

Dublin Memories

Part of a larger compendium
of oral narratives recorded,
transcribed, edited and
mapped onto the city by
CHRISTOPHER REID



Earlsfort Terrace

When I started college my ambition was to go through, do postgraduate and maybe end up a lecturer—that sort of stuff. But there were things I couldn't cope with very well. I couldn't go into a coffee shop—particularly downstairs below ground level—anywhere there were a lot of people and it was fairly crowded. I used to get very hot, and flushed, panicky. I was sometimes gasping. All I wanted to do was just get out and I couldn't even hear what other people were saying. It affected my whole social life in college. Before the finals I reached a stage where I couldn't study any more. I used to stay up most of the night trying to study—my mother trying to stop me. I knew I wasn't getting anywhere but the exam was coming up and I had to keep going. I couldn't concentrate and I couldn't remember anything. I went into the exam. For all the questions I put down the same answer rehashed in different ways. That's all I remember. That's all I could do. I felt suicidal because I realised, and I knew. I didn't need to be told the results. That was the end of my plans.

Dublin Airport

The other person. I did not know him right from my country. I had a bit of trust because I knew it was terrible if I stayed. I have no option. He said he would take me to a safer place. We set off in the afternoon. We got to this place—military transit—in the night. I saw this plane was very big, very big walls. I have never travelled outside of my country before. When I came off the plane, that other person, I had to do

what he says. I didn't know anything or where I was. When we came to checking in and doing those things he said he was going to answer questions so there was no need to. I had to follow him. I didn't know any part. I was outside my country. My country is very hot. I was wearing just something light. I came in what I was wearing. I was just shivering. Cold. The other person. He told me he had to go. He was returning. Just had to leave me to my fate. It was a horrendous station. I wasn't myself. And I was looking every way and crying all along within me.

Phoenix Park

I had another one, like I'm after doin' two of them. I was up in the park, had intercourse up in the park. There were loads up there because it was still bright at the time. There was loads of joggers, loads of people walkin' dogs, all the football crowd were up there. Do you know where the army used to be, the castle there? It's where all the fellas do their trainin'. Just up along there, on the opposite side of Inchicore, inside the park, up near the hospice, up around there. He was more or less your down-to-earth kind of normal-minded person, in a normal corporation house. He asked the usual questions. How many fellas had you got before me? Do you take it up the arse? All them things that get them goin'. All that, let's see your nipples, how big are your nipples? Do you wear sexy underwear? Stuff like that gets them goin'. People think it's a handy few quid, but it's not really. Do you know what I mean? It's not and it's never done. You feel horrible when you go home.

Ormond Road

It was just right. There's something quite lovely about old houses. It was a big house but it had been partitioned for renting purposes. The rooms were luminous—filled with light. My room looked out onto the back garden. I had planted loads of things in the garden. I had vegetables and herbs and everything. And you know they had really thrived. My herb bushes were huge. I was cooking, using them all the time. Flowers, because they were six years old, they were establishing themselves—the lavender and stuff. You know, somehow the kids had got attached to that house in Ranelagh. A family owned the house, their own mother died, and so this family decided to sell the house. It's incredible—they sold it right away. Another family bought it—somebody told me for five hundred thousand. I started looking for a place. Some weeks later I passed that way in the car and someone had knocked the partitions and they were doing it up. I so miss planting things now.

St. Audoen's Arch

I go back to that castle. Make me way back to it. There's a little green, there's a little kind of tool shed, I don't know what it is, but I go to the back of that. There's someone already there after shootin' up. I make conversation, small talk, chit-chat, talkin' about where you're from, the rest of it. I get me stuff out and I take his spoon. I take this fella's spoon, knowing that I shouldn't be doin' these things, but not carin'. I take me works from the packets. I take the spike from the packet. I empty the bag onto the spoon. Citric. I put some water into me works and put it onto the spoon. I rip up, I rip open the swabs and I make a bundle of them. I light them on fire and I burn me spoon with it. It doesn't take long to heat the gear. It must be good gear, it didn't take long to break up at all. I look at it, it's a nice colour, a nice golden colour. I feed into it big time. I do. Still, in the back of me mind it's tellin' me this could be your last, this could be your last, watch yourself, put half it into you, don't do it all. I suck the gear into me works and I think, I've told this fella I'm only out, and I'm a bit wary. He might ask me for some of this. Fuck it, put it all into you. I roll up me sleeve, I don't even bother to wait to put a tourniquet on to me. I spike me vein, and I love it. I put it into me worryin' if I'll die or not. But I don't. The rush hits me in the back of me neck. Pins and needles all up the back of me neck. Pins and needles all up into me head, pins and needles in me mouth. Haven't had this in a while. This hit. A good hit.

St. Catherine's Church

I come here sometimes. When I can't get into the hostel I do stay out on the streets. About two weeks ago was the last time I slept out on the streets in a sleepin' bag. You know that foreign place up off Grafton street. It's a travel place. It's a big grey building. It's like a church. Slept in that. I remember it well. There were three of us sleepin' out so it wasn't like I was on me own. A bloke and a bird were sleepin' out with me. I'd sleep under there because of the

shelter and it was lashin' out that night. We just sleep in the doorway as you just walk up to it. We just go up there, stay around for a while, and wait till no one's around, then put our heads down for the night. We don't go there till late, real late. Do you know it takes you ages to go to sleep, put your head down so you really know you're alright. You'd be afraid who's comin' around the corner. You do be hearin' stories of people gettin' robbed. We just wake up at seven o'clock, half seven like. The brightness just does wakes you up. I'm four months pregnant now. Please God you never know. When I'm eighteen in another year's time that's when the help is there—hopefully.

Terenure Road

I was managing a department that was responsible for all the payments the company made. These payments were made everyday in millions. The computer systems had to be working or our reputation would go down the tubes. I also felt responsible for some of the people who weren't coming up to scratch on our team. I worked late hours, and took work home. I took it very seriously. I had been there fourteen years when this high anxiety over work got to me. It played havoc with my relationship. It came to a head just before Christmas. My wife and I were not speaking. She had gone out. I think she was shopping. Despite the freezing cold I was out making a garden path. I was furiously digging, carrying and mixing cement. I worked flat out for about five hours. I was hoping, praying something would happen to me. That I would get a heart attack or something. I wanted to get away from the pain I was feeling. I wanted everything to be over. I wanted to die. I went upstairs to the bedroom, there were some pills there. I took them all and lay on the bed exhausted. I don't know what happened but I woke the next day. My wife didn't say anything about it. I can't remember how I got to a doctor, but I did. ♦



Christopher Reid exhibits this work in various forms including artist's books, as text pieces, and in large-scale photographs. These are exhibited in galleries and as public art pieces. He also writes fiction which has been published in many magazines.