

All Names Have Been Changed

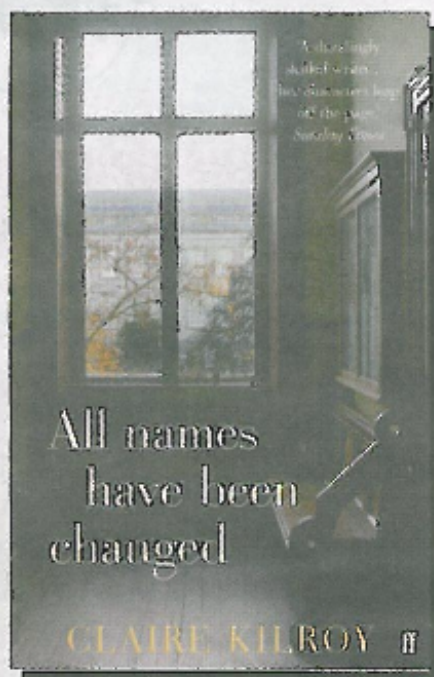
By Claire Kilroy
(Faber & Faber)

CHARTING THE RISE and fall of a literary genius, Claire Kilroy's new novel concerns a group of Trinity College students enrolled in a writing course with Professor Glynn – a famous author admired by all.

Set in the recessionary Dublin of the 1980s, we follow the students and their professor through their various personal and writing crises. Our more-or-less reliable narrator Declan, the only male member of the close-knit group of students, describes this experience from his peripheral point of view.

The four other students – all female and “fairies”, as Professor Glynn's calls them – come from diverse backgrounds, each of them bringing their own personal trauma. They all follow the larger-than-life professor on his daily boozy pub trips, the focus shifting more and more towards 'real life' experience and away from college.

Declan follows, but out of the picture – he is the one reflecting on the hierarchy in the writing class, trying not to lose his footing, both in the real world as well as artistically. The rest of the class fascinate him, all bar one haunted by their pasts and



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paranoia, much like his drug-dealing housemate.

Over the three terms we follow the class, relationships become more complicated, and various affairs finally lead to Glynn losing his aura as an untouchable literary genius. He becomes very much a person made of flesh and blood, a person of faults who is often not more than a weepy drunk kicked out by his wife and rejected by his daughter.

Kilroy skilfully parodies literary life and the struggles of aspiring writer Declan, the development in his own writing skills reflected by the subtle language changes from chapter to chapter (chasing literary quotations and identifying on which novels Declan has modelled his style in each chapter give the novel an extra layer of playfulness).

However, the experience of college life remains strangely vague, as do all other characters outside the group, detaching the novel's plot from any real action and showcasing the exquisite literary games Kilroy is playing with her witty and sharp use of language.

Certainly entertaining and often very darkly ironic, *All Names Have Been Changed* is a recommended read from start to finish.



Isabel Roleff has written articles and reviews for various magazines in her native Germany. More information about her work can be found at irishwritersexchange.com