

PATRICK KAVANAGH

“The bag-apron realist and the far-horizon visionary”



**‘THE MAN
IN THIS WORLD
AND WHY’**

DoranBrowne

ARTS PROGRAMMING & CONSULTANCY

“This is one of the charms of Doran and Browne:
they never think small or pedestrian...their
vision is always ambitious.”

The Irish Times

CONTENTS

4	Our Brief
6	I Monaghan shapes Kavanagh: Kavanagh to reshape Monaghan
8	II Kavanagh's high place in Irish poetry
10	III The Great Hunger – a poetic epic of a nation's soul
12	IV 'All look to London or some vague elsewhere'
14	V Kavanagh: The Man from Mucker
15	VI Kavanagh and the Spiritual
16	VII Kavanagh's Nature
17	VIII Illness & hospitalization: creating rebirth
18	IX 'Unhurried Simplicity' – Kavanagh's poetry for rural tourism
19	X 'The plough and the cut worm' – Kavanagh for a young audience
20	XI The Great Game Changer - Seamus Heaney HomePlace
22	XII Inniskeen's Patrick Kavanagh Centre – a re-modelling
24	XIII Carrickmacross, Castleblayney and Dundalk
25	XIV Kavanagh's monthly presence – a calendar audit of his poetry
27	Appendix 1: Summary of Recommendations
31	Appendix 2: Authors' short biogs

OUR BRIEF

An Artistic Visioning Report

To articulate a new vision for Patrick Kavanagh and his association with County Monaghan post the 50th anniversary of his death in November 2017 with a view to scoping the following:

1. Provide County Monaghan with a tailored Kavanagh vision and aesthetic rationale that best serves future artistic and cultural tourism direction.
2. Carry out a reappraisal of Kavanagh's status and cultural positioning - in Ireland and globally - with recommendations leading to greater profile in artistic and tourism terms for the overall benefit of his homeland and community of County Monaghan.

*Seán Doran and Liam Browne (DoranBrowne)
Report Authors*

PREFACE

We took the view in writing our report, 'The Man in this World and Why' that hopefully it would stimulate and excite debate and further thought among a diverse readership regarding Patrick Kavanagh's future potential for County Monaghan. We've tried to keep our recommendations reasonable and within the realms of reality. We apologise in advance for any previous writings and ideas on Kavanagh which we should perhaps have referenced; our commission did not allow us to trawl further. The report should not be read as in any way definitive but we hope nonetheless to have provided sufficient breadth of thought on the matter. Although the nature of this report did not require us to consult the Patrick Kavanagh Estate we would however like to acknowledge the Estate and its role as the carrier of the torch for the work and genius of Patrick Kavanagh. Any inaccuracies are ours alone.

Seán Doran and Liam Browne (DoranBrowne)
Report Authors

I MONAGHAN SHAPES KAVANAGH: KAVANAGH TO RESHAPE MONAGHAN

*Monaghan hills,
You have made me the sort of man I am,
A fellow who can never care a damn
For Everest thrills.*

*The country of my mind
Has a hundred little heads
On none of which foot-room for genius.*

*Because of you I am a half-faithed ploughman,
Shallow furrows at my heels,
Because of you I am a beggar of song
And a coward in thunder.*

*If I had been born among the Mournes
Even in Forkhill
I might have had echo-corners in my soul
Repeating the dawn laughter.*

*I might have climbed to know the glory
Of toppling from the roof of seeing –
O Monaghan hills, when is writ your story
A carbon-copy will unfold my being.*

**If ever there was
an example of a
landscape and
a poet deeply
intertwined,
Monaghan and
Kavanagh are it.**

Patrick Kavanagh spent more than half his life (35 years) living in County Monaghan and poems such as *The Great Hunger*, *Shancoduff*, *Inniskeen Road: July evening*, *Monaghan Hills*, *A Christmas Childhood*, *Epic*, *Threshing Morning*, *Art McCooey*, *Spraying the Potatoes*, *Stony Grey Soil*, *Peace* and many many more are an extraordinary capturing of the county's distinct geography and character. Of Irish poets in the last hundred years, only Heaney has come close to such a relationship (in his case with County Derry) and he was following the example set by Kavanagh. County Derry now of course has the Seamus Heaney HomePlace, Ireland's largest and first purpose-built literature centre, to celebrate Heaney's relationship with the county. If ever though there was an example of a landscape and a poet deeply intertwined, Monaghan and Kavanagh are it. Thus, there can be no better springboard for Monaghan's tourism ambitions than to have it course through the genius of Kavanagh. A compelling literary tourism plan built around Kavanagh would in our opinion spearhead tourism overall in Monaghan like never before. Within five to ten years it would, we believe, raise it from its current position near the bottom of the Irish Tourism league table figures into the top third.

Fundamentally and elementally as County Sligo shaped Yeats, south Derry shaped Heaney, south Monaghan shaped Kavanagh's success in the world.

Fifty years on, there is an opportunity to grasp for Kavanagh's legacy to help reshape Monaghan's success in the world.

Kavanagh should be to Monaghan in the future no less than Shakespeare has been to Stratford in the past.

Monaghan shapes Kavanagh

In the early days, Patrick Kavanagh was disregarding of his farming and personal life in Monaghan, believing it not fit for poetry. In reality, those years would become the bedrock of his future work: again and again, he would recall Monaghan in his imagination and in so doing pioneer in modern Irish poetry the celebration of the local. In his *Collected Poems* forty-five of the fifty-nine poems (75%) that he wrote up to 1946 (when Kavanagh was forty-two) are either influenced by Monaghan life or reference it directly. When he moved to Dublin the percentage of course dropped; from 1947 to his death in 1967, sixteen out of seventy-nine are Monaghan-related but this still means that nearly half (44%) of his entire poetry is deeply engaged with his home county.



The relationship between Kavanagh and Monaghan was so intense that it could be argued that his style developed out of his sense of place. A landlocked county of small lakes and drumlins and with its proximity to the political North, Monaghan does not offer the romanticism of Yeats and Sligo but instead encourages a realism tinged with flashes of sentiment and vision. Kavanagh's own experiences, as an apprentice cobbler to his father and as a farmer until he left for Dublin, gave him an insider's view of working the land and knowing the people of Monaghan. Out of the local and the vernacular he created a universal poetry. A literary tourism visit to Monaghan (particularly south Monaghan and Inniskeen) brings a much enhanced awareness and insight into the qualities and motivations that drove Kavanagh's poetic gift.

Kavanagh's perception of Monaghan and his seminal experiences there were further strengthened by his friendship with Frank O'Connor and Sean O'Faolain, both of whom were involved in editing *The Bell* magazine in Dublin. *The Bell* demanded a new literature for the new Free State. As O'Faolain stated, 'Write about your gateway, your well-field, your street-corner, your girl, your boat-slip, pubs, books, pictures, dogs, horses, river, tractor, anything at all that has a hold on you.' This new spirit of literature, the demand for realism, gave Kavanagh a greater belief in his own background and life as a fit subject for poetry. The newness of this approach at the time and the influence it continues to have cannot be over-emphasised.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Kavanagh's gift to reshape Monaghan

We recommend that Monaghan County Council invest new faith and finance in a literary tourism narrative that seizes the opportunity to adopt Patrick Kavanagh, as a globally recognized and loved writer, to spearhead the county's revitalization of its overall tourism planning. Although taking a figurehead of the past to lead its cultural tourism strategy has clear generic benefits for the broader community and its various SMEs, there are many contemporary poets, writers and artists living and working in Monaghan who could also gain from a well conceived all-inclusive cultural strategy focused around Kavanagh as one of the great human success stories produced by Monaghan. The Literary Tourism rationale should probably be taken forward by a Council-appointed independent steering group across culture, tourism, community and business to help advise and galvanise.

Out of the local and the vernacular he created a universal poetry.

II KAVANAGH'S HIGH PLACE IN IRISH POETRY

A PIVOTAL ROLE

To many literary observers, twentieth-century Irish poetry has been led by two of Ireland's Nobel Laureates, W. B. Yeats (1865-1939) and Seamus Heaney (1939-2013), and deservedly so. Their respective genius was arguably aided by 'blessed' literary lives with support from all sides throughout their careers.

The other great poetic genius of the century is Patrick Kavanagh (1904-67). Here we have chosen to press the point that the comparative lack of global recognition for Kavanagh's poetry is less to do with the quality of the work and more to do with his social circumstances and with the depressed period of the twentieth century in which Kavanagh lived. In our view, there is a need for redress which we would argue can only happen through a planned and resourced intervention; it cannot be left to the efforts of market forces. Ideally, this would be led by a newly resourced Kavanagh Centre (capital spend, staffing and revenue budget) under the ownership and operation of Monaghan County Council, building on the existing long-time resource of the current Kavanagh Centre leadership of Art Agnew and Rosaleen Kearney.

Yeats-Kavanagh-Heaney: a trinity of poets



The twentieth century itself was evenly meted out across these three poets: Yeats anticipating the new century by a decade with his first collection in 1889 (*The Wanderings of Oisín*) and Heaney's last collection coming out a decade after the century's close in 2010 (*Human Chain*). With Yeats' *Last Poems 1936 - 39* and Heaney's first collection in 1966 (*Death of a Naturalist*), it is Kavanagh who holds the centre with his first collection in 1936 (*Ploughman and Other Poems*) through to his final *Collected Poems* in 1964. Even the year 1939 is a pivotal point for this poetic trinity: it marked the death of Yeats in southern France, the birth of Seamus Heaney in Northern Ireland, and Kavanagh, at the age of thirty-five, making his major move from home in rural Monaghan to literary Dublin. The three poets are held in balance together across the twentieth century.



But the balancing act ends with Kavanagh's move to Dublin because his subsequent life and experiences severely affected the reception and appreciation of his work. Yeats and Heaney in their lives enjoyed more supportive environments, aiding their higher international critical acclaim and the ultimate recognition of the award of the Nobel Prize. The lives of Yeats and Heaney, in contrast to Kavanagh's, offer some insights into the particular challenges that Kavanagh had to face throughout his life. Yeats was able to reap the benefit of the Ascendency years of the 1890's and 1900's and Heaney's work began to be published in the mid-to-late 1960's when major positive social changes were taking place, with attendant freedoms and opportunities. Kavanagh's adult years, by contrast, began with the Civil War of 1922 through to the impoverishment and censorship of the years between the two World Wars and beyond. Ireland's choice of neutrality during the Second World War also disadvantaged relations between Irish writers and English publishers.



*Yes, Yeats, it was damn easy for you, protected
By the middle classes and the Big Houses,
To talk about the sixty-year-old public protected
Man sheltered by the dim Victorian Muses.*

YEATS by Patrick Kavanagh

Controversy and disappointment dogged Kavanagh in a way it never did Yeats or Heaney

W. B. Yeats was part of the Anglo-Irish gentry class and the family wealth came primarily from his mother's side of the family, the Pollexfens (who were merchants in Sligo). From an early age Yeats moved between London and family holidays in Sligo. His father, John, was an artist, and hence W. B. moved in artistic circles and was open to the cultural shifts of his day.

Whilst **Seamus Heaney** came from a small-farm background in Co. Derry, the 1947 Education Act was to have a profound effect on his future life and that of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland. Because of it he received a scholarship to attend St. Columb's College in Derry before going on to university at Queen's in Belfast. Education subsequently was to play an important role in Heaney's life and career, from teaching in Belfast and Dublin to becoming the Boylston Professor of Rhetoric & Oratory at Harvard.

Patrick Kavanagh had neither the financial nor educational advantages of Yeats or Heaney. He left school at thirteen and his lack of formal education undermined him all his life, causing insecurity. The years in Dublin, in which he often moved in an artistic, middle-class milieu exacerbated those insecurities and, if anything, he exaggerated his rural background and his sense of the outsider as a defence mechanism against the snobbery he encountered. Alongside this he suffered genuine poverty in Dublin, depending on loans from friends or those in the literary world to cover his most basic requirements. Unfortunately for Kavanagh there were no safety-nets for artists, no grants, no State-funded support in the early years (in later years he was routinely turned down by the newly formed Arts Council). Therefore, the unending struggle to survive financially, juxtaposed with his unfaltering belief in himself as a writer, produced a bitterness that often hid the warmth and gentleness of his nature.

Whereas Yeats' and Heaney's biographies are littered with moments of national and international significance - both in their own way bestrode the literary world - Kavanagh by contrast led a quiet, claustrophobic existence, a life of struggle that took place almost entirely within the social and religious confines of 1940's and '50's Ireland. Controversy and disappointment also dogged Kavanagh in a way it never did Yeats or Heaney. His novel, *Tarry Flynn*, was banned, his extraordinary epic poem, *The Great Hunger* was seized by Gardai when it was published in *Horizon* magazine and his final poetry collection, was rejected by the very publisher, MacMillan, who had originally launched him.

RECOMMENDATION 2: REDRESS

We accept we are probably crossing a line here in making a somewhat simplistic comparative analysis between these three poets and are therefore open to rebuke. We don't particularly want to be making excuses linking life conditions to poetic acceptance and hierarchies - that's life as they say. However, we are happy to stick our necks out within the confines of this report's brief to make such a comparative examination of these three poets, already linked together in the Irish mind, in order to illuminate our argument, which is that Kavanagh's 'down on his luck' life has played out also across the fifty years since his death. Left to the market place this will continue to remain so. Whilst Kavanagh's work is greatly loved by the Irish people, that love has not translated into any solid curation by the establishment of his work and reputation, as has been the case with Yeats and Heaney, and therefore only strategic intervention by one or more leading bodies of local and central government - arts & culture, tourism, heritage - can bring about the long-awaited deserved redress and the proper appreciation of Kavanagh's pivotal role in twentieth century Irish poetry.

III THE GREAT HUNGER

A POETIC EPIC OF A NATION'S SOUL

The Great Hunger is Kavanagh's greatest single literary achievement. It deserves to be garlanded as one of the totemic epic poems of the 20th century alongside David Jones 'In Parenthesis', T. S. Eliot's 'The Wasteland' and W. H. Auden's 'The Age of Anxiety'. We have singled out this Kavanagh achievement for one of our fourteen sections because of its unique importance. We are of the view that it is Monaghan's opportunity to seek a multiplicity of ways to assume public 'custodianship' of this one great poem, a poem emblematic of Kavanagh's homeland, history and place. Some specimen activities on how to go about this are given below.

Though Beckett and Kavanagh had very different upbringings and influences, both were modernists

The subject matter of this epic poem is certainly provocative. The poem presents a direct challenge to any attempt to romanticise Irish rural life - as Yeats would have done and indeed as Sligo as Yeats Country is today perceived. Kavanagh in contrast lays bare the pre 20th century hardships that were still part and parcel of life in the 1920's and 1930's. The poem contains pagan and Christian elements but Kavanagh rejects them both. His rage and frustration (emotions which damaged him in other aspects of his life) are the necessary raw emotions for this poem and he channeled them with great success into the work. It was a brave writer who conceived such an epic.

The poem, written in 1942, anticipates, as Fintan O'Toole has commented, 'a far wider sense of absurdity and disillusion that will descend on much of European culture after the second World War.*' However, it's a poem not just of its moment - Europe's darkest hour - but it also offers a direct link back to Ireland's famine (being published almost a century after the start of the Great Famine) and its ongoing influence on the soul of the Irish nation.

International cultural context

The poem does not stand alone in the context of international literature of the period. Though the subject matter of *The Great Hunger* is rural life, it is important to remember that its form is entirely modern. The influence of American poets such as William Carlos Williams comes into play. It also has kinship with, for example, John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath* (published in 1939) and *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, an investigation in text and photographs by James Agee and Walker Evans (published in 1941). Both of these books explore the lives of tenant farmers in the Great Depression and the economic, spiritual and psychological sufferings which they had to endure. There are very strong thematic connections between these totemic works of America literature and Kavanagh's Irish poem.

Remind the visitor that Monaghan is the poetic home of The Great Hunger the way that America's Midwest is the spiritual home of The Grapes of Wrath.

Also, in the sense that Patrick Maguire in the poem is something of an anti-hero, an interesting (and unexplored) comparison would be with another of Ireland's Nobel Laureates, Samuel Beckett and his novel, *Murphy*, which was published in 1938. Both poem and novel espouse a realism that challenges sentimentality and though Beckett and Kavanagh had very different upbringings and influences, both were modernists and both believed themselves to be moving Irish writing in new directions and away from the thinking of the Literary Revival (Yeats, Synge, Lady Gregory etc). Beckett of course has been fully and deservedly recognised as a great modernist writer whilst Kavanagh, by contrast, deserves much better recognition.

*Beckett's garbage-can
Contains all our man
Who without fright on his face
Dominates the place
And makes all feel
That all is well.*

Mermaid Tavern by Patrick Kavanagh



Another, and left-field comparison we would like to make, is with Igor Stravinsky's ground breaking score and ballet *The Rite of Spring*, which was first performed in 1913. Whilst Kavanagh wasn't influenced by the piece, both *The Great Hunger* and *The Rite of Spring* equally tap into similar themes; they both share explorations of violent, harrowing and realistic responses to the relationship between humans and the land - the enacting of ritual laid down by immemorial custom. Sacrifice and worship are central. Both works shocked their bourgeois audience; in *The Rite of Spring's* case, it was premiered in the then cultural capital of Europe, Paris, where it incited a riot. But that momentary

shock value has not subsequently influenced the world's admiration for the work, for its fundamental importance in the canon of dance. *The Great Hunger* should be viewed similarly. Subject matter and tone should not in any way overshadow or devalue the quality and importance of the work.

In an international context, it is important that Kavanagh's *The Great Hunger* be articulated in the same breath as the wider pantheon of great 20th century artists - Stravinsky, Nijinsky, Steinbeck, Eliot etc - and their art forms alongside its Irish importance.

TODAY

The challenges that Kavanagh posits in *The Great Hunger* are as true today as they were then. The need to turn towards life and love, towards the 'light of imagination', away from deadening habit, sterility. The poem is contemporary, as relevant today as when it was written, as important for an urban audience as a rural one because its themes are elemental, reflective of the struggles with which all human beings must engage. The poem is one of Kavanagh's great achievements.

* *Irish Times: May 16th, 2015*

RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the fact that *The Grapes of Wrath* focuses on a tragic time in US history, it is viewed as one of the country's greatest cultural triumphs. Ireland, and Monaghan in particular, needs to recognise and celebrate *The Great Hunger* in the same way, and the impetus somehow for this must come first and foremost from Monaghan itself, which ought to look to become custodian of this extraordinary epic poem.

Monaghan needs to find a way to materialize this poem into a work of public art, on a reasonably grand scale. For example:

RECOMMENDATION 3A

Might the 14 sections provide a pilgrimage walk/cycle through South Monaghan? Or can there be 14 'standing stone tablets' chiseled with each section of the poem in the nearest lay-bys close to road entry points around the circumference of County Monaghan, to greet and remind the visitor that Monaghan is the poetic home of *The Great Hunger* the way that America's Midwest is the spiritual home of *The Grapes of Wrath*?

RECOMMENDATION 3B

Co-produce with a quality theatre group or theatre venue (Castleblayney) to create a staging of *The Great Hunger* each summer, or each alternate summer in rotation with *Tarry Flynn* (staged in the Kavanagh Centre?) as a significant tourism attraction for coach itineraries?

As part of owning the poem (in whatever visible manner possible) links should be made with local history museums in Monaghan (with particular emphasis on the Famine) to re-stress the connections between the poem and the Famine (a moment many believe as the beginning of Irish modern consciousness) and thereby pique the interest of American tourists particularly.

IV 'All look to London or to some vague elsewhere'

(A Letter In Verse by Patrick Kavanagh)

THE WORK OF PATRICK KAVANAGH OUTSIDE OF IRELAND

Whilst Kavanagh has been translated, most recently into Spanish and Hebrew it is clear that he is not received as an international poet.

The literary agent, Jonathan Williams, one of the trustees of his estate, believes that there is a greater interest in Kavanagh now in the UK, as adduced by the demand to include his work in anthologies but as Williams also says, 'But how well he's known in North America or Australia is another matter.'¹ Kavanagh is represented in anthologies rather than being available through the body of his work. Yet, he is quoted by global celebrities such as the former President of the United States Barack Obama and Oscar winning film actor Russell Crowe. These bare facts however show there is an appetite for Kavanagh elsewhere in the world. Therefore, how can his status be significantly improved beyond this?

Great Britain context

During his lifetime, Kavanagh's relationship with a British readership was chequered and often challenging. Macmillan, his British publisher for his first collection (*Ploughman and Other Poems*) rejected publishing his final collection. At the height of his creativity, at the time of the Second World War, Ireland's neutrality also counted against him in this environment. Some of his work had been banned or censored. To compound these struggles, his unpredictable behaviour and lack of tact and diplomacy damaged any chances of a developing a proper British readership through the channels of the publishing establishment. A new way has to be found to excite British readers to Kavanagh's work.

International context

Kavanagh's work needs to be situated more within an international context, with connections made to other poets through theme or style - Kavanagh as a great observer of country life in the tradition of John Clare, as a challenger of the status quo and false pieties like Bertolt Brecht or as a visionary poet like William Blake. Kavanagh inhabits all these personae in his writing. Were slim, single theme compilations of his nature or spiritual poetry to be produced this might be a way of reaching the hearts and minds of a new international readership.

The international modernist

The soubriquet of 'peasant poet' (a term Kavanagh himself hated) has done his work a great disservice for Kavanagh was in fact a modernist poet who admired W. H. Auden, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Marianne Moore, Robert Frost and whose favourite books were *Moby Dick* by Hermann Melville and *Ulysses* by James Joyce. There is no dichotomy between the rural and the modern; in Kavanagh they were brilliantly combined and this should be acknowledged more and built upon to help his UK and international profile.

Accessibility

There is a serious need to have Kavanagh's work more easily available. For example, his work is absent from most of the major bookstores in London such as Waterstones (Piccadilly), Foyles (Charing Cross Road) and Hatchards (Piccadilly). If he can't be found there then he most certainly won't be available in the poetry section of bookshops around the UK. In a recent interview, Anne Enright commented that the book she most likes to give as a gift is Patrick Kavanagh's *Collected Poems* but, she says, a nice edition is hard to find.² If a nice edition can't be found in Ireland, it certainly won't be found elsewhere in the world.

1 Newstalk: The Green Fool: Did the World Overlook Patrick Kavanagh? 26th October, 2017

2 The Guardian: October 6th, 2017

...he (Kavanagh) is quoted by global celebrities such as the former President of the United States Barack Obama and Oscar winning film actor Russell Crowe.



Kavanagh needs high profile advocates in the literary/arts world who will introduce and promote his work internationally at poetry and literature festivals, who will demonstrate the connections that Kavanagh has to other poets and countries through his poetry and prose, and who will position him as an international poet who has something to say to all peoples and generations.

*A defect in USA society
Is the absence of that moiety
Of persons who can make the province
A Parnassian metropolis.*

A letter in Verse by Patrick Kavanagh

RECOMMENDATION 4A – GREAT BRITAIN MARKET

We believe the current fashion towards both nature writing and writing on spiritual themes offers real possibilities for promoting Kavanagh's work to the contemporary British market, were it packaged and promoted astutely. The latter can easily be achieved through specially commissioned programmes with BBC radio.

RECOMMENDATION 4B – GLOBAL MARKET

We recommend establishing an annual international destination multi-arts festival in Kavanagh's name with Carrickmacross as its main hub, in tandem with Inniskeen and Castleblayney to complete a triangle within south Monaghan. With professional programming and adequate budget an annual multi-arts festival within Monaghan would offer control in promoting Kavanagh's reputation. Within 5-10 years there would almost certainly be a marked difference internationally in both recognition of Kavanagh and admiration for his work as an international writer.³ A properly resourced Kavanagh Centre can also take up this mantle for international engagement and networking on Kavanagh's behalf throughout the year.

RECOMMENDATION 4C

The Kavanagh Poetry Award is resourced to take on a separate international dimension and run by the new Kavanagh Centre.

3. See: **Ulster University: The Festivals Project: Beckett, Ireland and the Biographical Festival: Friday 17 November 2017 to Saturday 18 November 2017: The Metropolitan Arts Centre in Belfast**

V KAVANAGH - THE MAN FROM MUCKER



The first library book he borrowed was T S Eliot's *The Waste Land*

The complete human story of Patrick Kavanagh should be told to the public within Inniskeen in a forthright and prominent way alongside the celebration of his work. Not only is it a remarkable life story in its own right and of potential keen interest to a new generation of Kavanagh fans but it is also a striking reflection of a difficult time in Irish history (post Civil War and the period between two World Wars) and as such it shouldn't be divorced from the work - in fact the circumstances of his life had a huge bearing on his creative work. The life story well told would therefore offer a helpful illumination on much of the poetry and on Kavanagh's uniquely Irish experience. As Lucy Collins from UCD wrote recently, 'His work challenges readers to open their minds to what is new and rebellious in literature, and to recognise the shaping force of their own lived experience in the encounter with art.'¹

Born in 1904 amidst a clutch of the 20th century's great poets and writers (Beckett b.1906, Auden b.1907), Kavanagh's start in life was very different indeed: rural working class, a cobbler's son who left school at the age of thirteen. His beginnings in this respect were not unlike another cobbler's son, but of the nineteenth century, Hans Christian Anderson.

Kavanagh therefore was essentially self-educated. Libraries were important to him, the first book he borrowed was T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Alongside his reading and writing, he spent twenty-two years (after leaving school) working on the land. Out of this intimate experience, he wrote wonderfully lyrical yet realistic poems on the rural Irish experience. Eventually though the pull of Dublin was too strong and he walked the eighty miles there, from the relative remoteness of Monaghan to the cultural centre of Ireland that was Dublin. His Monaghan upbringing though would produce rejection and class snobbishness in the circles he moved amongst.

But Kavanagh kept on writing. He produced one of Ireland's great epic poems, *The Great Hunger* (parts of which John Betjeman arranged to be included in a special Irish edition of *Horizon magazine*), his poem, *Raglan Road*, would become one of the most famous of Irish Love ballads, a memoir (*The Green Fool*) and a novel (*Tarry Flynn*) that are brilliant comic capturings of rural life, and late on, in a poetic re-birth, some of the most transcendental poetry ever written. Religion as a theme and in the richness of its imagery spurred his imagination.

He was rejected by publishers, his work was censored, copies of his books burned; it was a difficult and challenging life. Ironically the year of his death (1967) was the turning point year in contemporary 20th century culture, the beginnings of societal freedom and individualism that Kavanagh never got to experience.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Foreground the roguish, difficult life of Kavanagh in all conversations and presentations – Patrick Kavanagh Centre, Festival, promotional literature. Absenting it or leaving it in the shadows betokens an apology for his life actions that may be seen by some to diminish the work itself. The poet comes across stronger with his whole story outed and shouted rather than one part of it whispered through historical social mores.

1 *Exhibition brochure: Kavanagh Reconsidered: Special Collections Reading Room, UCD: Curator, Dr. Lucy Collins. UCD School of English, Drama and Film*

VI KAVANAGH AND THE SPIRITUAL

THE SPIRITUAL TODAY



Eckhart Tolle

In most bookshops today, Alternative-Mind-Body-Spirit sections are commonplace. One of the first writers globally to popularise this area was Eckhart Tolle, described by the New York Times in 2008 as 'the most popular spiritual author in the United States' but the spiritual theme now extends beyond the written word into film, experiential travel, curated walks, yoga, mindfulness, etc. It's very much a millennial early 21st century phenomenon. The power of the spiritual poem in film was beautifully demonstrated by the reading of W. H. Auden's poem, *Stop All the Clocks*, in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. More recently, the young poet, Rupi Kaur's book, *Milk and Honey*, with its spiritual explorations, has sold half a million copies and a new film on Zen Buddhism monks, *Walk With Me*, is narrated by Benedict Cumberbatch. The examples are unending. We believe there is a healthy portion of Kavanagh's work that if collected together under the 'spiritual' theme would find a new wider audience for Kavanagh across the globe.

Kavanagh's spirit

The focus on Patrick Kavanagh's life, particularly his struggles in Dublin with poverty and his ongoing disagreements and disputes with other cultural figures, though needing to be told can be in danger of obscuring the wonderful purity of some of Kavanagh's poetry - poetry that has an extraordinary spiritual quality, perhaps most of all in relation to nature. Kavanagh had the great ability to cast off his personal troubles and write poetry that was visionary and up-lifting and that reaches out way beyond his own time and society. This aspect of Kavanagh's poetry is particularly topical, at a time when there is enormous interest in nature-writing and in the spiritual life (e.g. mindfulness).

Some of the lines in Kavanagh's poetry have a wonderful stand-alone quality to them which works beautifully in the context of the spiritual uplift that people are seeking. Lines such as the following from *Is*:

*The only true teaching
Subsists in watching
Things moving or just colour
Without comment from the scholar.*

Or from *The Hospital*:

*But nothing whatever is by love debarred,
The common and banal her heat can know.
The corridor led to a stairway and below
Was the inexhaustible adventure of a gravelled yard.*

Social media can also potentially play an important role in promoting this strand of Kavanagh's poetry, particularly through the newly-resourced Kavanagh Centre. Below is a pool of poems from which we believe could be part of a Kavanagh *Spiritual Poems* selection, which we believe, if promoted properly, could sell extremely well. Many of these examples reference God. There are over thirty poems enumerated here and the list is not complete. *To a coltsfoot blossom, To the Man After the harrow, On Reading a Book on Common Wild Flowers, October, One, Lines Written on a Seat on the Grand Canal, Dublin, Having to Live in the Country, Shancoduff, Four Birds, Peasant, A Bat, Drifting Leaves, Furrow, Plough-horses, Poplar Memory, The Seed and the Soil, Creation, Snail, Stony Grey Soil, Spray-ing the Potatoes, Poor Cat, Ante-Natal Dream, Threshing Morning*

Social media can potentially play an important role in promoting this strand of Kavanagh's poetry

RECOMMENDATION 6A

A slim volume publication of Kavanagh's *Best Spiritual Poems*

RECOMMENDATION 6B

A 21st century 'Kavanagh Monthly' campaign. Release one epigrammatic line or two from Kavanagh's store of spiritual wisdom as a promotional exercise to sustainably rebuild his profile worldwide among a specialist audience interest. Encourage members of the public to sign on to Google Alert whereby they will receive regular email of Kavanagh excerpts.

VII KAVANAGH'S NATURE

Nature Writing Today



It may be because nature is so under threat currently but our interest in this subject has never been greater. There is an extraordinary range of brilliant writers exploring the subject of nature, such as Robert MacFarlane, Mark Cocker, Kathleen Jamie, Richard Mabey in the UK and in Ireland, Padraic Fogarty, Tim Robinson and Eric Dempsey. Indeed, MacFarlane described Kavanagh as 'the great poet of the Irish mundane.'¹ David Attenborough's recent Blue Planet II was named UK programme of the year, the BBC's SpringWatch and AutumnWatch are viewed by millions, thousands participate in birdwatch surveys of their gardens and the ecology movement goes from strength to strength. We believe this is another segment opportunity area to bring Kavanagh into focus through selecting out a complement of his nature poems to stand alone.

Kavanagh's role

Few writers knew nature better than Patrick Kavanagh, the seasons of the years, the particularity of each month, its flora and fauna. As the poet Gerard Smyth has written " 'Stony Grey Soil... ' With just those three immortal words he managed to conjure not just an image of a place and its physical identity, but its very spirit."² Kavanagh though was able to not only capture nature in his native Monaghan but to find nature on the streets of Dublin as well, most notably through his Grand Canal poems. So, as with his spiritual writing, a slim selection of his nature poetry has the potential to do well and bring a new readership to Kavanagh. Lines such as the following reveal his wonderful engagement with the natural world.

*O unworn world enrapture me, enrapture me in a web
Of fabulous grass and eternal voices by a beech*

(from Canal Bank Walk)

*The wet leaves of the cocksfoot
Polished my boot as I
Went round by the glistening bog-holes
Lost in unthinking joy*

(from Threshing Morning)

The following is a pool of 24 poems relating to nature that could be considered for collective publication, and this is by no means an exhaustive list.

To a coltsfoot blossom, To the man after the harrow, On reading a book on common wild flowers, October, One, Lines written on a seat on the Grand Canal, Having to live in the country, Shancoduff, Four birds, Peasant, A Bat, Drifting leaves, Furrow, Plough Horses, Polars, The seed and the soil, Creation, Snail, Stony grey soil, Spraying the potatoes, Poor Cat, Ante-Natal Dream, On reading a book on common wild flowers, Threshing Morning

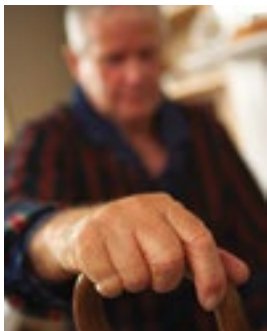
RECOMMENDATION 7

Publication of a slim volume of Kavanagh's best nature poetry

1 The Irish Times: November 30th, 2017

2 The Guardian: 30th July, 2005

VIII ILLNESS AND HOSPITALIZATION: CREATING REBIRTH



In 1955 Patrick Kavanagh was diagnosed with cancer and underwent surgery at the Rialto Hospital, having a lung and rib removed. Having felt fatalistic in advance of the operation, he later looked back on the two months of hospital recuperation as the happiest in his life. As he wrote in *The Hospital*: 'A year ago I fell in love with the functional ward /Of a chest hospital'. Partly this was because the fixed routine of hospital life was a welcome change from the disorder of his ordinary days and because he didn't have to worry about bills and debts, but more than anything it was the pure joy of being alive. As so often with Kavanagh he made connections between happiness and his Monaghan childhood.

*'Through the windows I capture experiences of light amid the roofs of St. Kevin's that have the eternal quality of a childhood memory'*¹

Poetry as a life-affirming riposte to illness

Where others might have allowed illness to stop them in their tracks or to resort to self-pity, Kavanagh instead rose to the challenge and out of the experience came poems of wonderful intensity and gratitude, the distillation of a life's craft, knowledge and experience, indeed some of his most famous poems such as *Canal Bank Walk* and *Lines Written on a Seat on the Grand Canal, Dublin*. They are a celebration of the smallest details of the world and of a soul delighting in being abroad amongst that world. Kavanagh spent much of his rehabilitation haunting the Grand Canal to the west of Baggot Street where he lay on the grass by the canal. 'The canal bank, with its dry wiry grass, was like 'a little sample' of the fields of Drumnagrella or Shancoduff.'²

As so often with Kavanagh he made connections between happiness and his Monaghan childhood

The potential for the reading of poetry as a life-affirming riposte to illness has not been properly acknowledged, though that is beginning to change. An anthology published last autumn, *The Poetry Pharmacy: Tried-and-True Prescriptions for the Heart, Mind and Soul*,³ celebrates the ability of poetry to comfort and inspire, and perhaps more than anything to reassure those suffering from physical or mental illness that they are not alone.

This is also a powerful aspect of Kavanagh's late poetry but has, we believe, been greatly undervalued in terms of its contemporary relevance. With an ageing population and the consequent increase in illness (a recent report⁴ by Cancer Research UK has stated that in the UK one in two people will develop cancer at some point in their lives) Kavanagh's experiences, his recovery from illness and the subsequent poetry offer inspiration for those who may be undergoing treatment and/or recuperation. His writing could be of great comfort and hope and therefore we believe it should be available to cancer support groups and to organisations such as the Marie Keating Foundation plus, in the UK, the MacMillan Cancer Support or the Marie Curie network.

RECOMMENDATION 8

Position selected Kavanagh's poetry as an inspiration for well-being, within health and hospital facilities, pilot tested in Monaghan with a view to being adopted further afield. Of course, the work of Kavanagh would not be alone in having this potential but the combination of his own life story, his illness, and the ease with which the ordinary person can absorb and relate to his poetry situates him extremely well for this kind of promotional push by which his work can be viewed anew in more unorthodox environments.

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- 1 Patrick Kavanagh: *Hospital Notebook*
 - 2 Antoinette Quinn: *Patrick Kavanagh: A Biography*
 - 3 Edited by William Sieghart. Published by Particular Books, 2017
 - 4 *British Journal of Cancer*

IX 'UNHURRIED SIMPLICITY': KAVANAGH'S POETRY FOR RURAL TOURISM



The desire to get away from the stresses of the everyday is now a core part of many people's lives. There is a movement away from the speed of contemporary life and towards a technology and social media detox; a yearning for cleaner air, quietness, stillness, a nostalgia for the past and its ways. And often this desire is linked to rural life and to the perceived calm it offers. As *Teagasc* put it in a recent report, 'The last 35 years have seen a growth in

rural tourism as urban populations are increasingly seeking leisure and relaxation in the countryside. Rural areas around the world are offering opportunities ranging from traditional countryside activities, walking, mountaineering, cycling, horse riding, angling, bird watching and foraging... Rural areas are endowed with the required natural resources and quiet picturesque settings necessary to enable tourists to experience tranquillity and a slower pace of life, as an alternative to the perceived pressures and constraints of urban life.'¹ The development of the Wild Atlantic Way has produced a major boost for rural tourism in Ireland. But what of inland counties for whom activities such as water-sports, beach-walking, sunsets over water, views to the horizon, etc. are not an option?

Poetry and rural tourism go together. It's our belief that the combination of Patrick Kavanagh and rural life in Monaghan could be a powerful and attractive opportunity. Kavanagh of course wrote some articles for the *Irish Farmers' Journal* and he exemplifies rural experiences through both his own life and through his writing: the landscape, the farming life, the seasons, etc. It's a lifestyle that has now to some extent disappeared but Monaghan, unlike some other Irish counties, has not been overrun by modernisation and retains strong links, both physical and emotional, to its past. There are many potential tourists whose parents or grandparents came out of a rural or farming tradition for whom the opportunity to experience this life, heightened by the sensibility of a poet as great as Kavanagh, could be very attractive. Monaghan's rural tourism design already provides a Greenway Project and considerations are currently being given to collaborating with neighbouring counties for a larger Greenway Project that could bring in Carrickmacross and Inniskeen.

A drive to attract these tourists could be led by the figure of Kavanagh, a promotion that doesn't just focus on his life and writing but on wider opportunities to experience the county's qualities in terms of exercise, tranquillity or relaxation, that might include farmhouse stays, hotel retreats, private accommodation tucked away in remote areas, etc. Ideally such a promotion could be linked to a Kavanagh festival weekend so that visitors could enjoy the best of both worlds.

Poetry and
rural tourism go
together

RECOMMENDATION 9A

Allied to the above, and supporting it, there needs to be the physical presence of Kavanagh's words, visible across County Monaghan, north and south (see *The Great Hunger* section recommendations). The county's latent ruralism of a time past needs to be transformed into a contemporary rural tourism brand which offers cycling, walks, hostels, farm stays – and poetry. Monaghan to be profiled not as a lost domain but as a desirable landscape to lose oneself in.

RECOMMENDATION 9B

A rural literary tourism brand for County Monaghan that could be potentially inspired by the line 'The bicycles go by in twos and threes' from Kavanagh's poem *Inniskeen Road: July Evening*.

RECOMMENDATION 9C

Patrick Kavanagh's poetic immortalisations of rural Monaghan (as identified in the Sheridan Woods Literary Landscape Character Assessment Survey) should be ring-fenced for future conservation as central to Monaghan's rural literary tourism drive.

1 *Teagasc: Agriculture and Food Development Authority. Rural Tourism (2016)*

X 'THE PLOUGH AND THE CUT WORM' - A YOUNG AUDIENCE FOR 2023



For many young Irish poets, Patrick Kavanagh was liberating. His subject matter, his tone, his belief in the parochial, all connected to those who aspired to write. His background and lifestyle were not daunting in the way of Yeats. The poet Martina Evans wrote that Kavanagh 'looked and sounded like a relative.'¹ Most famously, he had a huge influence on Seamus Heaney, as Heaney wrote of Kavanagh 'Meeting him on the page had been a transformative experience.'² Heaney recognised immediately the two aspects of Kavanagh that made him unique, 'bag-apron realism and far-horizon vision.'³ Writers are usually realists or visionaries, Kavanagh was both: as he wrote in *The Great Hunger*, 'Is there some light of imagination in these wet clods?'

Young people

Kavanagh offers a distinctive way into poetry for young people, both in Ireland and internationally. His work is accessible in its subject matter but it also, particularly in the late poems, has an idealistic, Edenic quality that would appeal to the young. All poets need a young readership if they are going to remain relevant and inspiring. Kavanagh's work, both poetry and prose, has the capacity to attract and excite young people, in part because his rural themes will strike a chord with those of a similar background and because his visionary take on the world chimes with that of the young. In his spiritual and nature poetry there is no cynicism in Kavanagh, the world is newly-minted and thrilling.

All poets need a young readership

It makes it all the more disappointing that his work has been taken off the Leaving Certificate curriculum and it cannot be stressed strongly enough how important it is to have Kavanagh's poetry back again on the curriculum. As Oliver Callan has recently commented, "The key thing is the leaving cert. He last appeared in 2012. The earliest opportunity to get him back on is 2023."⁴

There is a danger though of simplifying Kavanagh. Frank Sewell, Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing and Irish Literature in English, in a recent radio documentary on Kavanagh, worried that his work might be 'simplified or remembered in a way that is more narrow than he deserves. Let him be remembered in the round.'⁵

In many ways Kavanagh is a national poet in ways that Yeats isn't. He is both rural and urban, of the people, realistic and visionary, pagan and religious, and this offers a way of presenting Kavanagh to the world, a poet who understands what it is to be Irish and yet who transcends the national again and again.

RECOMMENDATION 10

KAVANAGH 2023: Efforts should begin now to have Kavanagh's work reinstated in the School Curriculum from 2023 onwards.

1 Irish Times: 25th November, 2017

2 Irish Times: 21st October, 2004

3 Irish Times: 21st October 2004

4 The Times, 1st December, 2017

5 Newstalk: The Green Fool: Did the World Overlook Patrick Kavanagh? 26th November, 2017

XI THE GREAT GAME CHANGER - SEAMUS HEANEY HOMEPLACE



With its first year high-profile success, HomePlace is now a game changer for any similar celebratory consideration of a past Irish writer, south or north of the border. It has to be the benchmark for the newly remodelled Kavanagh Centre to measure itself against. Given HomePlace has been built in Northern Ireland, it should offer encouragement in galvanising an equal response for a similarly significant poet south of the border. The front running contenders could only be Yeats or Kavanagh, Sligo or Monaghan.

Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney died in August, 2013. His unexpected death was a significant shock and loss to his close family but also the Irish nation at large, south and north of the border. Within three years Ireland's first purpose built, large-scale literature centre opened in his name (Seamus Heaney HomePlace 2016) in his home village of Bellaghy, to

celebrate his life and work. The scale of the building is enormous and surprised all. The chutzpah and confidence of a startlingly significant large-scale enterprise (2000 sqm) for a first time literature centre has paid off handsomely for Mid Ulster's profile and tourism figures. The Northern Ireland arts and culture scene 'outside of Belfast' has also greatly benefited.

Seamus Heaney Homeplace demonstrates that a major cultural building can succeed in what was previously considered the middle of nowhere, an entirely rural location forty-five minutes away from either of Northern Ireland's first and second cities. Bellaghy village has a population of just over 1,000 and the nearest sizeable town, Magherafelt, three miles away, has a population of 8,000. A more cautious and conservative approach would have been to site such a building in the capital, Belfast. Its ambition as an artistic public facility is unique in 21st century rural Ireland.

HomePlace is a superb model of success and its steps to success are both a gift in setting precedent and importantly instructive to any future Kavanagh Centre remodelling:

Magherafelt District Council (now Mid Ulster Council) approached the Heaney family for permission to build a dedicated, purpose-built Centre in memory of Seamus Heaney. Considering the relatively recent nature of the poet's death, the family's agreement was a signally generous and courageous gesture.

The **Mid Ulster Council** committed an upfront investment of £3.2m of its own funds towards the overall £4.5m capital costs and a further commitment of £500,000 towards annual running costs¹. The local council led and took the first step without waiting for commitment from others. The SHHP is owned and operated by Mid Ulster Council.

Central government and other agencies fell in behind and many put money in without quibble. The Northern Irish government through the efforts of the Mid Ulster MLA and **Deputy First Minister** (Martin McGuinness) injected a further £1m towards the capital costs.

The **Strategic Investment Board of Northern Ireland** (SIBNI) involved itself from the outset to assist and safeguard early stage development.

The **Arts Council of Northern Ireland** (ACNI) backed the project from the outset as one of its core priorities, resulting in an investment of £180,000 to the Opening Year programming and associated costs.

Mid-Ulster Council
committed
an upfront
investment of
£3.2m

1 <https://www.thestage.co.uk/features/2017/homeplace-how-a-cultural-hotspot-revived-seamus-heaneys-eden/>



Tourism NI also immediately positioned SHHP as one of its top unique tourism assets for NI.

A Centre Manager was appointed 18 months before opening. Professional consultants were hired to produce a world-class state-of-the-art exhibition space. Professional arts consultants were also hired to programme an Opening Year international artistic programme in the 190 seat performance space before handing over to the internal programmer from Year 2.

It is believed that a compliment of 19 full time staff run the centre.

The **Heritage Lottery NI** in 2016 awarded c.£750,000 towards a literary sculpture trail

within the surrounding 3mile radius deeply associated with Heaney's poetry.

HomePlace scooped **three awards** in its first year of operation: Best Visitor and International Centre by the Association of Heritage International (AHI) at its UK wide Heritage Awards; Best Local Authority Tourism Initiative at NILGA (NI Local Government Association) Awards and thirdly Best NI Visitor Attraction 2017 at the Northern Ireland Travel and Tourism Awards. 40,000 visitors from 20 countries visited the centre in its opening year of operation.

Reflecting on the success of the first year of HomePlace, Chair of Mid Ulster District Council, Councillor Kim Ashton, said:

"The local, national and international response to Seamus Heaney HomePlace over the past year has been quite remarkable. Whether people come to the centre knowing Seamus Heaney's work or being unfamiliar with it, the HomePlace experience moves and inspires them and we have hundreds and hundreds of comment cards from visitors of all ages, backgrounds and nationalities who tell us so.

"I believe that HomePlace quite simply tells us a story, but a very personal one, of an ordinary boy from an ordinary rural place who, while he grew up to become one of our greatest writers, never lost the connections with and passion for his roots. That is what speaks to people when they visit HomePlace.

"The support of the local community for HomePlace has also been very evident and that of partner organisations, particularly the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and Tourism NI, has been invaluable throughout the year".

A major cultural building can succeed in what was previously considered the middle of nowhere

XII INNISKEEN'S PATRICK KAVANAGH CENTRE – A RE-MODELLING



*Art Agnew, Rosaleen
Kearney and Patsy
McKenna*

Any consideration of the the Patrick Kavanagh Centre has to begin with an expression of unstinted admiration for the voluntary work of Rosaleen Kearney, Art Agnew and others who have worked tirelessly over many years to staff the centre and keep a dialogue open between Kavanagh and the public.

As laid out in the previous section though, the creation of Seamus Heaney Homeplace has been a huge game-changer in the context of literature centre development in Ireland, north and south. Along with, for example, Titanic Belfast it has demonstrated the substantial potential for place-focused, high-quality, interactive cultural centres on a major scale.

The execution of the exhibition within HomePlace has been of an exemplary high standard, undertaken by the same designers for the Titanic Museum. The revisioning of the Patrick Kavanagh Centre needs to begin with a similar level of ambition. No corners should be cut, it must become the jewel in the crown for Kavanagh Country, South Monaghan, and for the overall brand for Monaghan globally. As with HomePlace, if high-level investment takes place then the Kavanagh Centre will also prove to be the leading Literary Tourism investment north of Dublin just as HomePlace has been outside Belfast.

A revised exhibition and narrative at the Kavanagh Centre has the potential to be the flagship by which Kavanagh is revealed anew, over and above the currently accepted and assumed perception of the man and his poetry (much as this report is also striving to do). It can show how vital and relevant Kavanagh is to contemporary Irish culture, just as Heaney's relevance to contemporary Northern Irish culture is being recognised at HomePlace.

Viability

In the early days of the idea for HomePlace, there was considerable doubt as to how a rural 'middle-of-nowhere' small village could sustain a major new tourism facility. Where would audiences and visitors come from? Yet it's worth noting that Bellaghy is equidistant from Northern Ireland's two major cities, Belfast and Derry, and only three miles off the main Belfast-Derry M2 road. So it could be argued that it was actually in the centre of everywhere rather than the middle of nowhere. The Kavanagh Centre shares these qualities with an encouraging near-geographic matrix: it is only 10km away from the M1 between Dublin and Belfast, it is also equidistant between Dublin and Belfast (off the M1), 95km from Belfast and 97k from Dublin (albeit 30 mins more travel than HomePlace is from Derry or Belfast). However, this extra distance for audience attraction is counterbalanced by Inniskeen's proximity to Dundalk; its population of 63,000 is only 15km away. Dundalk, even though it's in County Louth, ought to be an important constituent in the concept and development of Kavanagh Country.

Add a performance space

HomePlace was astute in developing a literary oriented performance space, the Helicon (capacity 190) within its facility recognising that a year-round programme of events can tap into the evening economy and help in part to solve the challenge of persuading visitors to return again and again once they have seen the exhibition. A performance programme also of course strengthens the relationship between HomePlace and the local population who have become regular attenders for events continually renewing their pride and commitment to the facility.

We recognise that the Patrick Kavanagh Centre as a non new-build simply doesn't have the necessary space to incorporate both an exhibition and a performance space, and that the focus of the centre will be on the exhibition element interpreting Kavanagh's life and work. But we feel that there needs to be a year-round programme of events that will bring tourists back to the area and that will be a sustaining focus and an attraction for a local audience.

RECOMMENDATION 12A

Our recommendation is that a small studio literary-led performance space be identified in Carrickmacross - an intimate space with audiences seated in the round with a capacity of around 60 - 80. The close connection between Inniskeen and Carrickmacross in Kavanagh's life story makes for an ideal connection with the Kavanagh Centre in Inniskeen and the talks-performance space in Carrickmacross co-promoting each other. We would also recommend that the running of the studio space be possibly given to the Carrickmacross Arts Festival, who have already demonstrated their ability to bring audiences to the town, and would also be an excellent way of engaging a younger, cross-arts audience with Kavanagh's life and work.

For larger-scale performance work, though a little further away from Inniskeen, the Iontas Arts and Community Resource Centre in Castleblayney with a 300-seat theatre that can be adapted to a 100 seater space would be an ideal collaborator. Thus there is a triangular cluster of Kavanagh outlets representing south Monaghan.

RECOMMENDATION 12B

We also recommend a part name change to find a suffix (instead of the word 'centre'), ideally from the poetry, to the writer's name equal to HomePlace for Seamus Heaney.

XIII CARRICKMACROSS, CASTLEBLAYNEY AND DUNDALK



Carrickmacross has a regular presence in Kavanagh's poetry and prose. Situated eleven kilometres from Inniskeen, the road between the two places was one that Kavanagh walked regularly, for example on Fair days in Carrickmacross. Specific buildings are referenced as is the geography of the town. We feel that Carrickmacross should be the hub for an annual international multi-arts festival (weekend-long) on Kavanagh as a way forward in promoting the poet, along the lines of the recent literary bio-festivals Happy Days Enniskillen International Beckett Festival and the Lughnasa Frielfest in Derry-Londonderry & Donegal. The town has the infrastructure in terms of hotels, guesthouses, cafes and restaurants. It has already demonstrated the viability of a festival

through the holding of the annual general arts Carrickmacross Arts Festival. There is also scope to use buildings in the town as venues for events, e.g. the recently renovated Workhouse, now a Famine Museum and community resource, which is referenced in Kavanagh's prose and has a very powerful place in the town's history.

Carrickmacross' proximity to Inniskeen means that Kavanagh's birth-place and surrounds can play a central part in the festival, perhaps hosting some site-specific events, and coach tours from Carrickmacross can be organised as part of the festival (to be led by a staff member of the Kavanagh Centre). Indeed the road between Inniskeen and Carrickmacross could be the focus for a site-specific event or an opportunity to invite an artist to engage in some way with the road, bearing in mind its significance in Kavanagh's life-story and poetry.

We feel that for Inniskeen & PKC to thrive and not be isolated the surrounding wider Kavanagh area also needs to be animated, and only within a broader area that involves Carrickmacross and even Castleblayney can this happen – any international multi-arts festival ought to embrace the theatre facility in Castleblayney as part of its programming. The inclusion of Carrickmacross and Castleblayney through an international multi-arts festival would also entice tourists to stay overnight and invest into the local economy. It offers a hub and a focus for tourist activity, thereby giving those tourists the chance to get to know Monaghan better and ideally to return at some future date.

For Inniskeen and Patrick Kavanagh Centre to thrive and not be isolated the surrounding wider Kavanagh area also needs to be animated.

RECOMMENDATION 13A

That Carrickmacross be made a supporting major gateway to Inniskeen PKC and Kavanagh Country with Castleblayney to a lesser extent also visibly engaged in Kavanagh Country events and exhibitions.

RECOMMENDATION 13B

That a new annual literary-led international multi-arts festival be established in Carrickmacross & across south Monaghan in Patrick Kavanagh's name to spearhead global media and tourism interest in County Monaghan through Kavanagh Country year on year. One-off medium to large scale festivals are very helpful constructs within the cultural sector in promoting and raising the profile of the other year-long cultural infrastructures such as the Patrick Kavanagh Centre.

RECOMMENDATION 13C

We recommend that Monaghan County Council formally invite Dundalk into Kavanagh Country project development, to play a role as its eastern gateway given its importance to Kavanagh's early literary development. The Dundalk involvement could help bolster M1 branding for Kavanagh Country. Dundalk library and Dundalk's arts bodies and venues could provide added infrastructure support to help promote Kavanagh on a year-round basis. In return, Dundalk could gain a useful boon to its cultural tourism reputation.

XIV KAVANAGH'S MONTHLY PRESENCE: A CALENDAR AUDIT OF THE POETRY

A year round programme of Kavanagh inspired events ought to be an occurrence as natural as the seasons themselves

Seán Doran and Liam Browne of DoranBrowne were invited by the Mid Ulster Council to design the Opening Year Programme of events for the recently built Seamus Heaney HomePlace literature centre (October 2016). The events were to take place principally in the Helicon performance space (190 cap.) within the HomePlace building. Noting that Heaney produced 12 poetry collections across his lifetime the concept of '12 months 12 books' was laid down whereby each month - beginning in October 2016 with Heaney's first collection *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) and finishing in September 2017 with the poet's last collection *Human Chain* (2010) - featured multi-arts responses to each poetry collection. This concept provided a single focus for a year-long diverse artistic programme across different art forms, journeying through Heaney's creative life in leaps of 4-6 years each month. Serendipitously the chronological order of Heaney's collections over a lifetime matched the seasonal months of the year on many occasions, for example - *Station Island* (1984) in March, *Wintering Out* (1972) in December, *Door into the Dark* (1969) in November, *Seeing Things* (1996) in May (the luminous month), *The Spirit Level* (2001) in June at mid year and *Field Work* (1979) in February the beginning of the Celtic spring.

With Kavanagh, who continued to work as a farmer almost into middle age, the seasons and months of the year mattered more and were deep in his DNA. This is immediately obvious through his constant reference to the months of the year in his poetry, possibly as much as 80% of his poetic output. Some poems mention two or more months whilst *The Great Hunger* cites nine different months with some (particularly April) repeated regularly. A number of months are made titles of poems – *March, April, After May, June Evening, July Evening, August Bank Holiday, October* and *November Song*. Although there is the occasional use of a month as a literary device, it's rare because it's the working of the land with its seasons that is hard-wired in Kavanagh's mind. There are also many mentions of the seasons – Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter – that we haven't included in the audit below, with the exception of Summer because it has such a dense presence in Kavanagh's poems.

On the basis of this unique aspect to Kavanagh, we decided to audit the various mentions of months throughout Kavanagh's work as published in the *Complete Poems* with a view to considering how this might be useful subsequently from a tourism angle in an Opening Year programme to help launch the newly-remodelled Kavanagh Centre. There are a number of interesting features and pointers to note:

The highest density of mentions are in the summer - 'summer' and July. Harvest time for most crops. As Harry Clifton put it: 'In Kavanagh's finest work it is always high summer'. This would suggest building up the summer activity on Kavanagh around the already existing 'July Evening' festival in Inniskeen as a way of expanding a share of Ireland's high season visitors' tourism market.

Uniquely to Kavanagh, December is also one of the highest performing months because Kavanagh had such a soft spot for Christmas and childhood. Monaghan could be annually creating something special around Kavanagh's work for families and children in this month as a destination attraction to the regional-national tourism market.

April is the third best performing period in month name-checking, the month mostly associated with Spring proper and with the planting of potatoes.

January and February have the least mentions. These of course are the farm maintenance months.

Sustainable arts event programming year on year for a venue operates best when able to programme diversely for a wide range of audiences across the 365 days of the year. However, the downside of this strategy is that focus is often lost which is key to sustaining audiences. Kavanagh's work itself though offers a new Kavanagh Centre a unique ready-made calendar for its own programming focus – highest in the summer for tourists (July/August with 20 mentions), equally highest in December for children/families (13 mentions), April (13 mentions) followed by May (10 mentions) as high core arts programming months and January (2 mentions) & February (4 mentions) as lowest programming months from a tourism point of view.

MONTHLY AUDIT OF KAVANAGH CALENDAR POEMS



JANUARY (2)	Advent, New Year
FEBRUARY (4)	Immense event, Beech Tree, The Great Hunger, Valentine
MARCH (5)	March, March is a silversmith, Spring Day, The Great Hunger, Homeward
APRIL (13)	April, April Dusk, Wet Evening in April, One, Our lady's tumbler (Easter), Mary, To the man after the harrow, A wind, Polar Memory, The Great Hunger, A lover's Lenten dream, The Wake of Books, A View of God and the devil. (Easter is assigned to April)
MAY (10)	After May, May Evening, Question to life, , From the Meath Hospital, For my niece, The Great Hunger, Bluebells for Love, Why Sorrow, On Raglan Road, Adventures in the Bohemian Jungle
JUNE (5)	June Evening, Reflections on a Summer morning walk no. 2, The Great Hunger, In memory of my Mother, All Sorrow
JULY (11)	July Evening, July 1959, Inniskeen Road: July Evening, , Lines written on a seat on the Grand Canal, One wet summer, The Great Hunger, Lough Derg, The Twelfth of July, All Sorrow, Common Beauty, Ante-Natal Dream
+ 'Summer' (8)	Cool Water under bridges , Along the Grand Canal, My Powers, What to offer, Moment on the Canal, Summer morning walk, Thus a poet dies, Return in Harvest
AUGUST (1)	August Bank Holiday
SEPTEMBER (5)	Remembered country, Tarry Flynn, Temptation Harvest, The Rocky Present, Innocence
OCTOBER (8)	October, October Time, October 1943, My birthday, Memories of my father, The Great Hunger, The Wake of Books, In Looking into E.V.Rieu's Homer
NOVEMBER (5)	November Song, The Self-Slaved, If winter comes, On Raglan Road, After Forty Year of Age
DECEMBER (13)	The Christmas Mummers, A Christmas Caper, Christmas eve remembered, Christmas Carol, The old time Christmas Story, Santa Claus, A Christmas Childhood, Winter, The old time Christmas Story, Free soul, Pursuit of an ideal, The Great Hunger, Advent

RECOMMENDATION 14

The poetry itself underpins the notion of providing a year round celebration of responses to Kavanagh's work and locale for local, regional, national and international audiences to enjoy. A year round programme of Kavanagh events ought to be an occurrence as natural as the seasons themselves.

APPENDIX 1

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1: Kavanagh's gift to reshape Monaghan

We recommend that County Monaghan Council invest new faith and finance in a literary tourism narrative that seizes the opportunity to adopt Patrick Kavanagh, as a globally recognized and loved writer, to spearhead the county's revitalization of its overall tourism planning. Although taking a figurehead of the past to lead its cultural tourism strategy has clear generic benefits for the broader community and its various SMEs, there are many contemporary poets, writers and artists living and working in Monaghan who could also gain from a well conceived all-inclusive cultural strategy focused around Kavanagh as one of the great human success stories produced by Monaghan. The Literary Tourism rationale should probably be taken forward by a Council-appointed independent steering group across culture, tourism, community and business to help advise and galvanise.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Redress

We accept we are probably crossing a line here in making a somewhat simplistic comparative analysis between these three poets and are therefore open to rebuke. We don't particularly want to be making excuses linking life conditions to poetic acceptance and hierarchies - that's life as they say. However, we are happy to stick our necks out within the confines of this report's brief to make such a comparative examination of these three poets, already linked together in the Irish mind, in order to illuminate our argument, which is that Kavanagh's 'down on his luck' life has played out also across the fifty years since his death. Left to the market place this will continue to remain so. Whilst Kavanagh's work is greatly loved by the Irish people, that love has not translated into any solid curation by the establishment of his work and reputation, as has been the case with Yeats and Heaney, and therefore only strategic intervention by one or more leading bodies of local and central government – arts & culture, tourism, heritage - can bring about the long-awaited deserved redress and the proper appreciation of Kavanagh's pivotal role in twentieth century Irish poetry.

RECOMMENDATION 3A

Might the 14 sections provide a pilgrimage walk/cycle through South Monaghan? Or can there be 14 'standing stone tablets' chiseled with each section of the poem in the nearest lay-bys close to road entry points around the circumference of County Monaghan, to greet and remind the visitor that Monaghan is the poetic home of *The Great Hunger* the way that America's Midwest is the spiritual home of *The Grapes of Wrath*?

RECOMMENDATION 3B

Co-produce with a quality theatre group or theatre venue (Castleblayney) to create a staging of *The Great Hunger* each summer, or each alternate summer in rotation with *Tarry Flynn* (staged in the Kavanagh Centre?) as a significant tourism attraction for coach itineraries?

As part of owning the poem (in whatever visible manner possible) links should be made with local history museums in Monaghan (with particular emphasis on the Famine) to re-stress the connections between the poem and the Famine (a moment many believe as the beginning of Irish modern consciousness) and thereby pique the interest of American tourists particularly.

RECOMMENDATION 4A – Great Britain market

We believe the current fashion towards both nature writing and writing on spiritual themes offers real possibilities for promoting Kavanagh's work to the contemporary British market, were it packaged and promoted astutely. The latter can easily be achieved through specially commissioned programmes with BBC radio.

RECOMMENDATION 4B – Global market

We recommend establishing an annual international destination multi-arts festival in Kavanagh's name with Carrickmacross as its main hub, in tandem with Inniskeen and Castleblayney to complete a triangle within south Monaghan. With professional programming and adequate budget an annual multi-arts festival within Monaghan would offer control in promoting Kavanagh's reputation. Within 5-10 years there would almost certainly be a marked difference internationally in both recognition of Kavanagh and admiration for his work as an international writer.* A properly resourced Kavanagh Centre can also take up this mantle for international engagement and networking on Kavanagh's behalf throughout the year.

RECOMMENDATION 4C

The Kavanagh Poetry Award is resourced to take on a separate international dimension and run by the new Kavanagh Centre.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Foreground the roguish, difficult life of Kavanagh in all conversations and presentations – Patrick Kavanagh Centre, Festival, promotional literature. Absenting it or leaving it in the shadows betokens an apology for his life actions that may be seen by some to diminish the work itself. The poet comes across stronger with his whole story outed and shouted rather than one part of it whispered through historical social mores.

RECOMMENDATION 6A

A slim volume publication of Kavanagh's *Best Spiritual Poems*

RECOMMENDATION 6B

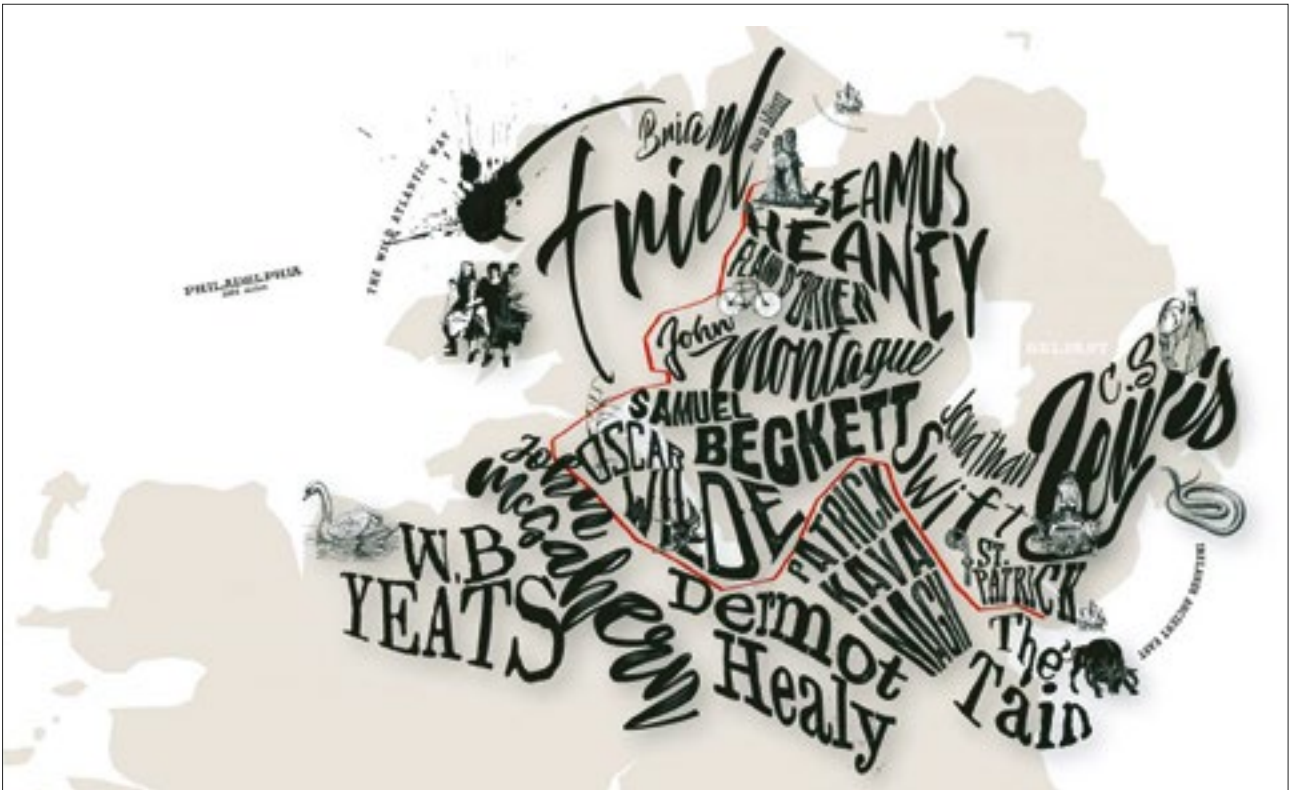
A 21st century 'Kavanagh Monthly' campaign. Release one epigrammatic line or two from Kavanagh's store of spiritual wisdom as a promotional exercise to sustainably rebuild his profile worldwide among a specialist audience interest. Encourage members of the public to sign on to Google Alert whereby they will receive regular email of Kavanagh excerpts.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Publication of a slim volume of Kavanagh's best nature poetry

RECOMMENDATION 8

Position selected Kavanagh's poetry as an inspiration for well-being, within health and hospital facilities, pilot tested in Monaghan with a view to being adopted further afield. Of course, the work of Kavanagh would not be alone in having this potential but the combination of his own life story, his illness, and the ease with which the ordinary person can absorb and relate to his poetry situates him extremely well for this kind of promotional push by which his work can be viewed anew in more unorthodox environments.



RECOMMENDATION 9A

Allied to the above, and supporting it, there needs to be the physical presence of Kavanagh's words, visible across County Monaghan, north and south (see *The Great Hunger* section recommendations). The county's latent ruralism of a time past needs to be transformed into a contemporary rural tourism brand which offers cycling, walks, hostels, farm stays – and poetry. Monaghan to be profiled not as a lost domain but as a desirable landscape to lose oneself in.

RECOMMENDATION 9B

A rural literary tourism brand for County Monaghan that could be potentially inspired by the line 'The bicycles go by in twos and threes' from Kavanagh's poem *Inniskeen Road: July Evening*.

RECOMMENDATION 9C

Patrick Kavanagh's poetic immortalisations of rural Monaghan (as identified in the Sheridan Woods Literary Landscape Character Assessment Survey) should be ring-fenced for future conservation as central to Monaghan's rural literary tourism drive.

RECOMMENDATION 10

KAVANAGH 2023: Efforts should begin now to have Kavanagh's work reinstated in the School Curriculum from 2023 onwards.

RECOMMENDATION 12A

Our recommendation is that a small studio literary-led performance space be identified in Carrickmacross - an intimate space with audiences seated in the round with a capacity of around 60 - 80. The close connection between Inniskeen and Carrickmacross in Kavanagh's life story makes for an ideal connection with the Kavanagh Centre in Inniskeen and the talks-performance space in Carrickmacross co-promoting each other. We would also recommend that the running of the studio space be possibly given to the Carrickmacross Arts Festival, who have already demonstrated their ability to bring audiences to the town, and would also be an excellent way of engaging a younger, cross-arts audience with Kavanagh's life and work.

For larger-scale performance work, though a little further away from Inniskeen, the Lontas Arts and Community Resource Centre in Castleblayney with a 300-seat theatre that can be adapted to a 100 seater space would be an ideal collaborator. Thus there is a triangular cluster of Kavanagh outlets representing south Monaghan.

RECOMMENDATION 12B

We also recommend a part name change to find a suffix, ideally from the poetry, to the writer's name equal to HomePlace for Seamus Heaney.

RECOMMENDATION 13A

That Carrickmacross be made a supporting major gateway to Inniskeen PKC and Kavanagh Country with Castleblayney to a lesser extent also visibly engaged in Kavanagh Country events and exhibitions.

RECOMMENDATION 13B

That a new annual literary-led international multi-arts festival be established in Carrickmacross & across south Monaghan in Patrick Kavanagh's name to spearhead global media and tourism interest in County Monaghan through Kavanagh Country year on year. One-off medium to large scale festivals are very helpful constructs within the cultural sector in promoting and raising the profile of the other year-long cultural infrastructures such as the Patrick Kavanagh Centre.

RECOMMENDATION 13C

We recommend that Monaghan County Council formally invite Dundalk into Kavanagh Country project development, to play a role as its eastern gateway given its importance to Kavanagh's early literary development. The Dundalk involvement could help bolster M1 branding for Kavanagh Country. Dundalk library and Dundalk's arts bodies and venues could provide added infrastructure support to help promote Kavanagh on a year-round basis. In return, Dundalk could gain a useful boon to its cultural tourism reputation.

RECOMMENDATION 14

The poetry itself underpins the notion of providing a year round celebration of responses to Kavanagh's work and locale for local, regional, national and international audiences to enjoy. A year round programme of Kavanagh events ought to be an occurrence as natural as the seasons themselves.

APPENDIX 2

THE AUTHORS



Dr. Seán Doran is a former Artistic Director & Chief Executive of the English National Opera (2003-2006), the first Irishman to lead an English national arts company. Overseeing a £30m budget at ENO he reversed a ten year decline in box office sales and secured the largest ever corporate arts sponsorship in the UK (BSKYB £3m). As ENO Artistic Director he commissioned film director Anthony Minghella's *Madam Butterfly* and Improbable Theatre's *Satyagraha* by Phillip Glass; his first artistic season at ENO was awarded an unprecedented all eight Olivier Award opera nominations. He is also a former Artistic Director & Chief Executive of the Arts Councils of Great Britain Millennium initiative, The UK Year of Literature & Writing 1995 (with former US President Jimmy Carter as its Honorary President) and AD/CEO of the Perth International Arts Festival (University of Western Australia 2000-2003) for which he commissioned Antony Gormley's 51 sculpture installation *Inside Australia* in the Australian desert. In 1997 & 1998 he was appointed Artistic Director of the Belfast Festival at Queen's. In 2012, Seán founded the *Happy Days Enniskillen International Beckett Festival* with support from the UK Cultural Olympiad, followed in 2015 with *A Wilde Weekend* and *Frielfest* and in 2016 the *Paris Beckett Festival*. In 2017 he was appointed Co-Artistic Director with his long-time collaborator Liam Browne for the Seamus Heaney HomePlace Opening Year programme and Liverpool's *Sgt. Pepper at 50* festival for which *The Daily Telegraph* described him: 'now considered the preeminent Festival Director in Europe'. One of the 13 *Sgt. Pepper at 50* commissions *Sgt. Pepper at 50*, the Mark Morris Dance Company's *Pepperland*, was accorded 'Best Show of the Year' by *The Times*. In his early career Seán studied music at the University of East Anglia and then worked as a conductor/artistic director of a music-theatre company in London (Patron Simon Rattle). He was the original co-author for the first *Rough Guide to Ireland* (1988) and wrote some freelance classical music reviews for *The Times*, *Independent* and other media. Seán was awarded the Centenary Medal by the Australian Government in 2001 and received an Honorary Doctorate from Ulster University in 2017.



Liam Browne was born in Derry, Northern Ireland. For many years he worked primarily in the field of literature; he is a former Literature Officer at the South Bank Centre in London, Literature Director of the Brighton Festival and Programme Director of the International Literature Festival Dublin. With Sean Doran he is the co-director of the multi-arts festivals *Happy Days Enniskillen International Beckett Festival* (2012 onwards), *Comment C'est: Paris Beckett* (2016) and *Frielfest* in Derry & Donegal (2015 and 2017). Under their new arts consultancy, DoranBrowne, he co-curated with Sean, *Sgt. Pepper at 50 Heading for Home* (Liverpool, May 25 - June 16 2017) and the first year of the new Seamus Heaney HomePlace, 12 months 12 books (Bellaghy2016/2017). His novel, *The Emigrant's Farewell*, was published by Bloomsbury.

DoranBrowne
ARTS PROGRAMMING & CONSULTANCY