



Patrick Cotter

all about ‘making it new,’” he says. “Half the challenge is recognizing the dead language, fossilized metaphors forever aiming to leap onto the tip of our tongues - and eliminating them ruthlessly.”

But Cotter doesn’t sit around waiting for lightning to strike. “My process used to rely on inspiration, and I wasted a great deal of time being patient,” he admits. Now, he invokes Picasso’s ethos: “Inspiration must find you working.”

Drawing on the work of philosopher Iain McGilchrist, Cotter believes the creative process is deeply neurological. “The left brain dominates consciousness and thinks it knows everything,” he says, “but it’s the right brain, playful and free, that generates originality.” He devotes time every day to cultivating the mental state that allows the right brain to roam.

Art photography often serves as Cotter’s muse. “I study and meditate on an image until a weird narrative or original metaphor is prompted,” he explains. Pinterest has become a digital gallery that inspires him. “Usually, the resulting poem bears a significant relevance to the world around me, but because it’s not directly inspired by hum-drum existence, it manages to be more insightful and interesting.”

Despite “not really being a writer of place,” Cotter acknowledges the influence of Ireland - and specifically Cork - on his evolution. “When I was younger, I believed I was a citizen of a non-nationalist, international youth culture,” he says. But his first travels abroad helped him realize how deeply Irish he truly was, even as he bristled at the country’s conservatism and clerical power structures. Now, however, he notes the transformation:

“Cork has developed from the kind of place a young person of talent should get out of to one that draws creatives of every kind.”

Although writing is a solitary activity, he continues, “writers can benefit hugely from being part of a supportive community. In Cork, we have a positive community today.”

This may explain Cotter’s stance on the ongoing relevance of poetry itself, which he describes as a continual study of the society around us. “Poetry is needed to prompt us to question authority and not be slaves to opinion, and to analyze the language of liars and manipulators.”

With *Quality Control at the Miracle Factory* poised for release, Cotter remains as committed as ever to the creative path and writing good poems that convey “originality of language and imagination,” he says. “You cannot have empathy, feeling and intellectual stimulation without either of those.”

@patrick_cotter_poet

In the quiet of Cork City, award-winning Irish poet and literary event producer Patrick Cotter steadily builds his legacy. Carving a life out of words — layered, playful and haunting — his latest collection, *Quality Control at the Miracle Factory*, may focus on war and bereavement, but Cotter himself is anything but grim.

“Poetry hasn’t made me rich,” he says with a smile in his voice, “but it has led me into a pleasant way to make a living. For most of my life, I’ve worked around books as a bookseller, publisher and literary event producer. Without poetry, I might have spent all my life in a factory or run off to join the French Foreign Legion.”

Cotter’s literary journey began with an ordinary classroom prompt at the age of nine. “Rhyme,” he recalls. “I was taken by the fact that I could create something original of my own.”

While it started as a form of amusement, poetry became something deeper over time. “I’m a poet because it is a vocation, a calling. Writing poetry, for better or worse, is an integral part of who I am. At this stage, I have little choice but to write.”

Growing up in a working-class family in Cork, Cotter was surrounded by stories of resilience. Both grandfathers were bakers; his father, a factory worker who played skiffle music on a tea chest; and his mother, a showband singer. “Materially, my people never had more than just enough to get by,” he says, but it’s clear the riches of culture and expression ran deep.

Cotter’s poetry has evolved in tandem with his life. “As a young man, I wrote many poems on love,” he reflects. “Now aged over 60, death and mortality are elbowing themselves onto the stage.” War is another recurring theme - not out of direct experience, but from a childhood steeped in televised conflict, war comics and corporal punishment. “Battlefronts have taken up much real estate in my imagination and consciousness,” he explains.

For Cotter, poetry is both a battleground and a sanctuary - a space to wrestle with language, clichés and cultural decay. “Poetry is