

'Solar Bones' by Mike McCormack: Book Review

By **Rachel Casey** - Aug 12, 2016

Solar Bones focuses on Marcus Conway, a fifty-something year old engineer from a small town in County Mayo. On 2nd November, All Souls Day, he sits in his kitchen listening to the Angelus bell. He opens the paper and starts to read, with the stories recalling memories from his past. We come to get to know Marcus as he reflects on his life, his marriage, his children and his job.

But this is not a typical story about a man ruminating on the events of his life. Written as a stream-of-consciousness narrative, there are no full-stops and little punctuation for the entire 223 pages. Sentences run into each other as he drifts from thought to thought and jumps through different time periods in his life and back again. This might sound daunting but don't let it put you off. It might take a few pages, but once you get into the rhythm of the story it becomes easy to read.

It's Mike McCormack's skillful writing that makes *Solar Bones* as readable as it is, despite its difficulties on the surface. It's lyrical and poetic, and flows easily, connecting each of Marcus's thoughts and memories seamlessly, from his daughter's art exhibition, to his wife's illness, and his troubles with work. None of the thoughts are linear, but it's not jarring for McCormack to pull you between years as Marcus reminisces.

Solar Bones comments on a lot of different aspects of life. The politics of a small town, modern art and protest, and the situation in Ireland soon after the recession hit. But most of all this is a book about domesticity and family life. It's the parts of the story where Marcus thinks about his wife and his children that will stay with you the longest. There is such love and care when it comes to his family that it's difficult not to feel for Marcus. He is a strong character, and well written. His relationship with his children is one that many people can relate to; not understanding why his children do what they do, but supporting them nonetheless, with only a small amount of reproach.

The only thing to be warned about with *Solar Bones* is that, if possible, refrain from reading the blurb at the back of the book. It gives away the ending, and I think the book is better not knowing. It's something you can probably figure out along the way, but if there's any surprise to be had, it's worth waiting until you get to the end. But overall this is an enjoyable book, and McCormack's talent shines through.

REVIEW OVERVIEW

Solar Bones	★★★★☆
SUMMARY	3.5
	★★★★☆ OVERALL SCORE

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