

came to the decision that it was time to take a break, to get some real time away. I realised I was no longer happy there. No, that's not it. Happiness is an illusion. That's something you realise as you get older. Happiness, and whoever said we had a right to be happy was a fool. That holy grail of the modern age, waved in front of wide-eyed believers. And I'm not saying that my money made me miserable. Money has made my life a lot more comfortable. It's made life bearable. You ask those crazies living underground if they're happy in their subway shantytowns and see what they say. Happiness, no I'm not saying I've lost it and want to get it back. I'm just saying I need a break, that my head is full and I feel empty and tired, that none of it seems to make sense anymore. So I came here to Dublin, to this house in Seapoint, came here to get some time out.

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But that isn't the whole truth. There was a little old woman working in the dry cleaner's the other day who asked me what part of America I was from. I looked her straight in the eye and lied to her just as I've been lying to you, to myself. I said I was from from New York. What was the alternative? To admit that I do not come from the States at all, and that I am in fact from Ireland. Not from Dublin, no, but from a town in the southwest. To tell her that once, almost fifty years ago, when I was twenty, I spent a year in Dublin, a year that started in a September much like this one and ended in his death. That I fled this city with bloodied hands and I have never been back since. That I have spent half a century across the Atlantic, trying to forget where I came from, and, thinking I had succeeded, I found, one day, that all I wanted was to come back, come back and write down what happened.

September 1950

You need a level head and a steady hand to write about your own life, to look at it objectively, unblinkingly and put everything you see down on paper. I'm not sure I'm doing the right thing, writing about that year I spent in Dublin, but I've started it now and something tells me to go on, that at last it's time to tell my side of the story. Each time I go to start writing though, I find there is more and more to explain, that there are countless events, both big and small, that led me out of Kingsbridge

Station and into the city that September morning in 1950. I find myself getting lost amongst the years and stories that are not always my own. I feel as though I'm being pulled this way and that, that there could be any beginning even though the ending will always be the same.

I suppose my childhood would be a logical place to start, if logic can be imposed on something as slippery as a life. A lot has been written about Irish childhoods. Too much, if you ask me. Misery can always be turned into money. I can't say my childhood was miserable. It wasn't interesting enough to be miserable. It was a childhood typical of the place and time in which I grew up, and like that place and time it was, for the most part, uneventful.

I was born in 1930, into a Free State of broken dreams and bitter grievances. I was the youngest of four children, with two

boys and a girl before me. Michael was the eldest and he behaved as the eldest brother normally does; part protector and part tormentor. He tended to keep his distance, acting as if he was superior to myself and the others, until he got bored and came to bother each of us in turn. Next was Kathleen, who was a bit of a tomboy, probably because she grew up in a house full of males. Seán was a year older than me and, being next to each another, there was a lot of rivalry between us. He was a good kid and quiet for the most part, but you didn't want to get on the wrong side of him. He had one of the worst tempers I've ever seen.

Like most brothers and sisters, we enjoyed each other's company some of the time, and the rest we fought like cats and dogs. During the summer holidays especially, the most minor occurrence would turn into a full scale row, which would only be broken up when my mother would threaten that we'd all be sent off to Letterfrack, a real life prison for the boldest boys and girls in Ireland.

My father had taken over the family barbershop when his father died of tuberculosis, or consumption as we called it. It wasn't exactly what he'd had in mind during his days as a young rebel, fighting in the Tans War and the Civil War, but by then he had a young family and they were his priority. At least the shop would provide them with a roof over their heads and enough money to get by on.

The barbershop was on the main street, and Friday evening and Saturday afternoon

New Releases

Travel Writing

Peter Ferry
Chatto & Windus



Opening with a mysterious yet distressing anecdote about a girl driving dangerously, Peter Ferry's first novel immediately captures the reader's imagination, drawing you into a story filled with humour, tenderness and suspense.

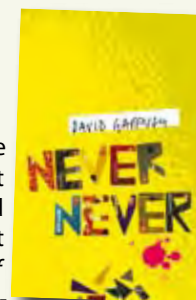
Pete, a high school teacher in a wealthy Chicago suburb, uses the story as an illustration of the power of storytelling to his bored, restless pupils. However, it is the unforeseen and surprising effect of the beautiful girl on Pete that really underpins the novel, forcing him to re-evaluate his life and his experiences thus far. Alienating his friends and girlfriend, Lydia, Pete becomes obsessed with the idea of uncovering the truth about the girl.

A warm and honest insight into fact, fiction and the blurred lines in between, *Travel Writing* offers a journey into one man's early mid-life crisis and is interspersed with travel stories that serve to tell the reader of the character's background. The novel is as entertaining as it is intriguing and is not to be missed.

Rachel Nardiello

Never Never

David Gaffney
Tindal Street Press



Never Never is the brilliant debut novel from David Gaffney. Gaffney is best known for his *Sawn Off Tales*. His writing combines observation, wit and rebuke about today's society through crafty description and brilliant character depiction.

Never Never tells the tale of Eric, a professional financial juggler, as he finds himself irrevocably in debt. He begins to receive postcards with one word on each — Coerce. Calculated. Harassment. This puzzle further deepens the anxiety of a man on the edge while he is trying to maintain domestic bliss with his girlfriend, Charlotte.

With the credit crunch looming, *Never Never* is the story of how our society is addicted to the commodity and the burgeoning norm of debt culture that encases daily life. Gaffney tells it like he sees it. His work is incredibly originally, wonderfully humorous, and revealing about the abundance and sadness of consumerism.

Never Never, along with Catherine O'Flynn's *What Was Lost* demonstrates Tindal Street Press's commitment to new talent and challenging content.

Shirley Stevenson