

I was born in 1946 in Washington, D.C. and grew up in Brooklyn (Bedford-Stuyvesant) and out on Long Island, to an Irish father and an American mother whose history went back to the Mayflower, but also had some Revolutionary War black ancestors. I am usually considered an Irish-American writer, but my maternal background belies that assertion. My mother's family was Irish, French, African-American, Swiss, English, and probably Dutch and First Nation American (Mohawk). All these elements of my biography have influenced my writing voice.

I attended nine years of parochial schools on Long Island (St. Aidan's Grammar School and Chaminade H.S.), and graduated from Herricks H. S. I attended three years of college at the State University of New York in Cortland, but left there in the middle of my third year. I had been in training to be a high-school English teacher, but I never looked back. College was interrupted by working in the U. S. Merchant Marines when I was 19 years old and wrote my first novel *Gulfweed Voices* based on those ocean-going experiences. Grove Press bought the novel when I was in my early twenties, but then never published it. Gilbert Sorrentino was my first editor.

My first published novel was *Season at Coole* (E. P. Dutton, 1972), followed by *Alcohol Poems* (1973) and *Paragraphs* (1974), *Tangun Legend* (1977) and *Still Life* (1978). I continued to publish short fiction, poetry, prose poems, essays, and memoirs in the 1980s and early 1990s. Twenty-two years after publishing *Season at Coole*, I returned to the Coole family with *The Brooklyn Book of the Dead*, which the Dalkey Archive published in 1994. Dalkey had reissued *Season at Coole* in 1985.

I am also a playwright. I attended the City College of New York, where I received my BA and MA in English and writing, with a minor in Irish history and literature. I then received an MFA in drama from Yale University, where I studied playwriting, theatre history, and dramatic literature. In the mid-1980s, my play *Our Father* was produced on Theatre Row (42nd Street) and ran there for over five years. Subsequently it was produced in London, Edinburgh, Chicago, and Los Angeles, and continues to be produced internationally, with recent productions in Chicago and London.

Though I have always been a journalist, in the late 1980s and into the 1990s I began to write more nonfiction, publishing *The Dramaturgy of Style* (essays, 1986); the memoir *Lost in Seoul* (Random House, 1990); *Green Dreams: Essays under the Influence of the Irish* (Georgia, 1994), winner of the AWP award in creative nonfiction; and the memoir *Where the Sky Ends* (1999).

After living for several years away from New York, mostly teaching in Boston, I moved to London in 2001, living and working there for the next decade. During this period, I had a fellowship at the University of Essex in Colchester, England, and was awarded a doctorate in 2006 for my research and writing on the origins of the Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church in the Bowery. I was awarded a major grant from the Royal Literary Fund, and this allowed me to concentrate on developing that research into a book. In recent years I have published that research in such magazines as *Creative Nonfiction*, *Talisman*, *Boston Review*, *PN Review* (UK), and the *Hollins Critic*, among other places.

Besides writing, I have always painted. Around 2011, after a trip by Eurostar to Paris, I began to make collages. This started shortly after a visit to Place Des Vosges and Victor Hugo's home there. I was intrigued by the ticket to the Hugo home and made a collage from it. Since then I have made around a thousand collages and had several shows of this work in London and Chicago.