

Salut! – Bonjour Montréal. – Je suis ravi d'être ici. Merci!

And a few words in my own mother tongue – The Irish language.  
A dhaoine uaisle – fáilte romhaibh go léir  
Tá áthas orm an onóir seo a glacagh Ar son mé féin,  
ar son mhuintir Chorcaí, agus ar son mo chairde Gael ar fud an domhain.

Gentle people – welcome.  
It's a great personal honour for me to accept this award,  
It is an honour for my home place of Cork city in Ireland –  
and indeed, it is an honour for Irish people across the world.

It is extremely special to have the luxury – to be able to work at what I love doing.  
So, it is very humbling for me to receive –  
– The World Cultural Council – Leonardo Da Vinci Award of Arts –  
for effectively following my own heart, indulging my passion and living my dream.

At times such as this I think of those who came before.  
I'm particularly speaking about my parent's generation.

They lived in comparatively difficult times.

My father and mother brought 12 children into this world.  
My Uncle John and Auntie Gretta – had 14 children ...  
My mother was born into a family of 10 daughters –  
into a small hillside farm on the Beara Peninsula  
On the most Westerly point of Europe – jutting out into the wild Atlantic

I think of that generation  
And I think of how they willingly and wholeheartedly –  
set aside their own personal ambitions, their own dreams, their creativity –  
To pave the way for the next generation – my generation.  
To allow me to follow my dream ...

And so, I am honoured to accept this very special award  
And I would like to dedicate it – to the memory of my mother.  
Siobhan Blake - Ni bheidh a leithéid ann arís

I am honoured. I am privileged. I am humbled.  
I would like to thank Elizabeth Osta of the Irish American Cultural Institute – who  
among others put me forward for this recognition. Elizabeth is here in the audience.  
I would also like to thank The World Cultural Council –  
And extend my heartfelt gratitude to Secretary General Lilly Hernandez of the World  
Cultural Council –  
who has been very kind and patient and helpful and generous with her guidance –  
ever since the award was first announced back in May .

And thank you - McGill University who are such welcoming and generous hosts.  
– Go raibh míle maith agaibh – to my own University, University College Cork –  
and the people of my native city of Cork. –  
who continue to support and encourage me with my endeavours.

And finally, I would like to express the most special word of thanks to Fiona O'Toole.  
For over thirty years – Through the ups and down, the happy the sad, the swings  
and the roundabouts – and all that life throws at us - Fiona has been by my side –  
offering love and inspiration and encouragement. – Thank you, Fiona.

Merci à vous, Montrealiens, merci pour votre accueil chaleureux !  
Thank you for such a warm Montreal welcome.  
Cead Míle Maith agaibh go leir. – a hundred thousand thanks to you all.