

With Trust in Place: Writing from the Outside

A unique and compelling collection of writing on the theme of ‘the outsider’, edited by Trust Director and Co-founder, Alice Leahy and including contributions by Maeve Binchy, Christy Moore, Con Houlihan, Gene Kerrigan, Justice Michael Moriarty, Anita Reeves and many more...

Alice Leahy has brought together a remarkable and hugely diverse range of contributions, from a number of well-known and not so well known figures in Irish society, including one man, a poet, who is homeless. Alice and her colleagues at Trust work hands on in the front line, providing human contact and health care to those who have become homeless, the most marginalised in Irish society. Alice considers that hands on approach to be Trust’s greatest strength, believing that *“it gives us the motivation to continue to challenge the bureaucracy that is stifling the initiative of others in front line care who try the put people first.”*

As Alice says, *“My work over the years on the margins of Irish society would not have been possible without the support of people in many walks of life. This is highlighted by the diversity of people who generously gave of their time to produce some thought provoking and in some cases provocative pieces for this book – a book we hope may help us to be a little more understanding of those who are different.”*

With Trust in Place: Writing from the Outside published by **TownHouse Dublin** and available in bookshops at €12-99. However, to facilitate Building Trust in the Community initiative it can be obtained for €10 by post by sending a cheque to **TRUST, Bride Road, Dublin 8.**

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With Trust in Place: Writing from the Outside

Introduction by Alice Leahy

When I mentioned this book about the outsider to Kevin, one of the men who is homeless who comes into us regularly, and asked him to suggest a title he said, *“outsiders have the head well screwed on but go against the tread!”*

We work with people like Kevin who because they *“go against the tread”* find themselves on the margins of society and find their way to our door everyday in increasing numbers.

We are a small agency. We provide a daily place of refuge for those who feel excluded by society. We do not ask them to fill in forms. We do not ask questions. If people choose to talk we listen. We provide what medical help we can. A change of clothes. A shower. Anything we can to make a life on the outside a little more bearable.

This book grew out of our increasing frustration that our approach is regarded as almost subversive because we refuse to delve in an invasive ways into the private lives of society's most vulnerable, many of whom are on the outside precisely because they cannot cope with that level of scrutiny.

Very little has changed since the mid seventies when we first went out to "*Skippers*" – derelict buildings, old tree trunks, abandoned cars, anywhere people found shelter – to provide what help we could. Today this is called a multi disciplinary approach except, unlike us, most professionals and managers manage the process from their desks and do not go out and meet people on the ground. The managers of the "*services*" have become more and more remote from the people they serve .

The modern approach requires agencies like ours to adopt "*performance indicators*" and seek to make people who are homeless conform to "*benchmarks*". In short, to subject them to a level of "*management*" that drove many of them out onto the street in the first place. In other words, management means forcing people to change which many of them are simply not able to do.

The point we are trying to make in this book is that the "*outsider*" who drops into us everyday shares more in common with the many successful outsiders celebrated in this book. They share in a sense the same fundamental values – they are different and maybe they even need to be different to survive.

In accommodating the outsider we need to think in terms of accommodating diversity and creating a society that can celebrate and appreciate what makes people different. This is about creating a world where no one feels excluded and those who are different are warmly welcomed. The highly talented outsiders would prosper and the others would not end up on the side of the road.

An idealistic vision?

No. We only have to look into someone's eyes and smile, especially those we usually hurry past. To raise our voice in protest against the racist remark or the social slur. To refuse to look the other way when someone is bullied. In short, we may have to make an effort to insist on making everyone feel welcome.

While in no way radical this approach would appear almost revolutionary in its impact if it could be extended in practical ways into the bureaucracy geared to tackling social exclusion given the way the services are currently organised – something that is only obvious to those of us at the coalface.

Putting our philosophy into action is a constant and persistent challenge. This was brought forcefully home to me one day by a retired man I met at a social function. He asked what do you call them referring to the people we work with – "*people*" I replied. But he persisted: "*You must call them something?*" – we parted company.

We like so many people in other agencies, both voluntary and statutory are frustrated at the fact that despite years of unparalleled prosperity nothing seems to have changed. This led us to try to share the insights and experience we have gained through our hands on work. The fundamental problem we seek to confront is

that those managing the system appear to have lost touch with what is happening on the ground. The more resources they deploy the less impact it has because those who should be consulted are not asked for their opinions. Those like us who put the personal and human needs of people who are on the margins first are deemed not to be using “*best practice*” are not progressive and therefore dismissed.

Despite our small size we felt that only by trying to bring the reality of life of the outsiders we meet everyday to the attention of the wider community nothing would ever change. We were also acutely aware that many others working with the disadvantaged and the marginalised also see the urgency of doing this but many are not in a position to speak out for fear of losing their job or their agency having their funding cut.

One reason we have been able to undertake a level of work in this area that is normally only deemed possible by the largest of organisations is through our adoption of the web, and the Internet in particular, as a vehicle for that awareness raising. In that regard, our web site – **www.trust-ireland.ie** - has been vital.

Our efforts to share our experience and insights began initially with an education programme and a national essay competition in 2000-2001 and followed in 2002-2003 with a national art competition both of which generated a very perceptive and encouraging response from students all over Ireland.

This book grew out of our commitment to education and through co-operation from a very diverse, experienced and distinguished group of contributors we hope to take that debate further by enabling anyone who picks up this tome to experience some sense of what it means to be an outsider and what it is possible to achieve.

Non-judgemental is a word that is often used to describe our approach and maybe more than anything it is why the people we meet everyday find TRUST a safe place and why people continue to want to help us to do the work we do.

Our work would not be possible without support from all sections of the community. The people who enable us to give out all most 400 outfits a month, all good as new and given freely as part of our holistic health service and primary care commitment. The man who delivers three boxes of fruit a week, the much-improved skin conditions are proof of its value. The financial and material help we get from the Health Board. The support of Dublin City Council and our premises from the Iveagh Trust. We acknowledge those who send us money, cards and letter's. The woman who sends us photos of her pets reminds us that we share our world with other creatures and that those who visit us with their pets are not refused help.

If we are to create a world where diversity is accommodated it must be a place where those who are different, are allowed the freedom to be themselves.

This book is a celebration of the outsiders and is part of our effort to help create a suitable environment for change by sharing the experience we have gained in our work over the years working with people seen as not being successful in society eyes.

We are all outsiders and here at **Trust** we intend to remain outsiders, because we see it as a position of strength and not weakness.

The contributors to this book show that people who go against the tread enrich us all. From Kevin who gave me the opening paragraph for this introduction, to the giants of Irish society like the late Noel Browne, who features in this book, and who I remember with fondness sitting in the middle of a small city centre complex with people about to be evicted so many years ago.

The title of this book was taken from Bernard Farrell's contribution which looked at a prison experience and the strength of the human spirit which could have been destroyed were it not for the vision of an outsider. This same vision was very much responsible for the setting up of **TRUST**.

The philosophy of **TRUST** is based on two central principles. The recognition of every individual's right to be treated as an autonomous and unique human being and the need to restore the dignity of individuals who society has labelled deviant and undesirable.

Daily we meet people whose bodies are ravaged by disease and violence, who may have pressure sores from sleeping out in all weathers, because they may have been sleeping in urine soaked clothes for weeks. They can have infected and untreated minor skin conditions and major skin problems e.g. leg ulcers. They may suffer from medical conditions common to the general public but exacerbated by their living conditions such as lice infected heads, scabies and malnutrition.

We regularly come into contact with men and women who have been abused mentally and physically, some may even be working in prostitution. We see people who have been institutionalised in Psychiatric Hospitals and Prisons many for years who are now relocated from one institution to another (Hostels) in the name of progress with insufficient support services to meet their needs. Some of these people have even found themselves to be inappropriately labelled "*mentally ill*".

These people, our friends, often struggle with guilt because they have left loved ones behind. Partners who have suffered for so long, children who are in care, parents who have died with whom they were unable to say goodbye. Drugs often dull the pain of living. Alcohol, gambling, illegal drugs, and prescribed drugs all play a part. Many people we meet have attempted suicide and some sadly succeed. Some people we meet in spite of unthinkable pain and misery never complain, never ask for any thing, accept their lot, leave us feeling challenged and inspired.

We live in a market driven society that only sees the loud and impressive actions. The little things done are usually seen as being irrelevant. Services are also driven by market forces. In **Trust** every morning we meet men and women, who come simply for a wash or change of clothes to make them feel that they are part of society and have a sense of worth. The inter-action can have far more impressive outcomes than many realise and proving that success cannot be measured in the language of consumerism.

I increasingly think you have to be an outsider to work with outsiders. Anyone who takes a stand risks being excluded. The first time I realised that was as a student nurse. My fellow students and I arranged to meet Matron to complain about the patients food. While knocking on the little brass monkey, fearful of the reception we would receive I turned around to find my colleagues retreating. I happened to be the one nearest the door. This very early experience was a sharp reminder that you risk being excluded when you rock the boat and many who attempt to make a difference become outsiders.

It may seem like a cliché to say “*there go I but for the grace of God*” but thinking of the many people including those who had no opportunities, and those like former solicitors, nurse’s, doctors, professors, journalists, religious and even a well known rugby player - all of whom have sought momentary refuge in **Trust**, one cannot help feeling it could happen to any of us.

In celebrating outsiders in this book we are acknowledging that those who dare to be different can enrich and challenge us in very practical ways and that those who “*go against the tread*” and end up on the side of the road are as worthy of our respect as those who achieve success in taking the same road.

ALICE LEAHY

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Titles and Biographies of Contributors

Oliver by Maeve Binchy

Maeve Binchy is an international best selling author.

“The People’s Solicitor” – Gerard Brady

Gerard Brady is a barrister living in Dublin.

Inside Out – Gerard Byrne

Gerard Byrne is a freelance actor who is perhaps best known for his role as ‘Malachy’ in RTE’s Fair City.

Medical Outsider : Dr Nancy Dunne – Mary Condren

Mary Condren is author of “The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion and Power in Celtic Ireland” (Dublin New Island 2002), as well as numerous articles on theology, feminism and feminist theory. She is director of the Institute for Feminism and Religion, and a Research Associate at the Centre for Gender and Women’s Studies, Trinity College, Dublin.

A Voice from Outside – Catherine Cleary and Richard Oakley

Catherine Cleary and Richard Oakley are senior reporters with The Sunday Tribune. (Since writing this Richard has moved to the Sunday Times)

Typescript – Oliver Connolly

Oliver Connolly, is a Medical Practitioner in Dublin inner city.

A Treasured Recollection – Bernadette Cronin

Bernadette Cronin is a Senior Counsel, having been called to the Bar of Ireland in 1978 and taken Silk in 1997. She regularly sits as a Member of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal. She enjoys painting and had a successful first exhibition of her works in 2000.

Nazma's Story – Anne Daly

Anne Daly – Award winning filmmaker, journalist and co-founder of the Esperanza Productions

An Outsider on the Inside Track By Séamus Dooley

Séamus Dooley was born in Ferbane, Co.Offaly in 1960. He is Irish Secretary of the National Union of Journalists. Prior to his appointment as a union official he worked as a national and regional journalist in the Irish Independent, Roscommon Champion and Tullamore Tribune. He is a graduate of the College of Commerce, Rathmines.

An Encounter – Tim Doyle

Tim Doyle is a Kerry born Garda Inspector based in Dublin and author of two books – Peaks & Valleys (1997) And Get up them Steps (2001)

Spike Milligan – The Outside Goon – Danny Erskine

Danny Erskine is a 16 year old student in Ashfield College, Dublin.

Prison Bars by Bernard Farrell

Bernard Farrell is a playwright whose work has been mainly premiered at the Abbey Theatre and also at The Gate, Red Kettle Theatre and extensively abroad.

The Road – Tony Gill

Tony Gill is a poet and one who sees himself as an outsider

Powerful Women – Ann Higgins

Ann Higgins is co-founder of Kileely Community Project with the women mentioned. She is co-ordinator of the Targeting Educational Disadvantage Project In Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.

Outside The Main Stream

Con Houlihan, a Kerry born writer and filmmaker living in Dublin. According to Con he hasn't yet won the Nobel Prize, but in 1967 he was voted Kerry's Rugby Player of the Year.

The Best Lesson – Miranda Iveagh

Miranda Iveagh is a Trustee of the Iveagh Trust which was founded in 1890, She is interested in the Arts, restoring old buildings and widely known for her philanthropic works. She lives in England.

An Outsider – Michael Kavanagh

Michael Kavanagh, Paper Vendor for 25 yrs in Grafton Street.

LISTEN – Eamon Keane

Eamon Keane Freelance producer and singer songwriter, wrote this piece after recording a programme with Vincent Browne at the Trust Centre for RTE Radio 1.

An Honourable Man – Grainne Kenny

Grainne Kenny is President of EURAD (Europe Against Drugs) and she is on the Board of Directors of Drug Watch International USA. She has received the following awards in recognition of her work: Woman of Europe Award, Medaille de Marie de Strasbourg , Medaille de Marie de Paris, Swedish Parent Award, Lord Mayor's Award Dublin. Lives and works in Dublin

Karl's Choices – Gene Kerrigan

Gene Kerrigan is a Dublin journalist and Author

A Woman Before Her Time – an Outsider who made a Difference – Hannie Leahy

Hannie Leahy, Founder member of 1st Branch of Country Markets in Ireland in Fethard, Co.Tipperary in 1947. She is currently Hon.Secretary.

Outsiders - Gordon Linney

Gordon Linney is Church of Ireland Archdeacon of Dublin and a former Honorary Secretary of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland. He is married with three grown up children and lives in Glenageary, Co Dublin.

Outside the Circle - Ray Lynott

Ray Lynott worked for twenty seven years as a RTE Radio announcer and producer, and wrote the collection of stories A Year in the Country which was published by Co-Op Books in 1978.

Two People's Lives Inspired By The Outsider – Geraldine McAuliffe & Tim Hyde

Geraldine McAuliffe, Nurse, Deputy Director, Trust and Tim Hyde, Captain, Church Army, St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin

Owen Sheehy Skeffington (1909-1970), Reader in French, Trinity College, Dublin – David McConnell

David McConnell, Professor of Genetics, Trinity College & Chairman of the Board of The Irish Times Trust.

A Home for Sean – Mamo McDonald

Mamo McDonald well known in Ireland for her leadership of the Irish Country Women's Association in the 1980s. Chairperson of Age and Opportunity between 1988 and 2001 and current Honorary President. She is on the Steering Committee of the Older Women's Network. At age 70 she went to University to study for Higher Diploma & Masters Degree in Women's Studies

Mad in the Head - Christy Moore

Christy Moore is the internationally acclaimed singer songwriter.

The Outsider – Michael Moriarty

Michael Moriarty is a Judge and Chairman of the Payments to Politicians Tribunal

Two Left Feet - Vincent Murphy

Vincent Murphy lives in Fethard Co Tipperary. He runs a family pub (McCarthy's Bar which is known world wide) and undertaking business which is in his family since the 1840's. He is married to Sarah who moved to Ireland from New Zealand. He has just finished writing his first book which is a humorous account of life in the undertaking trade

Dr Noel Browne – David Neligan

David Neligan was a political assistant to Dr.Noel Browne from 1968 to 1982. He has a dental practice in Dublin

My Brother Martin – John O'Connor

John J. O'Connor is a Consultant Psychiatrist in Beaumont Hospital and Clinical Director of the National Drug Treatment Centre, Trinity Court, Dublin.

Respecting Individual Difference – Pdraig O'Morain

Pdraig O'Morain is a journalist living in Dublin. He writes on health, social affairs and mental health issues. He was born in Ladytown, Co.Kildare in 1949 and has worked in journalism (staff journalist with The Irish Times until 2002), social services (National Social Services Board) and public relations and had a brief and undistinguished career as a civil servant at the District Veterinary Office in Naas, Co.Kildare. He writes poetry very early in the day and his work has been published in many literary magazines in Ireland and the UK. He is very interested in mental health and psychology, particularly in Dr William Glassner's Choice Theory and Reality Therapy. He is married with two children.

Look Back – Look Forward - Mary O'Rourke

Mary O'Rourke is a former Teacher and Minister and current Leader of An Seanad

Outsider - Micheal O'Siadhail

Micheal O'Siadhail is a poet who has published many books of poetry, his latest include Our Double Time (Bloodaxe 1998), Poems 1975 – 1995 (Bloodaxe 1999) and The Gossamer Wall: Poems in Witness to the Holocaust (Bloodaxe 2002).

FROM BANDLEADER TO COMMUNITY ACTIVIST – Jim Connolly –

Nora Owen

Nora Owen is a Former Minister for Justice

Coming In – Anita Reeves

Anita Reeves is an actor, living in Terenure with her husband Julian and two children Gemma and Danny.

Kitty's Folly – Margaret Roche

Margaret Roche is Former Chairwoman of AIM Family Services – a voluntary organisation dedicated to improving relationship difficulties. She is on the Board of Dublin City Anna Livia Community Radio. As a mature student she obtained an Mphil Degree in Women's Studies at Trinity College. She spent many years teaching drama and communication skills and adjudicating throughout the country. She is also an artist.

The Man in the Western Café - Brendan Ryan

Brendan Ryan is a member of Seanad Eireann and Honorary President of Cork Simon Community and Chair 1977 – 1980

Lafcadio Who? Rathmines boy makes good in Japan – Paddy

Sammon

Paddy Sammon, author of Greenspeak: Ireland in her own Words (TownHouse), lives in Rathmines, and has lived in Greece and Japan.

Insiders and Outsiders in Our Church - Willie Walsh

Willie Walsh is Bishop of Killaloe and lives in Clare

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