

# A Death in Dublin

## *French's latest raises the bar*

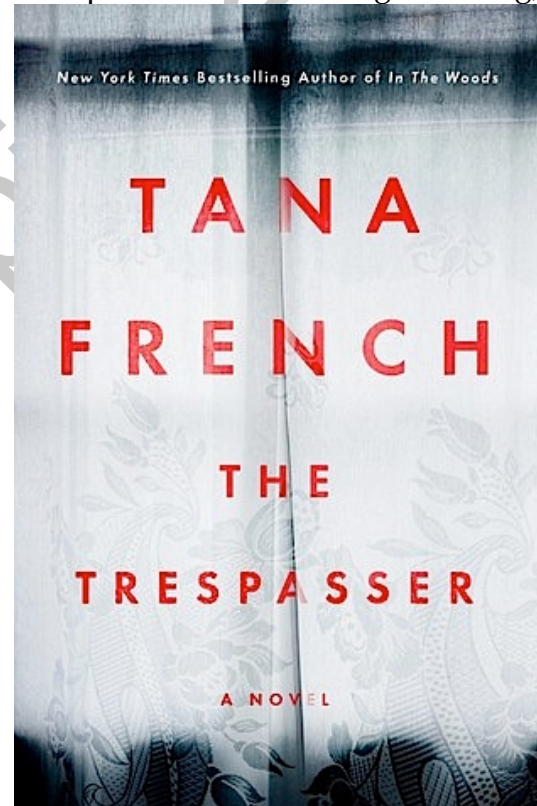
### *Suspended Sentences*

by Jim Napier

In a suburb of Dublin a young woman named Aislinn Murray is found dead in her home, her head bashed in. Garda detective Antoinette Conway and her partner Steve Moran are handed the case. On the surface it seems to be straightforward: the victim had prepared a romantic candlelight dinner; when her date showed up and she didn't answer the door he rang, then texted her. No answer in either case. Was he the killer, and the text and call simply a ruse to suggest he was innocent? All the signs point that way. Complicating matters, Conway is convinced she's seen the woman before, even talked to her. But for the life of her she can't remember where.

As they work the case Conway and Moran grow suspicious. A girlfriend hints that Aislinn had another man in her life, though she has no idea who he was. And as they work to identify him, a troubling coincidence comes to light: Aislinn's father had disappeared nearly twenty years earlier, and the case was never closed.

Conway's progress on the case is hindered by the fact that, except for her partner, the other members of the murder squad make little effort to conceal their hostility: vital pieces of evidence go missing,



and she's harassed by her colleagues. It seems that everyone wants her to fail so Conway will be bumped off the squad, and the Old Boy's Club can be resurrected. She struggles to solve the case, knowing

that her posting to the murder squad hangs in the balance.

Just over a decade ago Irish crime writer Tana French burst upon the scene with *In the Woods*, a work that earned her Anthony, Barry, Edgar and Macavity Awards for Best First Novel. Since then her standalone novels have been nominated for two other Anthony Awards (Best Novel for *Faithful Place* and *The Secret Place*), and a Dilys nomination (for *Broken Harbour*). In each case French stretches the boundaries of conventional crime fiction. *Broken Harbour* is notable for (among other things) devoting nearly the first two hundred pages to an account of a crime team's initial visit to the crime scene. Her most recent effort, *The Trespasser*, is no different: the prime suspect's several police interviews run to over twenty pages each. It would be many writing instructors' worst nightmare, and is not a structure that will appeal to all readers.

That said, the entire novel is exquisitely handled. A contemporary hard-boiled, *The Trespasser* is a classic depiction of a feisty cop with a chip on her shoulder who finds herself immersed in a quagmire of deceit and mutual distrust, and she struggles to do her job faced with not only the suspicions of others, but also while wrestling with her own lingering self-doubts. French perfectly captures the nuanced atmosphere of detectives working a case, their relationships with one another, with the forensics team, and with witnesses and suspects. The gritty dialogue, racing through the implications of every statement as if on speed, is spot on. The details of the investigation are laid out convincingly, and the jaded cast of characters and cunning plotting all gell to make for a riveting story that will hold you in it's grasp until the very last page. Reminiscent of the work of another Irish writer by the name of Joyce, who also pushed the literary envelope, *The Trespassers* is a superb read, not to be missed.

---

Published previously on *Reviewing the Evidence*, January, 2017.

Since 2005 more than 500 of Jim Napier's reviews and interviews have appeared in several Canadian newspapers and on such websites as *Spinetingler*, *The Rap Sheet*, *Shots Magazine*, *Crime Time*, *Reviewing The Evidence*, *January* magazine, the *Montreal Review of Books*, the *Ottawa Review of Books*, and *Amazon.com*, as well as on his own award-winning crime fiction site, *Deadly Diversions*. His own crime novel, *Legacy*, is scheduled to appear in the Spring of 2017. He can be reached at [jnapier@deadlydiversions.com](mailto:jnapier@deadlydiversions.com)