

Université de Lorraine, ERUDI, Master Mondes Anglophones
UE 903 – Littérature

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SUBJECT:

Role of fire in the following books: *The Freedom of the City*, by B. Friel (1973), *Cal*, by B. Mac Laverty (1983), and *The Fire Starters*, by J. Carson (2019).

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I. ESSAY

The three books studied during this year's literary class gave us various perspectives on the period of The Troubles in Northern Ireland (NI), from its beginning in the early 1970s up to its echoes in today's society. *The Freedom of the City* is a militant play written by Brian Friel, a Catholic writer. Set in Derry in 1970, in the aftermath of a Civil Rights meeting, the play presents three protesters, who, trying to escape from the gas bombs launched to disperse the crowd, find themselves in the Guildhall by mistake, while outside, their presence in the building is interpreted as a terrorist action. The play describes their final hours in the mayor's parlour, their surrender, and the tribunal supposed to investigate their deaths. The play was modified following the events of Bloody Sunday¹ to entail some references to the events. *Cal* is a realist novel by the Catholic author Bernard Mac Laverty, published in 1983, which describes the struggles of the eponymous character during The Troubles. Cal, a young, Catholic man, is on the dole. He lives with his father within a Protestant community, in an Ulster village. Press-ganged by two IRA² members, aggressed by young Protestant neighbours, his house burnt out, he falls in love with the widow of an NI police officer, victim of an IRA assassination in which Cal took part a year before. *The Fire Starters* is a recent novel written by the Protestant writer Jan Carson. Set in Loyalist Belfast 16 years after The Troubles, the story intertwines two sub-plots dealing (among other themes) with the difficulty of parenthood and the endemic violence—inherited from their parents—of an aimless youth, which implements the Fire Starter's calls to wreak havoc in the city by lighting fires.

The word "fire" is so omnipresent—in its various meanings—in the language of these three books that it seems culturally engrained in Northern Ireland's modern history and society. Indeed, I found many references to fire, that I classified in seven groups according to its use by the protagonists, ranging from its most violent employment, bringing death and destruction, to its most domestic, bringing well-being: 1) weapon or means of intimidation, 2) occupation for aimlessness, 3) traditional demonstration of power, 4) cleanser, 5) lighting cigarettes, 6) warmth and comfort, 7) metaphor for human passion and imagination (see examples in Appendix 1). However, each book, depending on its writer and on the political and social contexts in NI when it was written, does not use the same palette of references to fire.

¹ On 30 January 1972, the British Army opened fire on the protesters, which resulted in 13 murders.

² The Ireland Republican Army (IRA)

“The Troubles is too less a word for all of this.”³ Indeed, this word is an understatement for a 30-year conflict—a civil war that did not say its name?—between the IRA/Nationalist factions, the British Army⁴ and the Protestant/Loyalist factions. Protagonists on each side used firearms to kill or to hurt people, and this extreme violence is referred to in the books, from the slaughter of the three peaceful marchers by the British Army in Friel’s play to the assassination of Police Reserve officers such as Marcella’s husband, or kneecapping as a means of punishment or retaliation by IRA members in *Cal* (Appendix 1, § 1.a). Bombs and firebombs were also used by IRA terrorists to terrify people or destroy government buildings, such as the one placed by Crilly in the library, or by Protestants who burnt the house of Catholic families out to make them leave the district, in *Cal* (Appendix 1, § 1.b). Civilians suffered for more than thirty years of violence and fear, maintained by paramilitary forces on each side:

To suffer for something which didn’t exist, that was like Ireland. People were dying every day, men and women were being crippled and turned into vegetables in the name of Ireland. An Ireland which never was and never would be. It was the people of Ulster who were heroic, caught between the jaws of two opposing ideals trying to grind each other out of existence⁵.

In this instable and violent environment, young men who enrolled into these factions sometimes behaved as gangsters or hooligans, like IRA members who held up shop owners to fund their cause (*Cal*), or Sammy in his youth (*The Fire Starters*):

Sammy thinks about the fires of his youth: the bonfires, the burnt-out houses, the furniture store at the bottom of the Newtownards Road, which they’d doused with petrol after the owners failed to pay their protection money, the shops he’d done over for insurance, **and all those cars set alight for the sheer godless rush of wreaking havoc**⁶ (*my emphasis*).

Through her novel, and the fictional “Tall Fires” lighted by young people during the summer holidays—when they get bored easily—Jan Carson draws our attention to the fact that an aimlessness youth in NI might want to reproduce the events lived by the previous generation (Appendix 1, § 2): “Over the course of a single sun-blessed morning, their anger sours until it spills on to the city’s streets and they are burning buildings and cars and trees **for the sheer blood rush of actually doing something**” (p. 133, *my emphasis*). This danger seems particularly real in a city like Belfast: since the 1998 Agreement, although greater security has allowed for the development of neutral shared spaces, for example in commercial centres, the geographical distribution of the population and the increasing number of “Peace Walls” have

³ *The Fire Starters*, p. 8

⁴ Initially sent to protect the Catholics protesters during their Civil Rights marches at the end of the 1960s.

⁵ *Cal*, p. 83

⁶ *The Fire Starters*, p. 42.

made sectarianism worse; most schools still depend on the communities and, although they are not armed anymore, paramilitary groups have remained active in recruiting young people in sensitive areas⁷.

Sectarianism is also made worse by communities keeping some specific traditions alive, such as the gigantic bonfires set in the Loyalist areas on the 11th and 12th of July for celebrating the victory of the Protestant king William of Orange over the Catholic James II (Appendix 2). Perceived as the Loyalists' provocative demonstration of strength by the Nationalists, these traditions revive tensions between communities⁸. No wonder that these bonfires are at the heart of the story in *The Fire Starters* (Appendix 1, § 3).

In the novels, fire is also used to destroy evidence of criminal activities (Appendix 1, § 4), like in *Cal*, when Crilly burns the stolen car that they have just used to commit Morton's assassination (p. 88), or in *The Fire Starters*, when Sammy puts his son's computer and documents into the barbecue (p. 265). Fire may thus be perceived as a cleanser, as Cal later thinks of the arson which destroyed his house: "But in a way for himself it could be a clean start. Like burning a wound to cleanse it". (p. 81)

As in the old movies of the 1970s and 1980s, some of the male characters in the play and in *Cal* smoke a lot, which is typical of a period preceding the widespread health campaigns to prevent lung cancers... If Skinner lights cigars to pass the time in the mayor's parlour and "stubs out his cigar on the leather top-desk" in a provocative gesture (p. 129), Cal and his father, as well as Sammy, mainly smoke cigarettes to calm their nerves and find some comfort in stressful situations (Appendix 1, § 5). The dim light of a match or the red glow of a cigarette, flickering in the obscurity of Cal's bedroom or derelict cottage, seem metaphors of the brief moments of happiness Cal spends with Marcella, among the preponderant fear and darkness in his life. Indeed, the sensations of warmth, comfort and tenderness felt by Cal, when he remembers his mother (p. 78) or when he is with Marcella (pp. 107, 129-130, etc.) are linked with fire burning in the hearth (Appendix 1, § 6). And in contrast, the uneasiness and anxiety he feels when he must meet Crilly is enhanced by the cold atmosphere in Crilly's house, where "there was no fire in the grate" (pp. 21, 23, 149). The equivalent of social bond created through offering a cup of tea or spending time in front of a good fire in winter could be found in partying around a

⁷ NI Government, Department of Education, *Children and Young People's Strategy, 2020-2030*, § 6.82, p. 66,

⁸ <https://sharedfuture.news/bonfires/>

barbecue in summer, as in *The Fire Starters* (p. 13). And in a sense, for Protestants, bonfires in East Belfast are also an occasion of gathering and building things together.

Today, Ulster society is still living with the repercussions of The Troubles, i.e., “its legacy of trauma, mental issues and poverty”.⁹ If in *The Fire Starters*, magical realism and humour helped Carson to tackle difficult historical and political subjects, her novel dramatizes “the simmering volatility of a region that, with the looming post-Brexit threat of a hard border, could explode again”¹⁰. Fire is such an intrinsic element of NI culture that it has provided vivid metaphors not only for the language of human emotions and imagination in the three books (Appendix 1, § 7), but also for the journalist of *The Guardian* who reviewed Carson’s novel.

⁹ Interview of Jan Carson, Spring 2021, <https://youtu.be/nRrBtDVy6Vo>

¹⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/may/29/fire-starters-jan-carson-review>

II. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: References to fire in the books studied in 903-Literature class

1) Fire as weapons and means of intimidation

1.a) Firearms/Guns

The Freedom of the City. Act One, Judge: “Our only function is to form an objective view of the events which occurred in the City of Londonderry, Northern Ireland, on the tenth of February 1970, when after a civil rights meeting **British troops opened fire** and three civilians lost their lives”. (p. 101)

Brigadier (p. 125): “My Lord, they emerged **firing** from the Guildhall.”

Judge (p. 132): “...we have the sworn testimony of eight soldiers and four policemen who claim not only to have seen these arms but **to have been fired at** by them.”

Winbourne: “... When **a gun is fired**.... If **I fire a revolver** or an automatic weapon or bolt-action rifle, these lead particles....” And many times later in the same page... (pp. 132-133)

Act 2, p. 139. Michael: “And then the Guilhall Square **exploded**...”

p. 140; Skinner: “And then **everything melted and fused in a great roaring heat**.”

p. 150. Judge: “And your report states that all three were killed by SLR **rifle-fire**.”

Cal p. 28: Shamie was putting the gun beneath his pillow...

p. 46: ‘I think we should consider moving,’ said Cal...Their blood is up. Next time they’ll really have a go. Guns maybe.’

pp. 75-77: *Cal has to go back to their burnt house to retrieve Shamie’s gun on his bedside table.*

p. 87, *when Crilly shoots Marcella’s husband and father in law...*

p. 93 (*when the police arrive in the derelict cottage where Cal is squatting*): **Suddenly the room was filled with a blue-white light and the outside door exploded open.** There was yelling and the thunder of heavy feet. **The inner door was kicked and sprang back against**

the wall. Cal was halfway out of his bed and running doubled over when a voice screamed ‘Freeze’. **He saw rifles pointed at him.** A light blinded him and he was kicked on the side of the head. He fell back against the fireplace.

p. 150, *when they leave Crilly’s house they are arrested by the police:* ‘Halt or **I fire**’.

1.b) Arsons and bombs

Cal, p. 27: *the intimidation note:* GET OUT YOU FENYAN SCUM OR WE’LL BURN YOU OUT; THIS IS YOUR 2ND WARNING, THERE WILL BE NO OTHER. UVF.

Pages 74-76: *the arson of Cal’s house:*

There was a glow above the houses of the estate but at first he thought it was the street lights. Then he noticed that **the glow was billowing with smoke.** When he saw the blue pulse of a warning light he began to run. The street was full of people and a fire engine and a police car were pulled up on the pavement. He knew it was his house and he fought his way through the crowd. **There were flames gushing from the front room window and glass crashed and tinkled as it broke in the heat.** A crackling loudspeaker voice came above the noise from the cabin of the fire engine. Cal shouted to one of the firemen. ‘Is my father in there?’ His voice was almost a scream.

Cal went as close as he could until **the heat was scorching the skin of his face** and he had to turn his head away. The firemen were pumping a white column of water through the front room window and it seemed to be having no effect. **Small explosions and cracks continued.** Cal could see **flickerings beginning to come from upstairs.** (...)

The **petrol bomb** – if it was a petrol bomb; for all Shamie knew they could have poured the stuff through the letterbox and set fire to it – must have come through the front door. Shamie had been having his usual sleep in the armchair and had heard nothing. The first thing that warned him was the smell. He woke up and could hardly see across the room. When he opened the door the hall and **the stairs were a blazing inferno.**

p. 80: “We were burnt out”.

p. 120 (*a cow explodes on a mine in a field*): Suddenly the air was ripped apart by an explosion. Cal felt the shockwave of it beat through him like the thump of a drum. Marcella screamed and ducked, protecting the child who set up an unmerciful crying. (...) Three or four fields away he saw a plume of white drifting smoke. (...). He froze, frightened of stepping on another mine.

p. 144, *Crilly puts a firebomb into a book at the library*: ‘There’s plenty in that book,’ said Crilly. He took it out very gently and looked all around him and, seeing no one, flipped open the cover. There was a square hole cut in the pages. Inside was a small bag of powder wired to a watch. Crilly closed the book carefully and slipped it back on to the shelf. (...) ‘Jesus, why do you want to burn down a library?’ ‘Government property, in’t it? Orders is orders, Cal.’

2) Fire as a sick occupation to fight aimlessness

The Freedom of the City -- Michael: “Oh, as you say, he’s glib all right. But if you ask me he’s more at home with the hooligans, out throwing stones **and burning shops!**”. (p. 129) *Skinner pours himself a drink and sings quietly. Then very deliberately he stubs out his cigar on the leather top-desk.*

The Fire Starters: Chapter 1, ‘This is Belfast’, pp. 14-21 → *the Summer of Tall Fires*: This is the kind of violence a group of people will do to themselves (p. 16)

p. 42: Sammy thinks about the fires of his youth: the bonfires, the burnt-out houses, the furniture store at the bottom of the Newtownards Road, which they’d doused with petrol after the owners failed to pay their protection money, the shops he’d done over for insurance, and **all those cars set alight for the sheer godless rush of wreaking havoc**. They’d been wild keen on burning cars back in the day.... (p. 45) They’d beat the men up – just a bit and only with fists – **for something to do**. It was expected. But it was the burning they’d really come for. **The fire was something you couldn’t do every day in Belfast, not without permission anyway**. It was worth the drive just to see the cars catch and the drivers’ faces glow demon red as the owners watched their shiny Fords and Peugeots reduced to blackened ash.

p. 113: ...we pass a group of ten- and twelve-year-olds gathered outside a Chinese takeaway. ... **They are staring at the flames with the same rapt attention** I’ve seen on the faces of teenagers staring at phones. *Some teen-agers set a Tall Fire on the climbing frame in a park and are witnessed by Jonathan*. P. 119: The whole building is a giant torch, beaming up Belmont Avenue. It burns like a pagan shrine, the sort of horror you might travel miles to see. This is a Tall Fire.

pp. 127-128: All over Belfast, but mostly in the East, the bonfires are being layered up, like enormous wedding cakes. Flags and stuffed effigies of the other side are bound to the pallets with rope...They are their shipyard fathers and their grandfathers before them, standing with hands idly in pockets. They are waiting for a summer soon to come when they will be invited into the thick of the fire, to push the edges back with long-handled shovels, to work the crane, or empty handguns into the fire's flaming tongues. Bang. Bang. Bang. Like it's a beast to be slain...Most of the bonfires are already lording it over the thirty-foot limit by twenty, thirty, forty extra feet, in one case fifty. They are daring the police to intervene.

p. 129: Elsewhere in the city the Tall Fires continue to flame... The Tall Fires are a different kind of trouble. They could not have been predicted so have not been planned for.... It's been four weeks now and the fires are only getting worse.

p. 132-133: It holds cardboard signs to the camera. 'They're not listening to us'; 'Burn the whole city down'; 'I'm the Fire Starter.'... 'YOU SHOULD HAVE LEFT OUR BONFIRES ALONE.'...The Fire Starter has decided it's time to escalate the violence... The young men and women of Belfast have heard it all before. They don't want to stay at home and pray for peace. They don't want to follow rules or put the safety of others first. They are blood blind with anger: 'First the peace walls, and then the roads, the flags and now our bonfires,' they say. 'Soon we won't have anything left.' They are, at heart, terrified that once the last symbol has been stolen from them they will not know themselves different from the stranger in the street. They will be left without anything solid to lean upon...They use the war-weary language of duty: 'It's up to us'; 'Now's the time'; 'Our civil liberties are at stake.' Over the course of a single sun-blessed morning, their anger sours until it spills on to the city's streets and **they are burning buildings and cars and trees for the sheer blood rush of actually doing something.**

pp. 134-135: It is a kind of hell and they have only just started... This is the sound of war beginning and the young ones are proud to be doing their bit. By midnight on the Eleventh the young fire starters have grown bored with the bonfires and moved on to other, less likely, sources. Hundreds of teenagers and youths in their early twenties have swarmed the streets of Belfast setting fire to anything that speaks of authority: churches, schools, Ulsterbuses idling by the side of the road, postboxes, post vans, police Land Rovers where they can peel the officers out from behind the wheel, shops, trees and pubs, which go up like Halloween night when the spirits catch. **Anything that can be burnt has been burnt...**It is like a **snapshot of the world's end**: masked children eating ice cream while the whole city glows hell red behind

their backs...in other countries, people who had almost forgotten the problems with Belfast watch this clip... something like an old memory resurrected.

p. 140: The Orangemen decide to continue with their traditional parades. The Twelfth day storms angrily down the already flaming streets; **all is fire, all is rage and chaos.**

pp. 204-205: It has been raining for six days now... It is impossible to light an outside fire. The rain has no patience with heat. Even a cigarette requires careful manoeuvring with umbrellas and cupped hands. Water kills fire... The Tall Fires are over. The rain has drawn a line under the summer and all its nonsense...**Nothing has been resolved or achieved but this is not considered failing. This is how it has been in Belfast every summer since the Agreement.** The same hot anger rises at the end of June and goes stamping up and down the little streets. Stamping and shouting and raising Cain all the way through July until, by August's end, the energy's gone right out of it. The spite leaves gradually, like a pendulum losing swing...The angry time is over for another year. The people of East Belfast roll up their rebel souls and return to normal. They are relieved to have their nights back...This is how it's always been in the East. Though the Tall Fires have made this summer hotter than most, it is widely understood that it's August now and time for settling down. **Even the young ones have no interest left in setting fires or screaming at the police. The need for it has left their system.**

p. 213-217, *Mark posted a new video for the Fire Starters*: 'Naw, my da says lunatics like that never change. He went to school with this fella that was deep into torturing and stuff during the Troubles. Dad says you'd always have known there was something odd about him. He'd no fear nor nothing. No sympathy for other people. He was just unhinged. Your lad in the Fire Starter video's the same'...'Whatever – fires, beatings, bricking the police. Sure, **wasn't it good to have something to be at for a change?**'...The other claims he's heard from a mate of his brother that **the Fire Starter's going to do a bomb next.** 'Is it still anarchy if you use a bomb instead of guns?' asks his mate, and the other lad reassures him that **it's totally still anarchy so long as there's some kind of explosion. This seems to satisfy them both.**

3) Fire—From tradition to demonstration of power

Cal: Halloween night, p. 122: After tea one night he was aware of flickering lights on the wall of his room. He had lost all track of the time of year and only when he looked out and saw **cascades of crimson sparks** did he remember that it was Hallowe'en. (...) Rockets whirred and hissed into the dark and one expensive one burst at its zenith into a fountain of white which momentarily brightened the yard. The three faces were lit in awe (...). The next day, crossing the yard, Cal stepped on the charred stick and burnt-out tube of a rocket embedded in the mud.

The Fire Starters: Chapter 1, 'This is Belfast', pp. 14-21

p. 16: In the East, people are torn. **It is part of their culture to burn things**, yet they cannot possibly condone burning without order... **There have always been bonfires** in this part of the city. Not these haphazard pyres. Traditional bonfires, limited to a single night of burning... Most people cannot remember the story in detail but **the memory of fire is hard to forget**.

p. 104: But here we are with these Tall Fires and all the broken mess of you. The whole city's burning and you are at the centre of it, **talking the bloody talk of my younger days. Flags and bonfires**. Civil liberties and free speech... There is no sense in this thing you're doing. It's only moving backwards.

4) Fire as a cleanser

Cal, p. 81 (speaking metaphorically of the arson): He felt sorry for Shamie, losing all the things he had gathered over a lifetime. But in a way for himself it could be a clean start. **Like burning a wound to cleanse it**.

p. 88: *Crilly burns the car they have used to go and kill Marcella's husband*: He directed Cal to park behind some sheds on wasteground. They got out and Crilly took a can from the bag and poured it over the upholstery of the car. 'Have you got a match?' Cal gave him a box of matches (...) Crilly struck a match and threw it on the seat. The match went out and he cursed.

He struck another one. (...) **This time the car exploded with a dull whumph – blue at first, turning to yellow flame.**

The Fire Starters, p. 265: *Sammy wants to destroy all evidence against his son in a fire: It's more difficult than he thought to get a fire going. Everything is sodden after a month's worth of rain and the electronics refuse to catch. He piles all Mark's stuff into the barbecue and douses it with lighter fuel. The papers burn off quickly, the fabric and plastics melt and re-form under the heat, but the laptop refuses to burn... He...goes back in with a canister of petrol. All of a sudden the barbecue is engulfed in an explosion of hot red flames.*

5) Fire to light cigarettes

As a provocation → Skinner **lights a cigar** and carries his glass to the phone (pp. 120 to 129) *Then very deliberately he stubs out his cigar on the leather top-desk.*

p. 130: Skinner “They could do terrible things to you—break your arm, burn you with cigarettes, give you injections.”

To calm one's nerves

Cal p. 8: He fumbled in his own pocket for a match. (...) He struck the match, cupped it and lit one of the cigarettes, inhaling deeply. (P. 13—*after a strong emotion*): It took him three matches to light another cigarette. (p. 28): He lit up and lay back. It was strange how much the room glowed red each time he took a draw. It was so quiet that he heard the faint hiss of burning tobacco. Page 30. Page 52: The match flared and he spun it away from him, hearing its whirr and hiss into a puddle.

Page 78 (after Cal's house arson): They lay back and lit cigarettes. Cal for the first time in years felt safe.

The Fire Starters, p. 38, *Sammy has bought cigarettes*: It's years since he last smoked but today he's bought himself a packet. **Needs must. As the cigarette flares in his cupped hands** he notices the trail of summer jets smoking away from Belfast to the mainland and those destinations beyond. (...)

6) Fire in hearth and candles, as a means of comfort, warmth and tenderness

Cal p. 78 (*In Dermot's house, after the arson of Cal's house*): **In the darkness the fire still glowed.** Cal threw his cigarette over his shoulder into it. **He loved sleeping in a room with a fire.** He had been ill once in their first house in Clanchatten Street and they had moved his bed down beside the range. The fire door was usually kept open at night to keep the room warm and he would lie listening to his mother's voice talking to a neighbour or his father, **feeling the heat from the fire on his face.** The voices would become indistinct, mixed with the rattle of teacups or the creak of a chair, and for a long time he would be half asleep, half awake – listening not to what was said but to the enveloping sound of their saying. (*But as soon as he feels comfortable, his father tells him that Crilly wants to see him*).

p. 99, *when Cal settles more comfortably in the derelict cottage*: She lit a fire with paper and kindling and a cornflake carton full of coal. Cal wheelbarrowed some of the blocks he himself had cut to keep it going. When they had moved all they could think of, including a mat for him to step out of bed on to, Cal suggested that they have a cup of tea. He lit the camping stove and lifted the kettle. (...) In the cottage they sat waiting for the kettle to boil. Little Lucy was in the hall talking to herself and the blocks on the fire were spitting and hissing.

p. 107, *Marcella visits Cal in his cottage*: Cal raked the fire and put another block on it. (...) Cal took his hand from her shoulder because it felt awkward and sat down on the edge of the earth at her feet. (p. 108)

pp. 129-130: *the diner at Marcella's house*: (...) and when they finally did sit down in the candle-lit dining room she said, 'Isn't this great. Like lovers.' (...) The candles were becoming varicose with melted wax. Their light seemed to soften and shade her face so that she looked younger. (...) Then they moved to the other room for coffee in front of the fire. (p. 132) he could see the undersides of her thighs lit by firelight.

p. 135, *when the snow falls*: He lit a fire and changed his clothes and hung them steaming from the mantelpiece and the backs of chairs. (...) Cal heated a tin of beans and toasted himself slice after slice of bread **at the fire. He fell asleep** and when he awoke it was dark. (...) Shivering, he **raked the embers to redness and put on some kindling wood, then blocks on top of that. He pulled his chair nearer to the fire and put his feet up** against the tiles of the mantelpiece.

By contrast: cold hearth without fire

Cal, p. 21: Finbar Skeffington sat in an armchair beside the fireplace with his short legs out in front of him, looking at the high polish on his shoes. **There was no fire in the grate.** (p. 23)
[Cal] lit a cigarette and flicked the match into the grate, empty except for some sweet papers.

p. 149, *At Crilly's house, again, when her mother comes in she says* "It's bitter outside. Would you not turn on the other bar of that fire?"

The Fire starters

Summer → Sun → people are outside, social bounds

p. 12: Afterwards the flesh is pink, as if it has been burnt.

p. 13: The air is hot in the East. Someone has lit a barbecue.

7) Fire as in human passion and imagination

The Freedom of the City, Act One. Priest: "No sacrifice is ever in vain. But its value can be diminished if it doesn't **fire our imagination**, stiffen our resolution, and make us even more determined to see that the dream they dreamed is realized." (p. 116)

Act 2, Skinner: "... state subsistence that's about enough to keep you alive but too small **to fire your guts.**" (p. 144)

Cal, p. 140, *about love*: 'Love is a very strange idea. I never know what it is. When you were young it seemed to be all intensity and no opportunity. Later when you did get the opportunity **the fire had gone out of it.**' **'I still have it,' said Cal.** 'You're still young. Anyway that's too simple. It must be a mixture of friendship and desire.

The Fire Starters

p. 38: Every couple of blocks the pavement rises in cupped craters, curling at the edges, like the burnt black crusts of an overdone pancake. These are the remains of old fires. Some are fresh and still steaming. **Some have solidified and, in solidifying, formed tiny cities, lumps, lows and charred logs rising from the ash, like Hiroshima or Nagasaki in miniature. They are a very specific kind of beautiful.**

pp. 133-134, *Images of Volcano and lava when the bonfires collapse*: Before the authorities can move in to dismantle the bonfires safely, every one of them is alight. Belfast bakes from the combined heat of sunshine and a hundred daytime fires. **The tallest lose the run of themselves and swim down the streets, like molten rivers of lava.** Unpatrolled, they claim everything in their path, setting cars and terraced houses on fire, turning the warm tarmac to treacle, scorching the double-glazing until it pops one layer at a time, **making a noise like water laughing.** The old people are evacuated from their houses and stand at the end of their streets watching the fires flame. Some are crying, even some of the men. The fire brigade can't cope. Engines from the south are called upon. This hasn't happened since De Valera gave the word during the Blitz.

Appendix 2: illustrations



Craigyhill Bonfire, near Larne which is nearing 100 pallets high,

Credit: Craigyhill Bonfire Larne Facebook Page

<https://www.itv.com/news/utv/2022-06-22/in-pictures-the-huge-bonfires-being-built-across-northern-ireland>



A spectator at the bonfire in Sandy Row, Photograph: Jeff J Mitchell/Getty Images¹¹



Craigyhill bonfire in Larne. Picture: Philip Magowan / PressEye¹²

¹¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/gallery/2017/jul/12/eleventh-night-bonfires-12-july-belfast-northern-ireland-in-pictures>

¹² <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/galleries/news/northern-ireland-bonfires-2021-photos-40605677.html>

III. RESOURCES

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