

### Martin, Joy

Born: Ireland, 1937

Educated: Ireland.

Joy Martin was born in Limerick in 1937 and educated at Laurel Hill Convent, Limerick. Her mother was an Irish Catholic, her father an English Protestant, wounded in the war. The family lived, she writes, 'as rather poor relations on my grandfather's land in County Limerick. My parents were immensely tolerant people to whom religious bigotry was as much anathema as "class" ... Still, as a child I was deeply conscious of being neither this nor that; now I realise that I gained valuable insight into three worlds – that of the well-to-do, landed Catholics of the south-west of Ireland; the English middle classes; and what we then termed "The Poor" – and learned that a lingering sense of "not belonging" has its compensations.'<sup>1</sup>

Like many another only child, she read 'voraciously', and was privy to adult conversation. She always wanted to write and published her first short story when she was only seventeen. 'Like its author,' she notes, 'it was pretentious and precious.'<sup>2</sup> She wished to study English at

university, but her family could not afford this, so she turned to journalism. The editor of the *Limerick Weekly Echo*, now defunct, took her on as a trainee reporter, and after two years she moved to the *Evening Press* in Dublin. After she married, she lived in South Africa and worked for the liberal *Rand Daily Mail*, was assistant editor of *Femina* magazine, and wrote two non-fiction books before turning to novels. The first, *Twelve Shades of Black*, interviews with twelve men and women from black townships around Johannesburg, was a runner-up for the South African Literary Award. The second, *Myth and Magic*, analysed the beliefs of the Shona people of Zimbabwe. Between two spells in Africa, she worked for the BBC, writing news for the Home and World Service. She has two children and three step-children, lives in Chelsea, London, and whenever possible, in the family's holiday home in Whitegate, Co. Clare.

*The Moon is Red in April* (1989), based on the founding of the House of Hennessy Cognac, is set in eighteenth-century Ireland and France. Richard O'Shaughnessy flees from Cork to France to escape the penal laws and to fight in the Irish Brigade. The Hennessy family assisted in the research for this novel, providing letters and documents relevant to the period. *Ulick's Daughter* (1990) is also based on a true story, and is set in Ireland and Russia. Ulick, John de Burgh, fourteenth Earl of Clanricarde in Co. Galway, has an illegitimate child by the daughter of one of his tenants. When Ulick's son inherits, he evicts mother and child, forcing them to live on the roadside.

*Image of Laura* (1992) is a three-generational story set in Berlin from 1930-39, in London in the 1950s and 1960s, in South Africa in the 1970s, and in London of the present. In this present, the seventy-five-year-old Laura holds a retrospective exhibition of her photography, and an unusual birthday present brings back the past.

*Unveiling Treasures*

**Works:**

*A Wrong to Sweeten*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1986.  
Novel.

*The Moon is Red in April*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson,  
1989. Novel.

*Ulick's Daughter*. London: Grafton Books, 1990. Novel.

*A Heritage of Wrong*. London: Grafton Books, 1991. Novel.

*Image of Laura*. London: HarperCollins, 1992. Novel.

**Notes**

1. Personal communication.
2. Personal communication.

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