simon & Schuster £8.99) A soldier's fight against the Taliban bomb-makers of Helmand 3,920 (8,150)	6	2
5	Homo Deus / <i>Yuval Noah Harari</i> (Vintage £9.99) Examines our future and the challenges we face 2,765 (264,065)	7	63
6	Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race / <i>Reni Eddo-Lodge</i> (Bloomsbury £8.99) Discusses race in modern Britain 2,725 (44,920)	4	13
7	Prisoners of Geography / <i>Tim Marshall</i> (Elliott & Thompson £9.99) Ten maps that tell you all you need to know about geopolitics 2,690 (342,885)	8	95
8	Why We Sleep / <i>Matthew Walker</i> (Penguin £9.99) Professor explores the mystery of sleep and why it matters 2,610 (103,955)	5	23
9	A Brief History of Time / <i>Stephen Hawking</i> (Bantam £9.99) The late scientist covers everything from the big bang to black holes 2,145 (203,660)	11	11
10	Travellers in the Third Reich / <i>Julia Boyd</i> (Elliott £10.99) The rise of the Nazis through the eyes of foreign visitors 2,115 (3,360)	—	1

FICTION HARDBACKS		Last week	Weeks in top 10
1	Forever and a Day / <i>Anthony Horowitz</i> (Cape £18.99) James Bond returns in the explosive prequel to <i>Casino Royale</i> 6,790 (6,800)	—	1
2	The Outsider / <i>Stephen King</i> (Hodder £20) Detective Ralph Anderson investigates when a boy is found dead in a park 6,545 (20,965)	1	2
3	Dead If You Don't / <i>Peter James</i> (Macmillan £20) Detective Superintendent Roy Grace faces his most complex case 4,450 (24,695)	2	3
4	The Grey Ghost / <i>Clive Cussler & Robin Burcell</i> (M Joseph £20) Sam and Remi Fargo are back to help prove a grandfather's innocence 3,325 (3,345)	—	1
5	The Cast / <i>Danielle Steel</i> (Macmillan £18.99) Secrets, friendship and love await a woman asked to produce a TV series 3,010 (3,010)	—	1
6	Lancelot / <i>Giles Kristian</i> (Bantam £12.99) Author retells the story of one of the great figures of British legend 2,380 (2,380)	—	1
7	Legendary / <i>Stephanie Garber</i> (Hodder £14.99) Tella must uncover Legend's identity in the sequel to <i>Caraval</i> 2,255 (2,345)	—	1
8	The Burning Chambers / <i>Kate Mosse</i> (Mantle £20) A woman and a Huguenot embark on a quest to uncover a buried secret 2,170 (22,665)	3	5
9	The Tattooist of Auschwitz / <i>Heather Morris</i> (Zaffre £12.99) A story of love between prisoners in a concentration camp 2,055 (37,655)	5	15
10	Never Greener / <i>Ruth Jones</i> (Bantam £12.99) A woman's past resurfaces 17 years after an affair with a married man 1,880 (27,635)	7	6

FICTION PAPERBACKS		Last week	Weeks in top 10
1	The Break / <i>Marian Keyes</i> (Penguin £7.99) Will a couple be the same after a six-month break from their marriage? 23,865 (26,795)	—	1
2	Into the Water / <i>Paula Hawkins</i> (Black Swan £7.99) Psychological thriller from the author of <i>The Girl on the Train</i> 20,690 (78,520)	1	3
3	Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine / <i>Gail Honeyman</i> (Harper £8.99) One act of kindness will change a lonely woman's life 17,995 (420,750)	2	19
4	Sleeping in the Ground / <i>Peter Robinson</i> (Hodder £7.99) DCI Banks investigates a mass murder in a small Dales church 12,130 (12,265)	—	1
5	Two Kinds of Truth / <i>Michael Connelly</i> (Orion £7.99) Harry Bosch returns to investigate a double murder and a cold case 11,045 (41,035)	3	3
6	The Midnight Line / <i>Lee Child</i> (Bantam £7.99) A pawn-shop ring will lead Jack Reacher down a criminal trail 10,280 (195,480)	4	9
7	Don't Let Go / <i>Harlan Coben</i> (Arrow £7.99) A cop with a troubled past uncovers the truth behind his brother's death 9,630 (10,835)	—	1
8	The Good Daughter / <i>Karin Slaughter</i> (HarperCollins £8.99) An act of violence threatens a family years after a tragic event 8,770 (66,905)	7	5
9	A Legacy of Spies / <i>John le Carré</i> (Penguin £8.99) A retired intelligence officer is called to London to answer for his past 8,125 (58,255)	8	5
10	The Handmaid's Tale / <i>Margaret Atwood</i> (Vintage £8.99) Story of a handmaid's trials and tribulations in a dystopian world 7,780* (691,195*)	18	17

IRISH BESTSELLERS		Last week	Weeks in top 10
1	Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine / <i>Gail Honeyman</i> (HarperCollins £8.99) 1,220	—	1
2	Oh My God, What a Complete Aisling / <i>Emer McLysaght and Sarah Breen</i> (Gill Books £8.99) 1,217	—	1
3	The Tattooist of Auschwitz / <i>Heather Morris</i> (Zaffre £12.99) 1,179	—	1
4	Into the Water / <i>Paula Hawkins</i> (Black Swan £7.99) 1,177	—	1
5	The Break / <i>Marian Keyes</i> (Penguin £7.99) 1,012	—	1
6	Prayers From the Heart / <i>Lorna Byrne</i> (Coronet Books £10.99) 948	—	1
7	The Hideaway / <i>Sheila O'Flanagan</i> (Headline £14.99) 901	—	1
8	Skin Deep / <i>Liz Nugent</i> (Penguin Ireland £12.99) 843	—	1
9	My Brother Jason / <i>Tracey Corbett-Lynch and Ralph Riegel</i> (Gill £14.99) 784	—	1
10	The Woman in the Window / <i>AJ Finn</i> (HarperCollins £12.99) 643	—	1