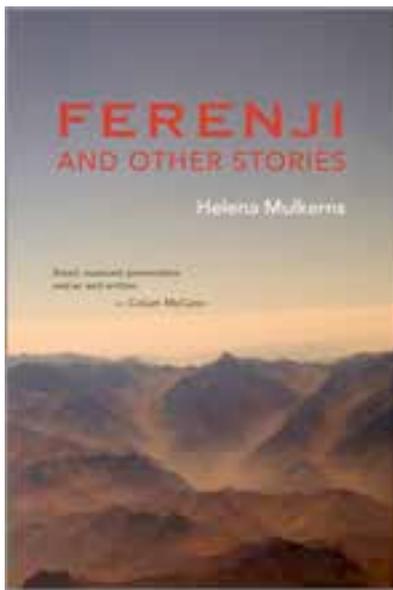




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## FERENJI AND OTHER STORIES

by Helena Mulherns

*\* for live links see accompanying email*

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*Smart, nuanced, provocative...* [Colum McCann](#)

*An engaging and highly readable collection...* [Sarah Gilmartin, Irish Times](#)

*Finely written and astutely observed...* [Dermot Bolger](#)

*Very moving stories...* [Seán Rocks, ARENA](#)

*These stories will invoke rage and sadness ...* [Olaf Tyransen, Hot Press](#)

*Ferenji and other stories* by [Helena Mulherns](#), from [Doire Press](#), is a themed short fiction collection set among civilians in conflict and post-conflict zones. From ancient Arabic, the term *Ferenji* means 'foreigners' and exists today in countries from Ethiopia to Vietnam. The author herself is a former journalist and UN veteran, who spent ten years 'in the field' as a press officer and photographer in Central America, Africa and Asia.

Publicity for the book's release is handled by Cormac Kinsella and so far has included a glowing [IRISH TIMES review](#), a [HOT PRESS interview](#), an [ARENA interview](#), and a [HOT PRESS book review](#). Elsewhere, she has written a column in [THE SUNDAY TIMES](#) and one of the books' short stories will feature next week on the [IRISH TIMES.com](#) website. Several other media features and reviews are forthcoming, TBC. See the [BOOK TRAILER here](#).

*Ferenji* depicts life in the field – warts and all – with pathos, dark field humour and satire, lending a passionate civilian voice to the new genre of contemporary post-conflict literature.

In 'A Child Called Peace', two young Irish peacekeepers find a child dying in a minefield. In 'Blood and Bone' a war photographer is haunted by the image of a refugee. "Dogs" explores how sexism can go beyond culture and borders. The title story, 'Ferenji' pits a lone aid worker against a bureaucratic system and 'Operation Cat Lift' is an allegory for our times.

The author was a music and arts journalist in Paris and New York before working for UN and has edited two literary anthologies, including [Red Lamp Black Piano](#). Her work has been shortlisted for The Pushcart Prize, Hennessy New Irish Writing and The Francis MacManus Short Story Competition. She received a bursary from the Arts Council of Ireland to complete *Ferenji*. She is also an experienced speaker and performer, available for events and interviews.

[Doire Press](#) is an award-winning literary publishing house located in Connemara, Co Galway. *Ferenji and other stories* will be available [in bookshops around Ireland](#), and from [Doire Press](#).

*For press and readings contact: Cormac Kinsella on 01-634-9924 or [ckinsella@repforce.ie](mailto:ckinsella@repforce.ie)  
Author's website: [www.helenamul.com](http://www.helenamul.com)*

## The humanity behind faraway wars



### Sarah Gilmartin New Fiction

#### Ferenji

By Helena Mulherns  
Doire Press, €12.99

**F**erenji, a word for foreigner from old Byzantium, appears in various guises in languages across the world. Derived from the historical term "Franks", or Europeans, it ranges from affectionate to pejorative, depending on how and where it is said.

It is a fitting title for Helena Mulherns's themed collection of short stories, depicting the lives of soldiers and civilians working in conflict and post-conflict zones. Each of the narrators, many of whom make repeat appearances, are foreigners trying to help or document worlds that are vastly different from their own. An Irish lieutenant struggles to remain professional while dealing with a child ravaged by a landmine. A photographer can't handle the chasm between life in Dublin and his experiences in the field. An Afghan woman who has spent years training abroad comes back to Kabul with her degrees to be treated like an animal.

*Ferenji* is an engaging and highly readable collection that seeks to show the humanity behind the wars in faraway lands that are often dismissed as "other". Mixing real and fictional settings - Paris, Dublin, Kabul and the imaginary but all-too-real east African landscape of Zohmea - the author brings interesting aspects of the violence to life.

From Dublin, Mulherns was an arts journalist in Paris and New York before joining UN peacekeeping missions in Central America, Africa and Afghanistan. The niece of the short-story writer Val Mulherns, she has edited two literary anthologies and been shortlisted for the Pushcart Prize, Hennessy New Irish Writing and the Francis MacManus Short Story Competition.

Most of the stories in *Ferenji* have a naturalistic style, interspersed with a few experimental flourishes. *Blue Tarpaulin* is told from the perspective of the titular object: "I am a stretcher for a bleeding mine victim. I am the bed on which babies are born. I am the shroud in which the massacre victims are covered." A brief but effective piece, it recalls the British author Harry Parker's debut earlier this year, *Anatomy of a Soldier*.

*Acacia Dreaming* is a powerful short about groups of women gathering to pray for an end to the violence, "for something beyond truth - the biggest small word in the world - peace... as persistent and vulnerable as soft-winged moths that batter night after night at a window."

Other stories, such as *Image of the Day* and *The Package Man*, offer snippets of ludicrous bureaucracy and immigrant lives in turmoil, although they ultimately feel unfinished.

Returning narrators offer mitigation, however, such as the memorable Tahmina, who, after standing up for a distressed Cambodian immigrant in a Paris post office, is viciously suppressed herself in a later story depicting an arms handover in Afghanistan. Scorned as a prostitute by the district administrator for not wearing a burka, Tahmina is supported by an Irish photographer, Emily, as they're left stranded for hours in the baking midday sun in the aptly titled *Dogs*.

*A Child Called Peace* introduces us to Lieut Dara O'Neill, who vividly describes the trauma in war-torn Zohmea, where five-year-old Selam has stepped on a landmine: "Her mouth was half open, a tiny rosebud split open on one side." Dara tries to escape the atrocity in *The Thousand Mile Rule* through a doomed affair that both parties cling to in the hope of some redemption or relief.

*Operation Cat Lift*, meanwhile, is a somewhat clunky allegory that sees Trini and Bren smuggle a cat on to a diplomatic jet in Africa while their colleagues can't get visas.

More affecting is Bren's earlier depiction, in *The Biggest Liar*, of his estrangement on landing in Dublin from Zohmea. As his sister picks him up in her new Land Rover, and brings him to Valumart, he is mesmerised: "He gazed up at the high, vaulted rafters, and then from side to side. It was like a cathedral... Rice, soups, eggs, biscuits for dogs."

**“There is the sense that Helena Mulherns's narrators are at the coalface, dispatching their stories home**



There are slippages here and there in this short collection, from a character noting "the Alanis Morissette irony of it" to a David Lynch-esque hotel, or a description of the process of taking a memorable war photo as "Wham bam thank you mam".

Philippe's shot of a young woman entering "a horror camp" on the Sudan-Ethiopia border has made the front page of an international edition. His reflections on the composition of a good war photo - from his sunbed at the Addis Hilton - call to mind last year's short-story collection from the Hungarian photojournalist Sándor Jászberényi, *The Devil Is a Black Dog*.

Like Jászberényi, Mulherns conjures up landscapes that are frightening and foreign: "Ahead, the heat was rippling up the view, twisting the horizon into a row of drunken amoebas." From the "adamantine Afghan sky" to "a valley carpeted in brilliant green vegetation like an emerald lake", there is the sense throughout that her narrators are at the coalface, dispatching their stories home.

Sarah Gilmartin is an arts journalist

# THE SUNDAY TIMES

## Fury over Trump

### Mexican wall was 'just talk' and no end to Obamacare



**Taly Harnden**  
 DONALD TRUMP has signalled he will compromise on key issues such as overhauling President Barack Obama's signature health-care reform and building a wall on the Mexican border, making a backdash from the hardline supporters who swept him to power.

Before his win, Trump described the outgoing administration's health reform, known as Obamacare, as a "disaster" and a "big lie". But after meeting Obama in the Oval Office, the president-elect struck a different tone, saying he preferred to amend the measure rather than repeal it.

Trump told The Wall Street Journal he favours keeping the legislation against insurers denying coverage because of patients' existing conditions, and a provision allowing parents to provide years of extra coverage for children - on their insurance policies. "I like these very much," said Trump, conceding that his change of heart had come as a result of meeting Obama.

Senior advisers to Trump have indicated that even his startling promises to build a wall and repeal Obamacare would be kept out of the campaign rhetoric ready.

"He's opened a new window," said Greg Kirsch, the former Obama aide of Republican

## Events trump my inner Bridget and I let a nasty woman out

MY WEEK HELENA MULKERNS

**SHOULD LIKE HAVE CULTURE**  
 When I read the book, I was struck by the way it was written. It's a story about a woman who is a writer and a mother. It's a story about a woman who is a writer and a mother. It's a story about a woman who is a writer and a mother.

The author enjoys 'high mirth and low bitching' over a US election that makes her the only sign the clocks have turned back



We are going to have a very interesting election. It's a story about a woman who is a writer and a mother. It's a story about a woman who is a writer and a mother. It's a story about a woman who is a writer and a mother.

O'Sullivan texts read by McCabe  
 O'Sullivan texts read by McCabe  
 O'Sullivan texts read by McCabe

...the author...  
 ...the author...  
 ...the author...

Arena With Seán Rocks  
 Monday - Friday 7-8pm



- Home
- Podcasts
- Music
- Books
- Poetry & Art
- More

### Podcasts

Monday 14th November

### "Ferenji and Other Stories" by Helena Mulherns

Helena Mulherns talks about her debut collection "Ferenji and Other Stories", short stories which are all set in the world of international workers in developing, conflict and post-conflict areas around the globe (published by Doire Press)



BOOKS

HELENA MULHERN

## LIFE DURING WARTIME

Helena Mulhern's new short story collection shows her extraordinary experiences as poet and novelist, which brought her to the heart of conflict zones in Ukraine and Afghanistan

**H**elena Mulhern has been awarded a number of prizes, including the 2014 Best Journalist and Poet award, the 2014 Best Poet award and the 2014 Best Poet award.

Her new collection, *Life During Wartime*, is a collection of short stories and poems that she has written during her time in conflict zones.

The book is a collection of short stories and poems that she has written during her time in conflict zones.

"I've known people in the UN who were covered in the rain."

"I've known people in the UN who were covered in the rain."



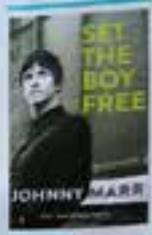
**HURT WINTER**  
Conor Brady



**I READ THE NEWS TODAY ON MY TV**  
John O'Grady



**THE BOOK OF DAVID**  
David O'Connell



**SET THE BOY FREE**  
Johnny Marr

Review of 'Hurt Winter' by Conor Brady. The book is a collection of short stories and poems that she has written during her time in conflict zones.

Review of 'I Read the News Today on My TV' by John O'Grady. The book is a collection of short stories and poems that she has written during her time in conflict zones.

Review of 'The Book of David' by David O'Connell. The book is a collection of short stories and poems that she has written during her time in conflict zones.

Review of 'Set the Boy Free' by Johnny Marr. The book is a collection of short stories and poems that she has written during her time in conflict zones.



FERENAH

Helena Mulhern

Helena Mulhern's new short story collection, *Ferenah*, is a collection of short stories and poems that she has written during her time in conflict zones. The book is a collection of short stories and poems that she has written during her time in conflict zones.

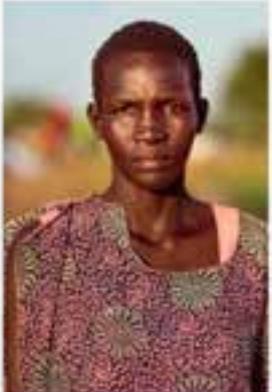
## Writing Reality: Reflections on Photographs of Refugees for Culture Night

Article by writing.ie © 16 September 2015. Posted in the Magazine (The Big Ideas).

If this Friday's Culture Night 2015 seeks to present new developments in the arts in Ireland, then Oxfam in Dublin have conceived an intriguing idea this year by combining two arts in one for their event: writing and photography.

The project also addresses one of the most important humanitarian issues of the day. With live readings from several of the writers and poets involved taking place in the Oxfam Book shop on Parliament Street from 6:30pm on, it promises to be a great night.

Like all of Europe, we are haunted at the moment by the Mediterranean crisis. The accompanying news reports deliver the facts and figures, and prompt many questions. At some point, however, we can also get a little media-fatigued looking at the images a given version of reality – in this case one delivered by photographers. The results will hopefully help highlight the reality of our refugees and displaced people – and make them as visible as possible so that viewers can, in turn, pose questions to themselves.



(c) Helena Mulhern