

Arts & Books

Our favourite books of 2011

Anna Carey finds out
what people have enjoyed
reading this year



John Tuomey

Those who travel west "to recuperate their visionary powers" can deepen their reading of the landscape by dipping into Tim Robinson's

Connemara trilogy. **A Little Gaelic Kingdom** (Penguin, £20) takes us around the Gaeltacht areas of south Connemara. This beautiful book marks the concluding instalment of Robinson's 30 years of work in the west, meeting people and mapping places, making poetic connections between the culture and the complicated countryside. The west was further illuminated this year by Michael Longley's **A Hundred Doors** (Cape Poetry, £10), where the wide world is narrowed down to focus on the transitory life patterns of the tiny townland of Carrigskeewaun, and 100 doors are opened out through 66 short poems written across the white space of 48 pages. These two are slow, meditative books. For a faster read, the Wild West finds fresh expression in the surprisingly formal voice of Patrick deWitt's **The Sisters Brothers** (Granta, £12.99). Two cowboys speak in fine sentences and endure strange adventures while their cruel plans for cold-blooded killing are hampered by slow horses and bad company.

■ John Tuomey is a director of O'Donnell + Tuomey architects. The firm's design for An Gaeláras, in Derry, was shortlisted for this year's Stirling Prize