

# Peann agus Pár — New Galway writing

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## My Galway German Girl

BY SEAMUS SCANLON

In Galway I can't forget.  
I flee often. To Rahoon.  
High above Galway City.  
The limestone Burren  
across Galway Bay is  
shrouded. Rain squalls  
race towards me. The  
smell of sea air reaches  
up. More black clouds wait  
off shore. Deep-sea bound  
trawlers leave the docks,  
slowed by the heft of  
swells from the Atlantic.

I cry.  
No-one sees it.  
The rain hides it sure.  
My sorrow lies low and  
cruel within me.  
Everlasting. A fine  
polished arc of pain  
through me.

I think about my  
German baby.  
Dead long ago now.  
Cancer ate her up. Beauty  
and the beast.

Ate her up before me  
while I looked on.  
While I looked away.

While I tried to soothe  
her in the Regional  
Hospital. Stretched out on  
stark white linen sheets. I  
snuck in at night while her  
mother dozed on a chair.

Victor don't visit. It is  
wrong to be here.

She cried. I lay my hand  
on her skin, etched with a  
patina of pain and slick  
from fever. Blue white  
veins under her  
translucent skin mocked  
me.

I hated her.  
I loved her.  
Before me she was  
dying.

Sixteen only.  
Fucking not fair.  
She was fair.  
Adored her sure I did.

Met her by accident in  
Galway City Library. I was  
reading Mein Kampf. I was  
a little Nazi neophyte. She  
walked up. She knocked  
the book from my hand. It  
skittered across the floor.  
Das is pure shoite (she had  
a mix of Galway and  
German accents and  
phraseology).

Read something real

why don't ya?

Like what I said.  
Like me. Read me.  
She stared into my eyes.  
Read me she said  
pointing at herself. Me.  
Me.

Her bellicose invitation  
startled me - thrilled me.  
Her harsh laugh echoed  
far in the City Library.

The circulation desk  
staff member looked up  
and scowled.

The female German  
blitzkrieg kicked my Mein  
Kampf under one of the  
stacks. I was afraid to  
retrieve it. Even though it  
was my personal copy.

Outside we walked  
down by Woodquay where  
swans nested all summer  
with their five signets.  
They drifted below the  
granite legs of the Galway  
to Clifden railroad bridge  
fighting the strong  
current. They sat like  
moored Spanish galleons  
once did in Galway docks  
centuries ago waiting for  
the wind to shift to carry  
them home.

She sat on one of the  
benches looking across at  
the university grounds.  
Rushes bent over with the  
strong breeze blowing  
down from Lough Corrib.

I am real but soon I  
won't be. Kiss me.

She pointed at her lips. I  
did my best. She pulled  
back after a while. She  
cried. What's wrong - did I  
do it wrong?

She lit a cigarette.  
No - dying I am. Cancer.  
She pointed at her chest.

I jumped up. I knocked  
the cigarette out of her  
lips.

It's too late!  
She was right.

She is buried in Rahoon  
cemetery high above the  
city. She looks across the  
bay towards the Burren  
and the grey clouds heavy  
with rain that huddle off  
the coast until they  
eventually drift in over the  
town and cover the narrow  
grey streets with fog, mist  
and then rain.

## Broken down train tracks

Decrepit houses hang  
below phone wires  
Things don't change but things don't stay the same  
They rot and fall away  
Fading, growing old

As Broken down train tracks  
Fill with empty bottles  
Of tonic wine  
And worn out school kids

Local gamblers yo-yo from bar to bookies  
And stand around smoking and musing  
As they shuffle their weary feet.

Small-town life is predictable and slow  
Screaming out for a straggler  
From a foreign place  
To come and stir the dead

JOYCE FAHY

## The White Strand

To walk along this sandy beach  
That grace's Renvyle shore  
To break from toil and rest awhile  
Brings joy to my inner core  
This idyllic place that's full of grace  
Takes me back when as a boy  
We played with sand  
And it was so grand  
My heart was full of joy  
Now that I am growing old  
If the truth was to be told  
It still fills my heart with glee  
To sit for a while in beautiful Renvyle  
Looking out at the islands and the sea  
In a place like this time stands still  
To enjoy this beach, folks forever will  
Though I'll be long since gone  
My soul will soar, over this beautiful shore  
Whispering a lovely song  
So I'll rise and go  
Where the clouds hang low  
And join with my ancestors  
Going through the gates  
To meet my mates  
As soon as one registers  
St. Patrick's Hill I can see it still  
With the white church at the cap  
Mweelrea mountain and the islands  
I'm counting  
Will forever remain on the map  
So respect this beach  
It's God's holy ground  
You are so lucky  
This place to have found  
And if you enjoy the exhilaration  
Leave it ready for the next generation

DANIEL SAMMON

## The Ballad Of (Eyre Square)

The air is fair, amidst the Square  
Of Eyre where birds unshackled from their  
Greysome chains of stone & steel  
Do sing a song of sixpence; gin  
And tonic for the office clerk  
For whom all sides be boxed within  
Until his lunch hour allows him then  
To sit on grass  
(and graze)

The Lady of the Square is fair,  
All walks of life are welcomed while  
Poetic pensioned punks of yang  
Cross dirty dancing drunks of yin  
And all will find a bench within  
To place their weary bums  
(upon)

Looking from the Doorway Brownes  
Williams Gate is seen uptown  
Victoria Place runs down around  
To the Docks and drowns in sound  
Of water lapping out  
(and in)

And where romance is sought there is no place  
In Galway to make better chase  
For much true love, it can appear  
By sitting and just listening there  
Where graceful damsels gather in  
And knights strive to, compete and win  
(Or kick and throw a ball about)

So when life does feel like some old sock  
Threadbare with holes chewed by your moth  
Switch off your TV brain and come  
Where walks of life; all merry in  
Of one accord; Involvement on  
(Eyre Square)

CONOR RYAN

## Beneath it devours

Giants whirr and clank,  
wrench earth by its roots  
tear, clench, gouge  
an artery -  
an ocean wide.

Poisons seep  
invade flesh to  
arrest alveoli,  
heavy with grief.

Over metal chatter  
a hand of voices roar;  
to impede the bully, secure  
beneath its jaundiced shell.

A gavel falls  
shatters shackles  
allows the beasts' return  
to pillage the tip of Erris,  
nestled in Ireland's arm.

A community fractured,  
bipolar and bleeding,  
left to battle batons  
raised at flesh and bone,  
reigning dull blows.

CLODAGH O'BRIEN

## Summer Buzz

A sinister sound by the  
kitchen sink  
not the soft hum of a  
honey bee  
lapping the warm  
nectar of hollyhocks,  
asters and purple  
foxgloves.  
nor is it the vexed tones  
of a wasp-  
Mother on high alert,  
Father reading the  
Sunday Press

"It's that filthy meat  
you get from the butcher  
for your grey hounds  
that draws them in"  
She arms herself with  
the metal pipe of the  
Electrolux  
and with the precision  
of a mark's man  
loops the air in pursuit.  
It dodges, buzzes  
swirls figures of eight  
around the kitchen  
window  
no match for Mammy.  
Exhausted it succumbs,  
sucked deep into the  
belly  
of the vacuum cleaner.  
She carries the bag to  
the bottom of the garden  
empties the dusty  
creature  
over the wall into  
Neary's field.

Later over tea, (just a  
little milk, no sugar)  
She tells us  
of the outbreak of  
diphtheria  
that took her two baby  
brothers,  
the thud of the earth on  
the tiny coffins  
the plaintive wailing of  
old women.  
"He'll have us all  
poisoned yet"  
She shakes the  
memories from her head.

I open the window a  
little wider  
shoo the blue bottle  
into warm summer air.

ANNE IRWIN