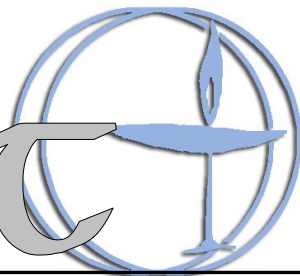


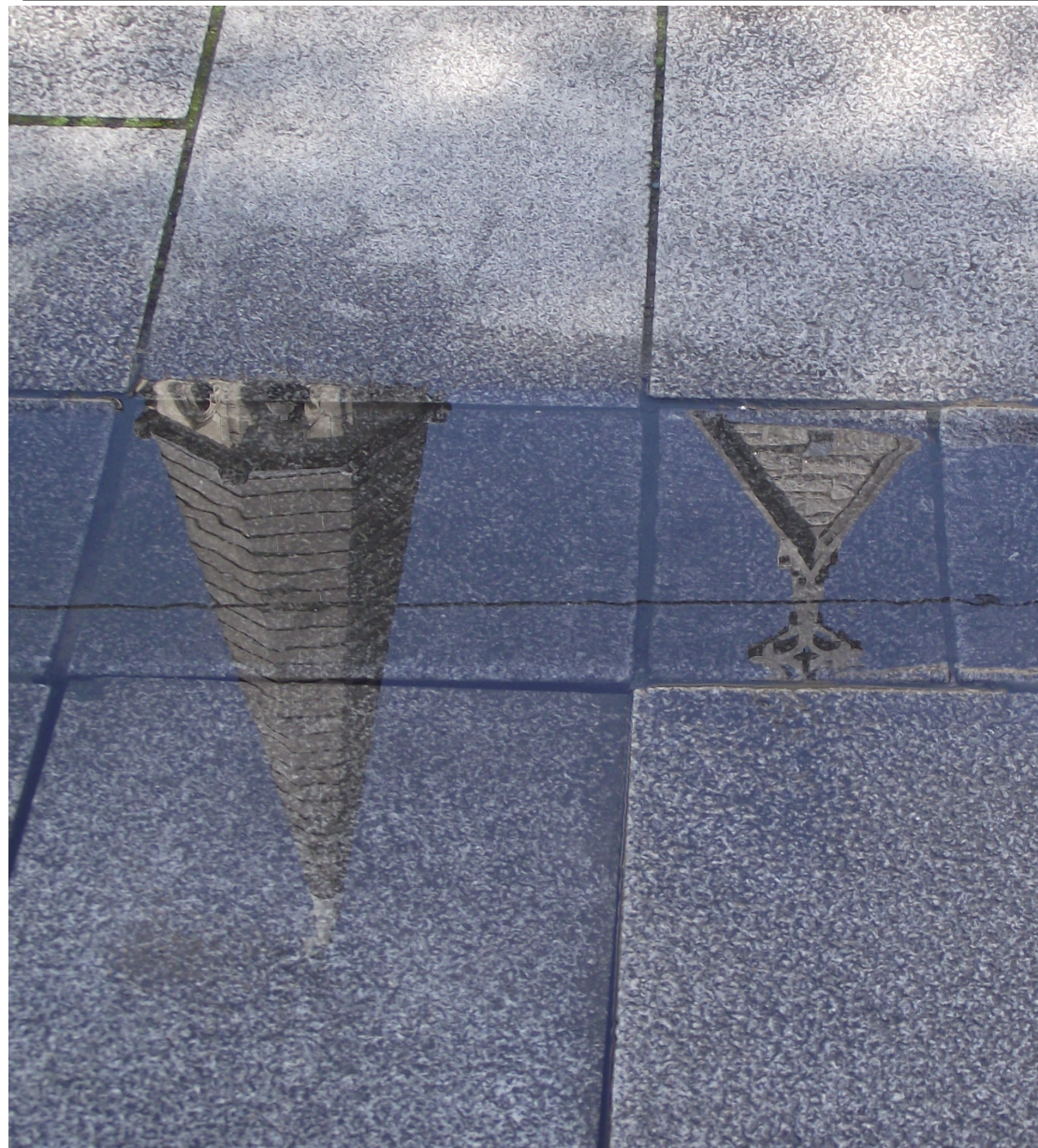
Oscailt



June 2021

IRELANDS UNITARIAN MAGAZINE

Vol.17 Nº 6



Oscailt

Oscailt since January 2005 has become the monthly magazine for Irish Unitarians. Originally it was the calendar for Dublin but due to popular demand by non members this new format was born and continues to grow and flourish.

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Front Cover: A reflection of the church in a puddle of water. (photo P.Spain)

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Oscailt

Our magazine title, *Oscailt*, is inspired by the account of the **Healing of the Deaf and Mute Man** in St. Mark's Gospel, Chapter 7. Jesus commands the mans ears to open up with Aramic word "Ephphatha" - open ! The Irish word *oscailt*, (from the verb *oscail*, to open), means an opening, or, metaphorically, it could mean a revelation or a beginning.

DUBLIN UNITARIAN CHURCH

112 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin D02 YP23, Ireland.

Service: Sunday at 11a.m. Phone: Vestry 01-4780638

Managing committee:- Madam Chairman: Denise Dunne;
Vice Chairman: Dennis Aylmer; Secretary: Trish Webb-Duffy; Treasurer: Rory Delany;
Tony Shine; Will O'Connell; Andy Pollak; Peter White;
Paul Murray; Madeline Stringer; Gavin Byrne; Tony Brady.

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Caretaker: Kevin Robinson Telephone: 4752781

PodCast of the church service is available on the church website.

LOVE IS THE DOCTRINE OF THIS CHURCH
THE QUEST OF TRUTH IS ITS SACRAMENT
AND SERVICE IS ITS PRAYER.

TO DWELL TOGETHER IN PEACE
TO SEEK KNOWLEDGE IN FREEDOM
TO SERVE MANKIND IN FELLOWSHIP
TO THE END THAT ALL SOULS SHALL GROW IN HARMONY
WITH THE DIVINE
THIS DO WE COVENANT WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH GOD.

UNITARIAN CHURCH Prince's Street, Cork.

Service: Sundays at 11a.m. www.unitarianchurchcork.com

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Dublin Unitarian Church

112 St.Stephens Green Dublin D02 YP23.

Service 11.00a.m.

Sunday Rota for June 2021

6th June

Service	Rev.Bridget Spain	<i>The Sermon on the Mount</i>
Reader	Jennifer Flegg	

13th June

Service	Will O'Connoll	<i>Just say Yes</i>
Reader	Gavin Byrne	

20th June

Service	Rev.Bridget Spain	Favourite Readings
Reader	Various	

27th June

Service	Tony Brady	<i>The Grace of Forgiveness</i>
Reader	Peter White	

Services are broadcast live from the church each Sunday at 11a.m.

**On our WebCam, click and connect at
www.dublinunitarianchurch.org**

PodCast are also available at the same website.

The Future & Beyond

The Doors are open Welcome Back!

On Sunday 16th May the doors reopened and we welcomed people back into the church. With hand sanitiser, masks, stewards to direct, social distancing and limited numbers attending the church is a safe space in which to gather. The past fifteen months have been a trial but now we are coming to an end of this pandemic. I hope that very soon we will be able to join in singing hymns together and that memories of lockdown will fade.

The closure of our church for months on end is a challenge for the community. We have missed out so much - our charity collections, brings clothes to Dublin Simon, reaching out to prisoners of conscience holding services of remembrance not to mention our Carol Service.

What has been happening?

Zoom Technology and our Web camera have allowed us to maintain Sunday services throughout lockdown. The work of the Managing Committee has continued without interruption. The monthly meetings have been on line and in April the AGM of the congregation took place via zoom. There are changes in the Managing Committee. After many years of service Dennis Aylmer has stepped aside as Chair of the congregation. Dennis continues as a member of the Committee and is now Vice Chair. Emer O' Reilly has also stepped down from the Committee. We say a big thank you Dennis and Emer for their work over the years. The new Chairman is Ms. Denise Dunne. I am told that the correct address is Madam Chairman. Congratulations Denise and thank you for taking on the role you can be assured that you will have our support in the days ahead. We welcome Will O' Connell as a member of the Managing Committee.

Web Camera

The installation of the Web camera is invaluable for those who are unable to come to services. In addition to the Web camera we will continue to provide audio recordings of the services. The experience of church is different when attending via technology. It is different for the person at home and it is different for the person leading the service. Church is about community, people coming together as a community to explore and to discover; church is where we find and share inspiration even if this is chatting over a cup of coffee.

LGBTI+

To mark Gay Pride Will O' Connell will lead the service on Sunday the 13th June; we have asked the festival to mention this service in their programme of events.

Web Site

During the lockdown the communications group has been busy redesigning our web site. The existing web site was functional but had become dated and over-

crowded with information. The new site is attractive it is user friendly and it is inviting. The new web site will be launched towards the end of June.

Rotas

Our Rotas have not returned to the usual pattern. Some rotas are still not operating but now we need volunteers for the reading and flower rotas. As we continue to move closer to fully open we will need volunteers to join the rotas for people to welcome attendees and distribute hymn books, coffee making, washing up and for help with Sunday Club. If you are willing to volunteer for any of these rotas contact Will O' Connell.

Sunday Club

The Sunday Club will not resume until autumn at the earliest. Before we can resume Sunday Club we need to regroup our volunteers. Denise Dunne has organised Sunday Club for the past few years. As Denise takes up her position as Chair of the congregation we need a volunteer to replace Denise as Sunday club leader. We will meet with the parents to discuss their ideas about Sunday Club and then see how we can work together to make and to provide a safe and worthwhile experience for our young people.

Oscailt Magazine

Oscailt magazine has been produced throughout the pandemic. Paul would welcome articles and input for the magazine. This is your opportunity to have your writing published!

Way Side Pulpit

These Posters are a way to advertise our presence. We need to change them regularly ideas/suggestions for wording are needed. Ideas please to Oscailt magazine or Bridget

The past months have been a challenge but now we look to the future with optimism and renewed energy. Remember the church will be full if we come to church, the church will be a vibrant liberal active church if we contribute to the community. This church depends on volunteers to operate; no one can do everything that needs doing but we can all contribute some thing.

Bridget

All Change

On the 7th February Irish citizens voted in a general election. Despite the impressive economic achievements of the sitting government; it was not re-elected. At the post-mortems on the election result the consensus among political commentators was that the politicians in power were out of touch “voters wanted change”. What was meant by change was not defined. The old adage be careful of what you wish for has once again proven its truth. Within three weeks of that election change came hurtling into our midst in the form of the Coroonavirus. The virus is colourless, odourless, it is so small that it is impossible to see, it knows no borders; its consequences are devastating; impossible to ignore.

When the last government came to power in 2011 the newspapers were filled with articles headed “Negative equity”, “Ghost estates”, “Banking crisis” and of course the new word NAMA. These words have faded into distant memory and have now replaced by the new buzz words “social distancing”, “self isolation” “hand washing”. We hope the HSE will be enough ventilators and PPE. All is changed utterly and it is easy to become frightened.

It is particularly easy to become frightened when we are alone in enforced solitude without a date for when our isolation will end. It is important that we get our priorities correct. Firstly we must for care for ourselves and ensure that we are not the cause of harming others. The next step is to reach out to other people by email, chatting over the hedge and phone calls. We must play our part in fighting this invisible enemy; but remember that this will also change.

There have been many epidemics in the past. These caused deaths and brought fear among people. Covid 19 is not a punishment from God it is part of the natural cycle of evolution. We are fortunate that we understand the origin of the epidemic. We are fortunate that we have a system of health that will ensure that the majority of people who become ill will recover. We are not powerless; we do need to be proactive in caring for ourselves physically, mentally and spiritually.

Many good things have emerged from this pandemic. One

obvious one is the heart lifting response to the call for volunteers to work in our health system. There are countless volunteers looking after older vulnerable people. Then see how creative we have become in finding ways to do things differently.

The first Sunday our church was closed we had a virtual service on line. The following Sunday our virtual service expanded to include hymns played by Josh and we followed with Virtual Coffee where we shared time and news with one another. Ten years ago none of this would have been possible. Another possible good outcome of this pandemic is that perhaps we may change our priorities in the future.

Despite the good news we are living in challenging times. People are anxious about the health of loved ones and many people are faced with real financial worries. This worry is set against the backdrop of spring unfolding as we approach Easter Sunday, the focal point of the Christian Faith.

Like the Christmas Festival, Easter is perfectly timed to tune in to what is happening in the world of nature. While I question the historic truth of the story I know the poetic truth contained in the story is perennial. The story of Easter has layers of meaning. The elements of the story and it's timing are perfect. The story has parallels for us, as a nation as we journey through the next few weeks.

For the purposes of this address I am presuming everyone knows the Easter story. Small details of the story hold important lessons.

Sunday next is Palm Sunday; the day Jesus rode in triumph in to the city of Jerusalem. Mainstream Christians portray Jesus riding on a donkey; a donkey well this paints a picture of a meek Jesus humbly going towards his betrayal and death. However the more accurate translation is that he rode an unbroken colt. There is deep symbolism in this detail. Jesus was entering Jerusalem; the capital of Roman rule in Judea, he was presenting himself as a power figure. When people put their cloaks in front of him they were acknowledging that power.

Christian scripture do not record an important part of the story. At the time Jesus entered Jerusalem Pilate- the representative of Roman rule - also processed into Jerusalem. Pilate's arrival was timed for the feast of Passover. Pilate's presence in Jerusalem was a reminder to Jews that Roman rule prevailed in the country. Jesus' actions were a direct challenge to Rome. When Jesus said that his

kingdom was at hand he was challenging Roman Rule.

Then imagine how the apostles felt. For years they had travelled the roads of the Judean countryside with Jesus; now they accompanied him in a spectacular entry into the capital. I am sure that all of them envisaged a golden future. Jesus was welcomed by the citizens and they were Jesus' faithful followers; their future seemed dazzling. The execution of Jesus brought destroyed their hopes.

Jesus was crucified "on the place of the skull between two thieves." The image of three crosses, one larger than the others, is one we are all very familiar with. There is a different, a more eastern way, to interpret this image. What goes on in the mind – our thoughts - our thoughts create our world and our mindset. Thoughts are simply thoughts they have no reality. The world of thoughts we create can literally steal our life. The two thieves, one on either side are the past and the future, neither of which exist. We all allow ourselves to be crucified by our thoughts and we all give free reign the thieves –the thief of living in the past and living in the thief of future.

The apostles hid in terror when Jesus was arrested. But after some weeks something changed. We may call it the Holy Spirit but however we name it; something changed them; they found the courage to come out of hiding and to preach the message of Jesus. The apostles experienced resurrection of the spirit. The death of Jesus impelled the disciples to find their courage and they were changed. Without the challenge of the death of Jesus they would have achieved their potential.

A few short weeks ago, before Covid 19, Ireland was beginning to experience signs of revival in the "Celtic Tiger". We had full employment, Negative equity was resolved. There we just a few clouds on our horizon. There were the calls from "the greens" that the world was heading towards "Climate Chaos". We didn't want to hear that story; that would involve us making drastic changes to our lifestyle. Covid 19 has challenged us to change.

Social isolation is making us aware of our need of nature for our wellbeing. We have rediscovered our connection with the world of nature and hopefully we will retain this connection and care for it more in the future.

Homelessness was also an issue we felt the "Government" should fix. Today it is reported that empty Air B&Bs are available

for the homeless. Perhaps we can do things differently.

The virus is demonstrating how connected we are. This virus originated in a market, in a city in China, we had never heard of. We ignored its growth until it came into our midst. We know now that is only working together that we will beat this virus.

Our politicians have left aside narrow political interests and shown leadership. Irish people have shown generosity and real concern for the common good. We have changed beyond recognition. We are more united as a people and we are showing that it is possible to do things differently.

When Irish voters; voted for change we never expected to experience quite how much would change for us! When this virus has burned its course and it will. Will we have changed or will we revert to the old way of thinking only of our own welfare? I hope we won't forget the good lessons this virus has brought with it.

Rev. Bridget Spain
Minister Dublin Unitarian Church

Dublin 29th March 2020

LUKE O'NEILL IS YOUR ONLY MAN

(After Flann O'Brien)

When skies are grey, no glimpse of blue,
And the world is cold and wan,
When lockdown brings no hope of you,
Luke O'Neill is your only man.

When conspiracy winds its narrow path,
"Bill Gates has a terrible plan,"
You need someone to put you right,
Luke O'Neill is your only man.

When Dry Robbers invade your Centra store,
And their bonhomie leaves you flat,
He'll bring good humour back to the fore,
Luke O'Neill is your only man.

When the vaccine rollout stutters and starts,
And they can't find your name on the plan,
When you'd kill for a pint with a man of heart,
Luke O'Neill is your only man.

Maeve Edwards

For Poetry Day April 2021

Where is God?

During this bad and unhappy 12 months and more, people, even the most religious, have asked “where is god”. The question mirrors that posed after many catastrophes, the Holocaust, Syria, among others. And I think perhaps the best answer (and not all Unitarians will agree) comes from a Rathfarnham man, Roy Sadlier, in a letter to The Irish Times on May 4th.

He was responding to a query from a Canon Ian Ellis who asked “where does God enter the frame as this Covid pandemic rages”.

Sadlier suggests that the answer might be that God does not exist, and therefore he does not enter the frame at all!

The God of the Bible, he says, is an interventionist god, who can and frequently does intervene in earthly affairs (often to extremely malevolent effect, including by spreading pestilence).

The fact that he visits pestilence (among a whole host of other unsavoury things) upon people, prompts the question of what role such a god (if he exists) might have in the current pandemic and belies the claim that he (again if he exists) is entirely benevolent.

God is an omnipotent, omnibenevolent, interventionist god when the outcome that he was petitioned for occurs, but when the outcome he was petitioned for does not occur, it’s a mystery, he must be having IT issues, or, as was argued in The Irish Times last year, he expects us to defeat Covid 19 ourselves.

As prayers for very good causes often go unanswered, one must conclude that there is a word for phenomenon of when a prayed for outcome occurs.

It is called a coincidence.

I am, once again, reminded of Epicurus: if God is unable to prevent evil, then he is not all-powerful. If god is unwilling to prevent evil, then he is not all-good. If God is both willing and able to prevent evil, then why does evil exist?

This is the knot, says Rob Sadlier, which a belief in an omnipotent, omnibenevolent, interventionist god creates for itself.

Paul Murray

Dublin Unitarian Church

Ordinary Water

When I first came to Ireland from the parched Spanish summer, I thought I had found a place where no one had to worry about that most essential necessity, water. In many places I have lived, people think about little else. The scarcity of water is a more or less continuous crisis. But summer 2008 it has hardly rained, even here. The developed world is beginning to worry, and the poor lands are getting worse. It reminds me of a reflection on water I did some years ago in another church:

Pour yourself a glass of water, and take few minutes to look at it with fresh eyes. Look: it is as still as the water from an ancient underground cavern and yet we know that it could just as well have been drawn from a rushing mountain stream, a storm tossed ocean or an enormous river at the flood. It is ordinary, the most ordinary thing in the world.

Rest your eyes upon it and experience its ordinariness. It is fundamentally the same as that which pours from our taps, or that which floods the gutters of our roofs, or that which is drawn from high mountain springs and transported to our shops with such great effort and expense. We can see it as the most common thing that there ever could be: We spray it on our gardens and steam it into our ironed shirts and sit in it, warm and pleasant, like emperors of Rome. We boil it and drink it, bend to a fountain in the heat of the day and gulp it, step over it in puddles and shake it off our umbrellas. There is nothing more ordinary. It is the most ordinary thing in the world.

We grew in it; lay in the dark and recapitulated the process of evolution in its warmth, growing eyes and hair and fingernails and attitudes to life. When it burst from the sac and flowed away we experienced our first emergency and came yelping into the world of light and air, some suppose unwillingly. That was water, the first mother, which came from the teacups and mineral drinks of our blood parent, changed in form and saved as our first home by processes we can hardly describe, let alone understand. But it is ordinary, the most ordinary thing in the world.

Others held our heads safely above its danger and bathed us.

The water took unto itself the dirt of our small lives and carried it away, but it did not cease to exist. In the endless repetition of its eternal cycle, it flowed away and cleansed itself in earth, sun and air and returned to nurture other babies, to wash the bodies of the dead, and to feed children rice and dhal and mealy meal and spaghetti in a thousand lands. Each time it became renewed and fresh as the waters of Eden, yet it carried the memory of the mud of the Nile, the slime of Okovango, and the deadly chemicals of Lake Erie. It was through all of this, ordinary water, the most ordinary thing in the world.

It is the only thing in this world which exists as solid, liquid and gas. In the frozen tundra it cradles the remains of mastodons and forms the roof of the Innuits; it carried the Diaspora of the South Pacific on palm rafts and the hulls of the Conquistadors on their bloody mission; industry captured it to power the mills of their revolutionary project and Turner painted it in the clouds. It turned to blood and then parted for Moses, covered the world of Noah and sheltered Poseidon, brother of Zeus, the ancient gods of our tradition. It pours endlessly for the faithful in the paradise promised by Allah, and carries the Holy Spirit down the war-torn Jordan, for Jesus and his millions. But it is ordinary, the most ordinary thing in the world.

From the beginningless beginning to the endless end, on our island planet there is no more-- though no less-- water. That which pours from our taps once quenched the thirst of sabre-toothed tigers, formed the blood of Genghis Khan, intoxicated Henry the Eighth at his table and carried the funeral boats of Vikings. It pours from our bodies, transforms itself through an endless alchemy of change, and appears again. Without it we become dry sacks, devoid of life. Our bodies are three-quarters formed of it; with even a small drop in its level, we become confused and weak and vulnerable to illness. It is so common that we use it without care, without knowing. But it is ordinary, the most ordinary thing in the world.

Now look more deeply into the water. See how it blends without prejudice, though it will have travelled from places far away, from continents we may never have seen. Water knows how to be water in all times and places; it is democratic in its union. Invisibly, the molecules embrace without prejudice or preference; the Mississippi and the Pacific, the Thames and the Mediterranean sea. It carries with it something of those places-- minute particulate matter we cannot see, salts dissolved so thoroughly as to be beyond examina-

tion. It is a medium of matter and a medium of soul; its waves have embraced paddle steamers and pleasure yachts. It has been truffles and hot dogs, tears of widows, blisters of centurions, communion wine. It is ordinary, the most ordinary thing in the world.

In the figurative, it is soul itself. The mirror of Narcissus, the resting place between epochs of the sword Excalibur, the still pond where the lotus bears the jewel and Mother Ganges. It is the sea of poetic love and the lair of Grendel, the unknown and unknowable of Jung's Unconscious and the Brahman ocean of unknowing to which the drop of atma returns. It is the river of Heraclitus, ever changing, ever the same. It is the sea of unchartable depth where Leviathan lurks and it is the evolutionary soup from which we dragged ourselves with only a sentimental backward glance at the Holy Dolphin. It is the resting place of dreams and the breeding ground of nightmare. It is soul itself, but it is ordinary. The most ordinary thing in the world.

It could be that we see now that the ordinary contains the miraculous. This small vessel contains the world. We are not separate from it. We too are ordinary, but we too contain the world. We are ordinary, the most ordinary thing in the world. Let us delight in the ordinary and swim in the water of life, from which we sprang and to which we return.

*And so maybe
we should be a little more respectful with our taps.*

Rev. Art Lester

Minister Croyden Unitarian Church



**Dublin Unitarian Book Club's
choice for April 2021.**



My Sister, the Serial Killer

by

Oyinkan Braithwaite 2018

The story is set in Lagos, it centres on the lives and relationships of two sisters who witnessed the death of their wealthy and abusive father when they were teenagers. Korede, the elder sister of Ayoola is presented as the dependable and responsible sibling, she considers herself ungainly and ugly as she has very dark skin 'like a brazil nut' and is very tall at 6 feet, she is surpassed by her beautiful pale skinned and voluptuous sister Ayoola. Korede is a dedicated nurse in the local hospital and has fallen in love with Tade, one of the doctors. With her great beauty Ayoola turns all heads and she gets what she wants at home and in life using her charms but when she is in trouble she can depend on Korede. Ayoola is an online business-woman and a romancer of selected admirers whom she kills by stabbing when their attraction fades. Ayoola sets her sights on Tade and the sisters relationship is in jeopardy.

The book is comedic and yet horrifying leaving this reader with mixed reactions. It describes the role of women in Nigerian society, the power of beauty, the control of women, their relationships and rivalries and the power exercised by men in a patriarchal society.

Corruption and the defiance of the traditional cultural mores are revealed as we follow this coquettish man killer and her loyal sister through 4 murders all committed with her deceased fathers prized stiletto. Oyinkan satirises elements of traditional society and plays with cultural norms in what presents as a comic novel though I did not find her debut novel funny at all and found the flippant style quite irritating.

Marian McCaughley

This book opens with the words "Ayoola summons me with these words 'Korede, I killed him'. I had hoped I would never hear those words again" Yikes! So Korede has heard these words before, twice before as it turns out,

and each time Korede has gone to clean up Ayoola's mess.

This is the story of two very different sisters and the bond that ties them together. Korede the eldest of the two is a nurse in the hospital in Lagos, Nigeria. She is a diligent conscientious worker and takes life seriously. Ayoola is the complete opposite, self-centred, manipulative and has a feeling of entitlement. She is incredibly beautiful, men fall at her feet. She is so beautiful that she literally gets away with murder with the help of her sister. But why does Korede help her especially when she doubts that the latest murder was in "self-defence"?

As the story unfolds we learn about their abusive ,corrupt politician father who is now dead ten years but is still revered by society and his presence still haunts their lives. It is a ceremonial knife belonging to their father that Ayoola uses as the murder weapon.

Their mother coped with this toxic marriage through medication and lived in a 'bubble'. Ten years on she still lives in her own world, keeping up with societies expectations of a politician's widow and her main focus is to marry off Ayoola, whereas Korede is a nurse so can look after herself in the future. Ayoola has always been looked after and protected so no wonder she feels entitled.

One day Ayoola turns up unannounced at the hospital where Korede works and she meets Dr.Tade, the same doctor who Korede is in love with.

Ayoola and Tade start dating and Korede is not just consumed with jealousy and hurt, she is also fearful that this could be Ayoola's fourth victim. How can she save him and at the same time remain loyal to Ayoola?

The author pokes and prods at the cultural norms of Nigerian society. We encounter corrupt police, dealings on the black-market, dodgy land deals, tribal legacies regarding the role of women and what is valued in society such as beauty and power. There are some humorous episodes especially in the hospital when we see how the receptionists treat the hospital attendees and their nosiness into everyone's lives. The cleaners shenanigans also lighten the load of a novel with very dark underlying themes. For this reason there were very mixed views of the book by our readers.

Oyinkan Braithwaite can certainly tell a story and paints colourful images and memorable characters. I look forward to reading more from this young author as she develops her craft into the future.

Alison Claffey

Continued on Back Cover



Book Club continued



Oyinkan Braithwaite is a Nigerian writer in her thirties who lives in Lagos. She was educated in the UK. This novel was longlisted for the Booker Prize 2019 and longlisted for the 2020 Dublin Literary award. It is, in short, about two sisters living in modern day Lagos. Korede a nurse the elder who cleans up after the murders that her younger beautiful sister Ayoola just keeps on committing.

The book does not neatly fit into a genre. It could be said to be crime fiction, but it is also a wickedly dark comedy, an examination of the bonds within a family, and an overview of how the lives of strong women can be constricted through living in a patriarchal culture where family is everything.

Yet as the body count rises the trauma that shaped their childhood becomes clear. The book might seem light with short chapters however with a few deft sentences Braithwaite can paint compelling portraits in just a few words of the settings and the characters. Braithwaite is also a slam poet and her playful use of language in the book shows that she just loves words.

Every reader in the book club remembered the story and the characters and found the book a page turner. Some had qualms about the subject matter and found the balance of dark humour and murder unpleasant. Others loved it. If there was a consensus it was, that whilst this book might be funny and dark it does not mean that it is not also serious!

Kristina McElroy

Oyinkan Braithwaite's next book seems to be directed to young adult readers "The baby is mine" due out 17th May 2021

