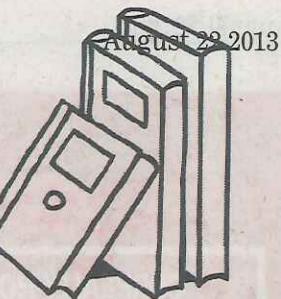


Peann agus Pár – New Galway writing



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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

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 signs. 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