

Books – The Rental Heart & Other Fairytales – Kirsty Logan



Kirsty Logan has been called many things in her time. From the fellow student on Glasgow University's Creative Writing course, who slated every piece of her work as 'fluffy, girly and pointless' to Kaite Walsh of the Independent, who called her a 'bold fresh new talent' with 'a wild, original imagination', it's fair to say, Logan has seen it all. Her work has appeared in over eighty publications and been read on radio, and on Thursday she was in conversation with Peggy Hughes, Programme Director for Literary Dundee, at Looking Glass Books.

Logan has recently published her collection of short stories, *The Rental Heart & Other Fairytales*, with which she won the International Scott Prize after submitting her work to Salt Publishing 'on a whim.' Her stories have earned her many accolades – she's even been described as the potential love child of Angela Carter and Michel Faber, both writers whom she admires hugely. She wrote stories from an early age – she says she was a moody child who wrote to draw her parents' attention away from her angelic younger brother. Working at other jobs throughout her twenties (she is still the Books Editor of *The List*) it took her time to realise that writing could be a valid career choice in itself.

Although she feels she did benefit from her MLitt, she says that writing degrees don't make anyone any more of a writer than they were before, 'There is no secret golden key that unlocks the box.' From reading other ground-breaking authors like Italo Calvino and Carter herself, Logan began to see that

it was OK to write 'odd' stories. She's been described as part of the New Weird genre, a writer of modern day fairy stories with undertones. At first, she wanted to write 'big dramatic hard-hitting stuff' but now she finds the small things much more poignant.



The stories in the book were not written as a collection, but many share common themes – fairy tales, substitutes for love (which she describes as 'big and difficult'), the intimacy between two people, or between a person and a 'love substitute.' In one story a woman makes a partner out of paper, in another a girl with antlers and a boy with a tail are the only two 'different' people in their island community. It's safe to say Logan's writing is also different.

Social media led to several breaks for Logan; she acquired her agent by entering an Ideas Tap competition she saw on Twitter, and it was also through Twitter that she got involved in The WoMentoring Project, which provides free insight, knowledge and guidance to new writers who may not otherwise have access to such support. She points out, however, that they too are substitutes; groups of friends are there, but also not there.

Logan thinks of only one person at a time when writing, 'You can't please everyone.' For her, writing can be a catharsis, a way of dealing with difficult thoughts; after her father's death, she felt lost and longed for a structure, some instruction on what she was supposed to do. She wrote a story about a bird in cage; its life signifies the grieving period, so that when it dies, that time is over. Although Logan now feels that grieving cannot be contained in this way, the story has inspired her new novel, The Gracekeepers, which will be published in 2015.

Many writers find their second or third novels a struggle to write, but Logan is not short of ideas. The next book will

involve Scottish and Scandinavian folk stories, exploring loss and sexuality, and it will be followed by a gothic lesbian romance set in Glasgow. After that she very much wants to write something about pro-wrestling; yes really. She is a huge fan of the X-Files and has written about her fascination with the programme for The Female Gaze website. She reads many on-line journals such as Gutter and Ninth Letter, and particularly admires Margo Lanagan, whose stories she describes as sinister and beautiful, creating strange worlds with no explanations. Anneliese Mackintosh and Dawn West are other favourites.

A woman of wit and wild thoughts, a writer who lets her imagination soar, but who values the intricacies of everyday existence; Kirsty Logan entranced her packed audience just as her work entrances her readers.

The Rental Heart & Other Fairytales is published by [Salt Publishing](#) and available from Looking Glass Books, Waterstones, the Book Depository and Amazon.

Kirsty Logan's website is www.kirstylogan.com

The Womentoring Project: womentoringproject.co.uk