ATTIC. STUFF. WRITE.

CONAN KENNEDY

Irishman in a hat.
Woman paddling.
Pictured recently in Italy.
This is their story.
Part of it anyway.

This pile-of-boxes graphic here has many uses. It denotes a pause, a change, the opening of a new box, the opening of a new memory in the mind. Designed by my mate Cliff Hayes, my book designer mate Cliff Hayes in Sussex, it is worth its weight in many words. The amount of hard writering work it saves is enormous. And also the amount of hard readering work, so let's all be grateful.

However in the particular instance above it represents more than just a change of thinking tack or the opening of another box. Right here it signifies the passage of many months between the starting of the book and its continuation. Just after reaching these US social security cards something else came up. Trouble with novel sort of thing. And oh to hell with it I think I'll go to Italy. That sort of thing. Months passed. Then something else came up. A health thing, which reminded me, as if I needed reminding, that

In the wallet too I had my latest photo of H, taken only a week or so before on Ross Beach in Killala. I wondered if I should slot her in between financial cards and library cards, as a sort of a buffer between two aspects of life's journey? Or would she be better beside the driving licence?

I decided that it probably didn't really matter. What mattered was that she was beautiful to me. So I looked at her for awhile, feeling good about things. And then I looked beyond her into the photo, and that headland in the background. Around there is an old coastguard station and rocky coves where people rarely go and sand martins dart in and out of little holes in earthy cliffs. And round there long years ago I used go swimming with Ann, another woman, the one on the side so to speak. A mountainy girl and those were hippie times and she would plunge naked into the water and splash around. She had no bath or shower up in her cottage on the side of Nephin so I suppose that had something to do with it. But the water didn't care for reasons and the sand martins nor me neither. Watching a naked woman swimming in the ocean is a prayer to gods forgotten…but gods still recognised, still known.

I put my wallet back together neatly, in proper order, and just in time because then my name was called and it was all very efficient. First a nurse did stuff and then a junior doctor did stuff and then a senior doctor did stuff and then the man himself. He did nothing really, being wisdom itself. At the pinnacle of information from his minions. And I was minded about the old joke about what's the difference between god and hospital consultants?

God doesn't think he's a consultant.

He told me what was what and that was that.

I went out and looked out over the balcony down to the concourse far below.

There's a coffee bar there and I saw H and one of my daughters sitting at a table, foreheads close in conversation. That daughter was the mother of the new baby, and I knew they were talking about that. Rather than about me! Which was understandable but rather disappointing at the same time. But I also knew they were waiting for me as we had arranged, and I decided to wave to them. But they didn't look up, and I was very high

and far away. So my waves and gestures were in vain and I felt like a ghost. That I was already dead and trying to communicate across dimensions.

Frustrating, that.

The lift seemed to be delayed so I went down by the stairs, and with time on my mind the threads were days and each flight of steps a week. Four weeks, I reminded myself, four weeks, four weeks working on this damn book and it still not quite finished.

Frustrating that.

Because I was thinking of writing a novel.

How and ever, it turned out not to really matter because when I got back to Killala I discovered over the next few days that the stuff in my stores sort of peters out in the mid 2000's. Less stuff equals less words. Guess in these times I don't squirrel things away so much. That happens. People get older and start discarding things rather than accumulating. Makes sense. No pockets on a shroud.

But there are bits and pieces from recent times.

Like when I made the front page of *The Irish Times*.

THE IRIS
FROM RUSSIA TO FINGLAS WITH LOVE
THE NEW CONNECTIONS SERIES IN GALLERY
NewsDigest
False all-clear for
EU leaders agree plan

Granted, it's easy to make the front page of *The Irish Times*. All one has to do is be middle class and bludgeon the wife to death. But I gained access less bloodily. Sold them myself as a columnist.

And started off with a story about my father's old girlfriend Ekaterina, a Romanov and a Russian princess. And how I had tracked her down to Montevideo. And what we had said, one to the other, before she died.

She said my looks reminded her of my father.

Connections, good name for a column.

CONNECTIONS
CONAN KENNEDY

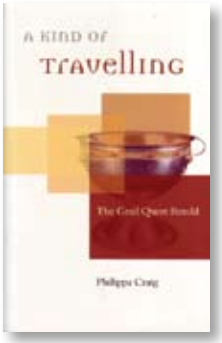
Covers a multitude.

"Sure that's a lovely idea" said the then editor Ms Kennedy-no-relation on the phone. "I'll buy them. We'll run you Mondays".

I explained that I didn't take *The Irish Times* on Mondays.

"Well you will now" she said merrily. If slightly testily. And I was glad I hadn't mentioned that I didn't take *The Irish Times* on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays or Fridays either.

So for the first time in a long while I found myself in regular



is or was a sort of lay nunnery organisation in London. Quiet and gentle women.

Tranquility.

Integrity.

Don't get too much of that in the world of books.

Nice.

Obviously I had now become respectable. Dealing with state bodies and national institutions. Not to mention nuns in London. Yes H and I did have a parallel existence in the alternative dimension of SM occult matters, and were both essentially as stone mad as ever.

But to the world at large our respectability was unchallenged.

And that's what counts.

When dealing with state bodies and national institutions. Not to mention nuns in London.

I was balding and polite, well turned out and not only should have gone but did actually go to *Specsavers* and wore fancy high end glasses.

Three hundred euro.

Are you fucking mad?

No, it was me not *Specsavers* that was fucking mad paying three hundred euro for a pair of glasses. But needs must and that was me.

And H was a careful career minded woman wearing very… nice… shoes…

Interesting the photos that emerge from the attic stores.

These are definitely H's shoes, on H's feet. And I've been living with those legs since they they wore a *Sacred Heart Convent* schoolgirl's skirt…so I know…those are definitely H's legs. I suspect that the genesis of this particular photo may have something slightly more to do with the SM occult matters mentioned earlier than any relevance to the Irish book industry…but that is neither here nor there. What was both here and there was the fact that in the eyes of the world we were for the moment quite respectable and sorted.

We weren't.

We were strange.

So how did we get in to this SM occult business?