A vividly humane account

Page Turner / Edited by Peter McDermott

Danny Morrison’s “Then The Walls Came Down,” which was first published in 1999 to favorable reviews, went out of print earlier this year. However, it’s now been made available on Kindle with additional material, some of it political, that had been excluded from the original for reasons of space.

“It’s a collection of my prison letters from Crumlin Road Jail and the H-Blocks before, during and after the IRA ceasefire,” Morrison said of the book. “It is very personal, about my relationship with my partner and the difficulties imprisonment imposes on relationships. But it is also about how I viewed the early stages of the peace process.”

A reviewer in the Irish Times said it was “remarkable as a human document” and another in the same paper described it as “one of the most important books to emerge from the conflict in Northern Ireland” and as a “vividly humane account of life in prison.”

A Belfast Telegraph reviewer had praised Morrison’s 1997 novel “The Wrong Man” in similar terms, saying it “should come to be regarded as one of the most important books of the Troubles.” The Sunday Times’ recommended it as a “powerful and complex piece of storytelling,” while “The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature” called the novel “a powerful evocation of betrayal, deceit and guilt.”

As well as his career as a writer and commentator, the former republican prisoner is secretary of the Bobby Sands Trust and was chairperson of Féile an Phobail from 2004-2014. Morrison, Sinn Féin’s national director of publicity from 1979-1990 and an Assembly member for Mid-Ulster from 1982-1986, was well-known as the first to articulate the “Armalite and ballot box” strategy, which, he has said, “argued for the party to engage with and embrace electoral politics.”

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Danny Morrison. PHOTO BY ROBBIE HAWKEY