

Kerri Ní Dochartaigh: Thin Places

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Yvette Huddleston: Hello, I'm Yvette Huddleston, and I'm delighted to be talking today to Kerri Ní Dochartaigh for this wonderful Ilkley Literature Festival event. Kerri was born in 1983 in Derry/Londonderry on the border between the north and south of Ireland. She writes about nature, literature and place for the Irish Times, Dublin Review of Books, Caught By the River and other publications. Today, we're going to be discussing her book *Thin Places* which her first book published in January this year, which blends, memoir, nature writing and social history.

The book has deservedly already received much acclaim. The Irish novelist, Christine Dwyer Hickey says of it "Everything about life is contained within the covers of this astonishing book. Politics, history, nature, language, and of course love. A profound and moving work of art." And I agree with that. It really is an extraordinary book. It's raw and beautiful, dark and harrowing sometimes yet it's ultimately celebratory and hopeful. So let's sort of begin at the beginning. And let's begin with your beginning, Kerri. So you were born in 1983, which was at the height of the troubles in Northern Ireland. In fact, you explain it in the book that that year is the exact mid-point of the violence. Your mother was Catholic, and your father was Protestant. So their kind of mixed marriage must have been quite rare at that time. Is that right?

Kerri Ní Dochartaigh: Yeah, that would be correct. There would, of course there's always kind of some people who I do experience in later life who would be in and around my age, who do come from a mixed background, but it's incredibly rare. Thankfully, it's much more common now. It's much less of a division in the city. Of course, there are other issues, but yeah, when I was growing up, it would have been quite rare, which I didn't really know until things changed.

Yvette Huddleston: That's what happens in childhood isn't it? And I think, well, in that particular city, which was so marked by division, I mean, the conflict is widely accepted to have actually started there in Derry, isn't it? So how did being from that kind of mixed background, how did that affect the everyday life of your family? Because it must've had an impact.

Kerri Ní Dochartaigh: Yeah. Well, I think because I have been asked this a few times, so I've thought about it in fresh ways actually, since been interviewed about it. And I think that as happens with lots of different situations for children, who've grown up with some form of trauma. It wasn't obvious to me at most points. It just, that was my normal lived experience. And I suppose, because my parents were very young they were, you know, they were very cool. They didn't, they weren't really affected by this difference that much. It didn't play into our everyday lives because really until my dad left, we went to a protestant primary school which was in the area that we lived in. Neither of them were very practicing religious-wise, so it didn't play into to anything until it became the most important thing. So I had this very funny dichotomy where for the first number of years, my parents were together and we lived in the same house and everything felt just normal. And then when my dad left, my dad was the protestant, we were living in a protestant area when my dad left suddenly, we were no longer protestant because there wasn't that presence.

So it went from having no role at all to suddenly being the fabric of the everyday, literally the most important thing that defined the everyday.

Yvette Huddleston: So it's quite an intriguing thing to think back on as an adult, I suppose. And in fact, that kind of, you know, that feeling of being unwelcome was very much

underlined by this incident, which happened when you were 11 years old when a petrol bomb was thrown through your bedroom window, as you say, at that time you were living in the protestant waterside area. So that is just such a visceral description in the book. Can you just tell us a little bit more about that experience?

Kerri Ní Dochartaigh: Of course. So my dad had just left a short while before, and it was myself my brother and my mum living in a house. And we'd had funny experiences, which I recount them in the book where my brother and I had had very close relationships, even on this council state in the middle of the inner city. We'd had really close encounters with wild creatures and a number of weeks before we were petrol bombed, a kitten had turned up, just this random scraggly kitten. And my mum had never really wanted a pet before, but she let it stay, which was yeah, when I look back on it now, it feels like a really important cusp moment. This cat had been sleeping in alongside me and quite often homemade petrol bombs they're hard to detect in a space if you're asleep and sometimes they wouldn't make much of a smell or a noise. And yeah, I woke up to this cat kind of clawing at me, clawing insistently at me and woke up in a smoke-filled room. And there is a funny thing that happens in the book. Of course, you said the description in the book it focuses a bit on two things on the reality of this smoke-filled room, but also on the thing, which had the most impact on me, which was what happened really deep inside of me as a child. Because on that night I did experience, I suppose, the sort of where the real-life world and the traumatic almost dreamed world, but also real, kind of came together on that night. And that's something that I've carried throughout the book because I carried it throughout my life. I remember, I look back on that event as when I met darkness really for the first-time literal darkness, but also obviously all the other forms of darkness that live in children anyway I think, but that live in some of us maybe a bit more than others.

Yvette Huddleston: Yeah. So you talk about this coal black crow, which is I think what you're referring to, that just keeps coming back and sort of hovers over you as a child. And then revisits you at certain points during your life.

Kerri Ní Dochartaigh: Yeah. And it was a very, as you said, very visceral image and very, very alive in me for an incredibly long time. Haunting, harrowing, but also someone said to me in an interview last night that they had felt that there was a form of intimacy with the crow. So in the book, for those who haven't read it, in the book, I talk a lot about different experiences with darkness and with grief and with trauma. And the crow is kind of a visual element there. But the person I was speaking with last night said that they felt that there was a moving towards intimacy. And I think that that's something that I feel I really wanted to put across in the book. Yes, it's a very dark book, but I try to put across the fact that through a variety of different ways, through moving from silence into sharing, moving towards healing, we can redress balances. We can. And I do think I've made a lot of peace with that crow. I think there's a love there that yeah, I don't know if that sounds really silly.

Yvette Huddleston: It doesn't at all and that definitely comes across as you move through the book. When you're reading the book yes, that there is this peace-making process, basically with that crow. So I mean that first, that move after the petrol bomb, you were moved then up to a catholic neighbourhood, but you didn't stay there very long either.

Kerri Ní Dochartaigh: No, we lived there for a much shorter time period. We'd lived in the house that we were petrol bombed out of for years, you know, the whole way through me being in school. And then we moved across the river and interestingly it was more or less, you know that phrase as the crow flies? It's more or less a straight line actually as the crow flies, which has always, again that has always lived in me as imagery.

So we moved across the river, so in the city of Derry/Londonderry, and the River Foyle this beautiful meandering river is almost like a barrier or a boundary. That generically, historically

would have been separated. People who were predominantly protestant would have lived on one side; people who were predominantly catholic would have lived on the other. So the council just moved us into the same type of house, but in a catholic area. But of course, it's almost impossible to just slot into a box that wasn't made for you. And you know, we had no idea of the working ways, the living ways of people that lived there really either. So quite soon after it wasn't as, maybe not as traumatic, but we were bullied out of there quite early on as well.

Yvette Huddleston: Yes. I mean, you saying that you were like "nothing other than other", which is a great way of describing it and you are indefinable, unnameable, so fallen in the gaps in between. But I mean early on in the book, you know, you found some solace, even as a child, you know, very early on in the natural world. There's a lovely passage early in the book when you talk about one of the first houses that you grew up on you call it a "rough grade council estate" it's a little terraced house. And you say that you'd struggle to recall the house, but you could outline that garden, in perfect and minute detail and that you spent most of your childhood outside there, no matter what the weather or the season. So what did you do in that garden and what can you remember about doing in the garden?

Kerri Ní Dochartaigh: It is really interesting because actually weirdly during the pandemic I've been dreaming about that garden a lot. And I realised that it has gone maybe potentially even deeper inside me. More than I've even realized when I was writing the book in that small passage. So the garden came out from our kitchen door. So a lot of the time my mom would have been in the kitchen and even, obviously making food and things, but when her friends came over, they would also congregate in the kitchen. They would be there together. So I do remember that sense of the garden being a very separate space, but also an extension that there was no real difference. So being in the garden was a bit like how I would feel if I was in my own bedroom or in my own, any other parts of the house, except that, you know, there were a lot more insects. Insects are always in the house, too right?

But you know, there would have been, I remember so many insects. I remember being... You know, it was a concrete garden, but along the steps, there were tiny little patches of grass which would have just been wild really. I think at that point, the garden would have been, you know, probably not really used for that much, drying clothes. So just being there, just not really doing that much, maybe playing in my kind of my own little world. And then, you know, being with my younger brother, but just looking, observing. Just being in the world that happened outside the door of my home really has kind of consistently affected how my life has gone from then on in really. Yeah, just being there.

Yvette Huddleston: It's that power, I mean, you know, through reading this book, you know, you're incredibly tuned in to the sort of the ebb and the flow of the natural world and you know, that minute observation of it, and it's almost like a physical and spiritual connection which you feel very profoundly. I mean, was that something that you were aware of even as a young child?

Kerri Ní Dochartaigh: Sorry for interrupting. Yeah, I do think that I was aware of that. I was aware that for a number of reasons, at a very young age, I didn't really mix that well with other children. Even from a very young age. I did struggle with communication in particular ways. And I know that I would have been very aware that I felt at my most, I don't want to say normal, but relaxed or when I would have been outdoors in the outside world. So in the local park that we would have been taken to regularly for picnics or for walks along the train track, I remember feeling like I could properly breathe. I could properly, I sensed that even as a very young child, that I wanted to do things that were maybe potentially not really even doing things, just being outside was always a thing. And it has always been. I don't view myself as separate from the natural world, which is interesting because within that sort of genre of nature writing, there's been a lot of criticism, I think recently about the fact that

there's this idea of going into the landscape and conquering or bagging all the Monroe's or, you know, sort of all of that idea of ownership that of course begins with colonialism and goes much further back.

Even if we look at how the plant world works in Britain, you know, the naming of things and that removal of other forms of species, either humans that came before us, it was their land and now isn't or even in a hubris level, so the soil and the sea and I suppose, the older I get, the more I realise that that desire in me to not have any separateness, for it not to be me and the natural world was born at an incredibly young age. And it wasn't fed to me, it was there just, which is in most children. That sort of instinctive response, which has, as you say, which has nothing to do with ownership. It's just about being.

Yvette Huddleston: I wanted to talk a little bit, cause that kind of brings us in quite neatly into the title of the book *Thin Places* and you sort of define a thin place as "places that make us feel something larger than ourselves, as though we're held in a place between worlds, between experience" And I wanted you to kind of expand on that a bit more and how that's connected with Irish mythology, in fact, as well in Celtic mythology, and the notion of liminal spaces, the sense of that kind of thin veil between this world and another world.

Kerri Ní Dochartaigh: Yes, completely. And I do think it came in quite nicely because of almost like there not being a difference between the natural world and our personhood. And so in the Irish language and obviously then in Irish mythology and Celtic folklore there is the sense of the natural world having a personhood. So there being a definite sense of a relationship that is in our bones, almost like when we are in a place that is of us and we are of it, something really powerful is at play.

And when you live on a landmass, on any landmass, not just in Ireland, not just in Europe, but across the world, that has been long defined by abuse of the land and by removal, by separatism it doesn't just affect the land in that way if we unpack what the Irish few view is on land, it affects the creatures that live there. So it can even affect the trees that can affect the hills. And I suppose, growing up without the Irish language because of my background and coming to it at a much later age, it felt like consistently I'd had that experience in place. That I hadn't understood that I had been in particular places and when I was there, and even when I looked back on being there, it was the experience, and the place held the feeling of being dreamlike. Being gossamer and thin and things almost shapeshifting and inside and outside and they were often beside water. We spent a lot of time on the beaches, but thin places exist sort of predominantly across Celtic records. So even in Cornwall, Scotland, places like stone circles or places where people have gathered and built bone fires in the landscape. What my experience is that they can be anywhere, you know, so places that aren't hallowed or marked with stones, the top of a housing estate, a field at the top of a housing estate is one of the thinnest places I've ever been. And since writing the book, so many people have reached out and said, Oh, there's this part of Berlin, which, you know, feels really thin. Or, you know, I've been in Sheffield along this particular part of the canal. And I wonder if there's a changing in our consciousness as human beings. It's been accelerated this year and I wonder if we ourselves, I know we're changing how we interact with place, but in that we're changing how we interact with ourselves in the place.

So it felt like the book had coming out in the middle of a pandemic could be really weird, but actually it's maybe quite relevant for a number of people that it might not have been relevant for before. So, yeah, there's definitely that link there in the Irish language. We are not separate from the land. We are part of it. We've come from the land. The land defines us, but also doesn't, so there's this concept of the liminal, but what I'm really intrigued by recently is how that happens across the world.

You read in sort of Aboriginal myth, you read in sort of recollections of women who've grown up in Africa, across the entire planet there are spaces that make us feel safe or on the flip side that make us feel that we're meeting ourselves and that includes the darkness. So there is a two-ness to a thin place.

Yvette Huddleston: And that sort of discussion and that sort of approach to place and, you know, identity and belonging and everything. I think that seems to have been something that came out of listening to your grandfather, who I think the relationship with the grandfather, I found that very moving. He was born in the same year as the Irish border in 1921, which is quite significant as well. You say, he sounds as though he had a very profound and positive influence on your life. Could you tell us a little bit more about that relationship?

Kerri Ní Dochartaigh: Completely. Yeah, so he was born a handful of days before the Irish border. So next month he would have been a hundred. So my grandfather has been dead for a number of years and the longer that he's been gone obviously this is what happens with grief, the deeper I've realised the impact that he had on me as a person and on my life and on the decisions that I made.

He was definitely one of the people who's outlook on everything shaped me, whether it was good or bad, in that generation there wouldn't always have been things that I necessarily agreed with them on. For example, especially when I would have been in my twenties, but I suppose what he taught me was how difference is actually completely okay. What isn't okay is to make difference, be the thing that keeps us apart. And that allows us to forget that we're more similar to each other, as humans, but to other species as well as what we would really like to admit sometimes. And that's a huge learning. That's an incredibly big learning for a woman I think actually. Because if we think about what we've even seen in this last week, when we've been talking, difference has been something that has continuously defined us as a race. And I think that what we're seeing now increasingly is more voices, like my grandfathers, that would have said, you know, we need to be aware of what ties us together rather than what separates us.

Compassion, listening would have been something I learned from my grandfather. And I think listening is something that we need, all of us need, to move forward safely from any form of trauma healing. If I think of race, right? We live in the racism, the gender imbalance, you know, disability imbalance, everything that we're seeing in the world today. If we really take a step back and allow people to own their experience and be honest with us, instead of telling them that they're wrong or our way is right.

Yvette Huddleston: Yeah, that's a wonderful gift that he gave you then really isn't it? To start thinking about that way of understanding and that difference doesn't really... we should see it but it doesn't make any difference in a sense that we are all part of the same human family. I mean, there was a brief period when you did actually feel quite settled, I think in Ballykelly, which is a small village, I think it's about around about 20 miles away from Derry, which seemed to be removed from the Troubles, and you said that that the friendships were somehow kind of above any idea of difference. And I love this thing, the first question you were asked was what my favourite Nirvana song was, which is great. That must've felt very comforting after what you'd been through previously. But actually, then that whole period actually ended in a terrible kind of tragedy. If you could tell us about that.

Kerri Ní Dochartaigh: Yeah. So again, very relevant for what we've seen this week. So we moved to Ballykelly and it was a very calming experience, and I felt very welcomed, like I breathed out. And then an experience, which wasn't defined by the difference of protestant and catholic but was still defined by male violence. Because one of our friendship group was brutally beaten to death. And obviously the ripples that that causes for an entire community, for an individual, for a group of friends, they go incredibly deep, and you carry that

experience with you probably for life, I think. So, yeah, increasingly I've been unravelling that part, that little bit of my story and really thinking about how that speaks for the collective human experience that healing of any form is not linear. It's cyclical as is the story of one's life.

So interestingly I've probably felt for a long time, like the petrol bomb was the thing that most defined my experience of violence in my life, but potentially what I'm seeing as a woman in her thirties now and also as a woman who's carrying a baby that I didn't think that I would have, what I'm now seeing is potentially that violence that takes its shape either in things like colonialism or in abuse of woman or in sectarianism that is the same violence, it's coming from the same place.

And that's what *Thin Places* is defined by not just the sectarianism, I think, but by the lived experience of violence that comes in different forms that takes different shapes.

Yvette Huddleston: I mean, you talk about the silence around those experiences of trauma, and you know, you're very candid about the silence that you kept yourself for many years and, you know, other members of your family and friends who've been through similar experiences. Talking about them, writing about them, has obviously been very helpful. Can you now see a way forward for everybody really?

Kerri Ní Dochartaigh: So that's a very important question and it's got two very different strands, I think. Yes, writing about the experiences of trauma did do something, but I'm very wary to say that it was cathartic in any way, because I don't feel that it necessarily, I think with most memoir it's a funny balance because actually you're retriggering. You are giving it away.

You're saying I don't want to carry this anymore, but you're giving it. And I think the important thing to me in writing the book, I know for a lot of memoir writers, especially trauma writers, there's this idea of taking your place in a very long line, that is a very important part of a healing narrative coming into normal life. So for instance, I only feel like I could write my book because of the incredibly important individuals that came before me that wrote about similar trauma and had to go through that as well.

I'm thinking as you know, many writers from the North, many female writers from the South who were born there, who've given their suffering to us to make it feel like there was a safe place to do that in. And I feel like we all stand on the shoulders of each other in that respect. So I did feel like by keeping myself silent, there were so many other people that potentially may not ever have wanted to feel like they could even share their story. It's not saying that I'm speaking on behalf of anyone, but rather that in speaking and breaking the silence, you make it a safer place, hopefully for other survivors to come forward. But then of course there is, so that's hopeful, that's incredibly helpful, but what I think we really need to move towards as humanity is that there's more than just this idea of listening to a survivor, of listening to someone who's experienced any form of trauma or abuse.

There's also the real need to actually go a number of steps further. So you must create the space for people to speak. And that's in a way what the publishing industry is trying to hopefully move towards like allowing room for the voices that have long been silenced, making enough room at the table for everyone who needs to be heard. But then we have the next steps, which are how does compassionate listening really properly work?

Like we've seen recently, women say that they felt suicidal and be told that they weren't believed. We've seen a continuous onslaught of violence towards women towards people of colour, towards people with disability. So creating the safe space for them to come forward and continuously re-trigger themselves is really not enough. We need to go much deeper.

We need to look at the problem where it begins. Where does this sense of ownership and violence, where is it born? That's where we must fix it.

And that's where creating the safe space takes all those steps further, where it's enough to just say something and walk away. And then someone else has to pick that up. And I've been thinking about that a lot with the harrowing situation with Sara Everard this week and how women have felt. And it's of course everyone, it's up to anyone who deals with their own experience of something, but what we've seen again and again and again, is women, you know, I've seen it on my Twitter, I've seen it on my Instagram, feeling the need to share what they've gone through again and again. I do think we're at a turning point now we've had those voices. What we need now is the listening that comes truly and then the healing that is allowed through that dialogue.

Yvette Huddleston: For your own healing, part of your journey to sort of finding some healing involved necessarily leaving, didn't it? So you left Derry pretty much as soon as you could. Just talk through that journey, because then I mean, you went away to study in Dublin to start with, and then you went to Cork and Edinburgh and Bristol and other places. But that impulse to leave, must've been very, very strong.

Kerri Ní Dochartaigh: Yeah, it felt, I suppose, even more than an impulse it felt just a given. And I do talk about this in the book that I think that that's something that was my own personal experience, but in the book, I try to really focus on the fact that our personal experiences are completely defined by the generations that came before us.

And in particular, as women, we are carrying much more of what our ancestors went through than what we realise. And I feel like leaving is something that was written into the narrative around Ireland, so, so long ago. So I felt like, again I was following a path that had already been laid out for me, you know, to stay somewhere where one has been so traumatised and where there isn't necessarily an awful lot of a sense of purpose or future, is a difficult thing to do.

So I did. I ran very much from place to place. So I began in Dublin, as you've said, dragging a lot of darkness around, moved to Cork, you know, moved to Edinburgh, always trying to find that sense of belonging and that sense of home and safety that I felt, for no one's fault really, but I felt I hadn't ever really properly had.

And then we realise that we it's the same us that's going from place to place. It's always the same us.

Yvette Huddleston: In those places and going from those places to places, you did always manage to find, again, the natural world, that's what gave you the solace So each of those places, you know, you did find something didn't you, you know, either by the canal in Dublin or, you know exploring the islands when you were living up in Scotland, in Edinburgh.

Kerri Ní Dochartaigh: Yeah, and I think it's an interesting dynamic because when we use the word solace, when we're talking about nature, again it can feel sometimes, almost like there's a separatism there.

So I'm very conscious of sort of saying when I talk about my healing journey, that yes, I did go into the landscape, but it wasn't to take anything from it. It was because that's where I was me the most. And that can be a good thing or a bad thing. So it wasn't always this incredible experience. And in fact, most of the darkest moments that I had in any of those places happened in the outside world. So they happened at the top of hills or mountains. They happened in water or by water. Because when you feel yourself as being part of the

natural world, you're at the mercy of it. And at the mercy of yourself and your own thought processes in a way that can be good or bad.

So I think the idea of finding these spaces, it was just a given to me. That's what I do. That's where I go, because that's part of who I am. I am a wild creature. I'm, you know, I'm affected by things like, you know, the gut flora in my stomach, I'm affected by the cycles of the seasons. I'm, you know, when there isn't enough light, I feel it. And so I suppose it's... but then again, I also on my healing journey, I'm really conscious of wanting people to know that I also did, you know, over a year of really intense therapy as well as talking to a really supportive partner. So the natural world, I'm conscious of this, what we see a lot, which is, "Oh, I had this awful experience and then the natural world healed me" because mental health doesn't work like that.

And healing doesn't, maybe it does for some people, but we need to be more open about how we talk about how we can make it safe for people to heal. And how complicated that journey is and how complex it is.

Yvette Huddleston: And you do absolutely communicate that very beautifully. And I think the way that you entwine these sort of beautiful lyrical descriptions of nature into your dark and troubled narrative at times, you know, I think that's it's an amazing feat. So I'm sort of interested in the process of you know, how you put the book together really?

Kerri Ní Dochartaigh: Yeah. That topic intrigues me greatly. I love the craft of writing and I suppose, so *Thin Places* had seven major edits, very major edits in a very short time period. I wrote the book, my first draft in the first four months of the drafting process and then came back at it six other times. So there are like seven different books or maybe five quite different books. And then on six and seven, it's just tweaky.

But in the first book of *Thin Places* it was a much more hybrid book. There was far less linearity. There was a lot more poetic, sort of a lot more of those poetic sections. It'd be a lot more that you couldn't really read between the lines. And that completely reflected where I was with my own story. That it had always been fine if I could give it as a bit of an analogy, but I didn't really need to break it apart and look at what the actual pieces were. And thankfully, I have an incredible agent and incredible editor who both felt from very early on, like the book needed a lot more structure that was linear, but that needed woven more. So rather than having just sort of the consistent, poetic moments that were never clear and never spoke to the reader on a direct level. They felt that those things needed brought in.

And at the beginning I kind of maybe struggled against it. But very, very soon in I realised that actually in the writing of the book is where you see your own story as having all of these themes. Themes that I never saw were tied together until I put them into that narrative, into that linear with the interwoven parts throughout. So I'm really grateful for that because I think the book is richer for it. My relationship with the book is richer for it, but I'm intrigued by how memoir works, how it works on the person, how it works on the reader, how it works, I suppose, within the genre.

Where does memoir fit when it comes to writing about politics or history or you know, a lot of people criticise especially particularly strong female voice memoir. A lot of men criticise it and, you know, those people don't like the "I" in nature writing, but actually I think we're moving to a place where I'm thinking of writers like Rebecca tomorrow, Nina Mingya Powles, Jessica J. Lee writers who are really taking the genre and showing what it can actually be. And weaving in these experiences of you know, as women, like kind of being in the natural world when you have your period or what difference does it mean when we're in the natural world when we want to be in a night space?

We feel that we can't, or we've been told we can't. So, that's nature writing. It contains all those spreads, as you say. Because we're not separate. We're not. And that's where I think I'm moving towards more.

So *Thin Places* was really good. It was a very good thing for me to try and begin to learn a bit of the craft of piecing these things together. But it will change. It will continue to change. It's already any work that I've written since finishing *Thin Places* has been really different. And I hope that always happens

Yvette Huddleston: That's really interesting. So we're sort of moving towards kind of wrapping up a bit, but so let's end on you were away from Derry and from Ireland really for 15 years. And then you moved back to Derry not long after the EU referendum actually in 2016 and so you were in Derry for a while, you're now it seems, you know, that you're in a very happy place still in Ireland, but not in Derry. So how does that feel and does it feel as though you've made that journey now? Away from, and then back to your homeland?

Kerri Ní Dochartaigh: It's a very interesting thing Yvette, because we're in this moment, of course, collectively where we've been kept in place in a way that we've never been kept in place before. So we moved here just before the pandemic began, right to the very heart of Ireland right in the middle. Very isolated, and the idea was to go into the rest of the land.

So to use it as a base and to explore the other parts of the island that I felt drawn to, and my partner thankfully felt drawn to as well. But as soon as we moved here, we had eight weeks of a storm every weekend, and then we were locked down. So it's been very intriguing to see how I respond as someone who has ran from place to place to place, to then be in a place that I didn't know at all. And didn't have any connection with and to learn how to stay has been, I don't want to say it's been a gift of the pandemic because I don't want to use that language around something that has deeply traumatised so many people, but I can see that there has been learning in it for me, incredibly deep learning and people always say where I come from, you couldn't write this down, which means it's a reality that's more unbelievable than fiction.

And that's how I feel about being here. The changes that have happened in remaining earthed have been, and again it's clichéd, but they have changed my life and potentially I've experienced more growth in the last year than in all the years that came before.

Yvette Huddleston: That's wonderful. And it feels like a safe place, which is what you were looking for. That's great. Well, thank you so much, Kerri for talking to me about your beautiful book. I think it's absolutely wonderful. It's, you know, very affecting and very powerful and very beautifully written. So I would encourage it everybody to buy it. And if you're going to buy it, please go to the Grove bookshop, our local independent book in Ilkley. Thanks again, everyone for joining us. And thank you so much, Kerri.

It's been wonderful to talk.

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