



[Home](#) > Bog Child

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# Bog Child

Books Reviewed:

[Bog Child](#) [1]

Issue:

[170](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Nicholas Tucker](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

This author's first two novels were marvels of literary concision, packing much into a spare narrative accompanied by just the right amount of dialogue. But by her own very high standards, this posthumous novel although a fine achievement is never quite in the same league. Set in the 1980s during a wave of hunger strikes in Ulster jails, it sometimes struggles to avoid a note of political worthiness as different characters put forward arguments for and against the hunger-strikers, who include the brother of Fergus, the 18-year-old hero of the piece. Fergus duly falls in love with Cora, a visiting English girl out in Donegal with her mother, who is investigating a tiny bog child just discovered buried on the border between the Six Counties and the rest of Ireland. This child, dating from 80AD and in fact no child at all, has her own story, running parallel with the main plot but sometimes never very convincingly reaching into Fergus in his dreams. Awake, he has numbers of problems to contend with, all made bearable by the bewitching Cora, with Fate obligingly seeing to it that she comes to stay at Fergus's house as a guest and then an occasional bed-mate. But first love is hard to describe, and here again there are some awkward moments where records of meals eaten and drinks drunk are given equal importance to descriptions of the hectic emotions of adolescence on the same page. There are still some excellent moments, particularly when Fergus interviews his older brother Joe, intent on starving himself to death. A clever twist also leads to an almost happy ending to a story that while having more than its fair share of sadness still manages to come over as strongly life-affirming at the same time.

Running Order:

59

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[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/bog-child>

[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/170>

[3] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/nicholas-tucker>