

# Books in brief: From the gig economy to coping with depression

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## **Temporary**

By Hilary Leichter

*Faber, £12.99*

The word “temporary” is both an adjective and a noun, referring simultaneously to the non-permanent nature of a state of existence, and to a person who may take up a job for a short period of time. Hilary Leichter’s debut novel gleefully plays with this notion of temporality, frolicking in the playground of the gig economy. Her protagonist remains nameless throughout the narrative and that’s part of her power; she is at once every woman and no woman, and her creator defies the reader not to recognise at least one aspect of her absurd multitasking existence. Her various jobs range from human barnacle to stand-in mother as she searches in vain for something that her current roles simply can’t provide: permanence. Relentlessly engaging, imaginative and inventive, this is a modern surrealist fable for our times. **BECKY LONG**

## **Working in Cork: 1917-2001**

By Liam Cullinane

*Cork University Press, €39*

The book focuses on the Cork factories of Irish Steel, Sunbeam Wolsey and Ford Marina and the men and women who worked in them. As such, it is Irish 20th-century working-class history but it breaks new ground in its comparative-factory approach and its extensive use of interviews with former workers in those factories. The latter approach provides “a more total picture of working lives than would otherwise be possible”. The business history of each factory is covered, followed by a comparative analysis of how industrial relations and work experiences affected employees’ lives, and finally an overview of interviewees’ work-life patterns, gender experience and trade union activities. The comparative approach reveals differing industrial-relations records, differing union recognition and so on, but it’s the picture of real lives lived that intrigues most. **BRIAN MAYE**

## **Self Portrait in Green**

By Marie Ndiaye, translated by Jordan Stump

*Influx Press, £7.99*

It is through meeting other women that the narrator forms a sense of who she is. These spectral women are befriended and always identified as “a woman in green”. The characterisation of such women is “untouchable, disappointing, infinitely mutable, very cold, able by force of will to become very beautiful, and able too, not to want to.” Not a disposition easily recognised and, aptly, their presence can seem hallucinatory, tragic or as fleeting as the

ephemeral object several people see but cannot name. All of the narrator's connections are subject to sudden termination, including those with her own family. Formed from the green fog of memories, Ndiaye's novel is a richly imaginative and openly ambiguous search for an elusive self. **DECLAN O'DRISCOLL**

### **Tomorrow They Won't Dare to Murder Us**

By Joseph Andras, translated by Simon Leser

*Verso, £8.99*

Recent controversy about French president Emmanuel Macron's refusal to apologise for France's behaviour during the 1954-1962 Algerian war of independence demonstrates how little his country has done to face up to its colonial past. This compelling novel details the motivations and conflicts of Fernand Iveton, a real-life "Pied-Noir" member of the FLN who attempted to place a bomb in an area where he knew nobody would be killed. Imprisoned, memories of his beloved wife, H el ene, and the solidarity of other prisoners help to counter the immense physical damage done to him. To not know about Iveton before reading the book is an advantage because Andras maintains suspense about the outcome of his trial until the end. By then, you wonder why you had never heard of him before. **DECLAN O'DRISCOLL**

### **Common Ground**

By Naomi Ishiguro

*Tinder Press, £16.99*

Common Ground is a coming-of-age story that explores the friendship between Stan, a lonely young boy who is bullied at school, and Charlie, a fearless Romany/Traveller teenager. The story follows their friendship into early adult life and explores the difficulty in maintaining an innocent and natural bond in a society that does not hesitate to remind them that they belong to different worlds. While the author approaches this book with good intentions to explore the discrimination faced by minority communities, Common Ground does not appear to be well researched. For example, using the terms Romany and Traveller interchangeably; these are distinct ethnic groups. I would be interested to know what the Travelling and Romany communities think of the book. **BRIGID O'DEA**

### **Mending the Mind: The Art and Science of Overcoming Depression**

By Oliver Kamm

*Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £16.99*

This is simultaneously a distressing and uplifting read. In this easy-to-read book, Kamm takes us through his year of torment and anguish with depression and how, with professional help, he was able to make a full recovery. Being mentally ill, he observes, is akin to being in a trench with no idea how to get out. He could not open the front door without having to build up to it. He found his illness radically unfamiliar and therefore all the more terrifying. The book covers all aspects of the illness, such as what causes it, medical treatment, psychological

treatment, living with it and, finally, the end of it. Kamm wants those suffering to realise their condition is not hopeless, and it is in principle curable, and that those whose lives are devastated are not responsible for their plight. **OWEN DAWSON**