

# Peann agus Pár — New Galway writing

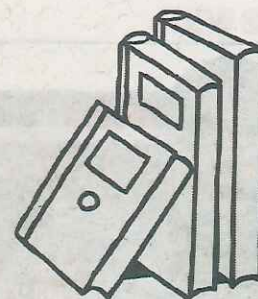
Welcome to the Galway Review literary page. In collaboration with the Galway Advertiser the Galway Review will be publishing a literary page as a feature in the Advertiser each week from now on. An open invitation is being given to writers in Irish and English to submit their works for consideration and publication. Writers worldwide are invited to send their submissions to [thegalwayreview@gmail.com](mailto:thegalwayreview@gmail.com) and selected pieces from The Galway Review will be published on the literary page of the Galway Advertiser.

It is the goal of this joint venture to encourage writing amongst young and old and to have a panel of editors who will determine what will be published on the literary page. At a recent meeting in Taibhdhearc na Gaillimhe the General Administrator of The Galway Review, Uinseann Mac Thómais and Managing Editor, Ndrek Gjini outlined their plans for the Galway Review to a select attendance of Galway writers present. While the emphasis will be on writers with a connection to Galway, or from Galway itself, it will not be exclusively so affording extra variety of content. We look forward to a lively and entertaining literary page with the help and support of contributors and the team at the Galway Advertiser.

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## Passing

Is it the loss of life or a soul returned to its maker,  
Do we weep or loathe the taker.  
Are they missing us or ease our pain on days were in distress,  
There absents can leave our existence in a mess.  
What is believed can either help or hinder,  
As life's progression can be a blender.  
Tears roll down faces as goodbyes are said,  
Others construct promises they may be sorry they made.  
Heartache grief, Overwhelming sadness,  
May exhibit depression, or for short whiles be construed  
If not suffering symbols of madness.  
Foundations are broken, structures altered,  
Memories can become distorted.  
To console is to identify with a loss endured,  
To suffer in silence has no remedy or cure.  
An extraordinary life needs to be noted,  
For those who have passed through the course of our lives,  
Are instilled in our memories their imprisoned and immortal.  
Their Spirits remain with us,  
We must be inflamed with pride, for been part of their lives,  
Do them proud,  
Have a strong mindset and survive.

**GRETTA ADAIR**

## Celtic Mysticism

December filled sky  
Enters me from on high.  
Her magical mystery glance,  
Fills me like a sigh.  
December leaves are hiding  
Through a bookstore's door.  
Among the shelves on high  
Inside Narnia's Cupboard.  
Discover this magic  
Inside a bookstore's door,  
Circled like starlings  
along the seashore.  
Go on up to Heaven  
To the second floor,  
To the land,  
The land of Tir na Nog.  
December filled sky  
Enters me from on high.  
Her magical mystery glance,  
Fills me like a sigh.  
Soon as she appears  
The sky clears away.  
Her smile is a golden vision  
At the end of my day.  
I dance with this Goddess  
In a far off Jewish land.  
Taking each other's joy,  
Holding it in each other's hand.  
In the land of magic  
Where I am soon to be born  
I do know she is something  
Something I'll forlorn.  
I take a hold of her palm  
Fly against tradition  
To a world above,  
Of Poetic Celtic Mysticism.  
December filled sky  
Enters me from on high.  
Her magical mystery glance,  
Still fills me like a sigh.

**GARY PHELAN**

# 'The Death of Night: Poetry as Vehicle to a New World

REVIEW: *The Death of Night. Selected poems by Ndrek Gjini.*  
Pbck. 89pp. EMAL publishers. ISBN 9928-04-026-5

BY EMILY CULLEN\*

After only ten years in Ireland, Albanian-born Ndrek Gjini has produced his debut collection of poetry in English. Gjini has firmly established himself in the Galway arts community through his work with the City Arts Office and his several successful literary initiatives.

His collection offers unique insight into a poet's quest to find the Self through the heightened lyrical possibilities of poetry within a newly acquired second language. Gjini uses English and poesy as a vehicle to a new world, condensing his experiences of home at a cultural and linguistic remove. This becomes a crutch he crafts to carry the freight of his broken history. The combination of geographic dislocation, moving between traditions, and weighing words in an adopted vocabulary bestows a vibrant freshness on Gjini's poems. We experience the world anew through his philosophical eyes and poet's heart as he breaks free of the normative and the descriptive, giving full reign to his imagination: 'what if a fish was looking up / a good recipe / on how to cook a man' (from 'On Holidays'). His subtle use of the macabre affords a glimpse into the fraught history of the Balkans, arresting the reader from the very first poem: 'neon lights on the roads and squares/are like bandages on its injured body.' But even in this title poem, light appears alongside darkness, ultimately overtaking it.

Simplicity of language is a strength of this book as Gjini speaks in an almost

elemental tone, conjuring the idiom of a folk tale. Nature and the seasons are often personified: 'The twilight runs away from him / or the night locks him in forever' (from 'The refrain of a pensioner'). A concern with the cyclical continuity of life, and a veneration for the customs and beliefs of his people pervades his work. The magic is in the brevity he achieves, collapsing an emotion and an insight into just a few potent lines. This same concision falters, however, in certain poems where imagery and ideas are truncated in ephemeral conclusions. Consequently, these sparse lyrics become like fragments that suggest there is more that might have been said.

While an affecting, poignant note resounds through the collection, especially in poems evoking the poet's mother, Gjini is, ultimately, a celebrant who advocates belief. 'Every time we believe / we extend our lives a little bit', he writes in 'War against doubt'. The manifestation of hope becomes a key concern for Gjini who closes his book with the lines: 'Yet as long as more bridges / are being built than destroyed / love prevails over hate.' We are reminded of Walter Benjamin who stated: 'It is only for the sake of those without hope that hope is given to us.' Gjini has seen, first-hand, how the 'milk of love' is necessary to crumble the 'walls of malice' and his message is an important one. Every so often we need to hear an authentic voice, such as Gjini's, to remind ourselves that we are responsible for our own perceptions, for fostering our imaginations and, ultimately, for nurturing our own happiness.

\*Dr. Emily Cullen's second collection of poetry, *In Between Angels and Animals*, was recently published by Arlen House.

## Cicatrix

The glass eye doesn't double-take when I pass his seat,  
then return its attention to his newspaper,  
doesn't crinkle when he smiles into his phone  
or when he slaps his thigh, laughing.  
The glass eye doesn't peer into his coffee as he drinks,  
doesn't wink at the waitress to flag her down,  
doesn't swing side to side as he pats his pockets,  
doesn't squint to pick loose change for the tip.  
The glass eye stands proud and cool  
sucked into its socket by tepid moist flesh.  
Though part of him, it remains apart from him,  
unreachable, insentient, imperturbable.  
Pocket lint  
Dust particles and threads  
adhere over time, lint settles and collects.  
So at any one moment  
we see it as a cluster of something, an entity.  
We assume intent as if formed by design,  
whereas unplanned and transient, it has settled for a bit.  
Like a person and their apparent depth,  
a semblance of self, fashioned from an engirdling mould.  
It's a stray collection  
cast together, in this shape, at this time.

**AIDEEN HENRY**

## Heritage

By then ninety he reversed hands  
so I might read a fable inscribed  
on his soft washed palms. Self-  
evident, he said, no bother please  
with why, what, or how. He let  
me run my fingers along his lines.  
Closing his eyes, my father breathed  
with an even calm. I smelled  
onion on his breath, chapstick  
richly coated to his lips: Light  
of winter weak, defined, found  
the curtain's slit, crossed his

crown as it wound across the room.  
The lines I followed backward,  
every strand ended neatly  
tied with bows: green, red, white,  
pink like roses and greens that grew  
once in his garden by the sea:  
songlines of a father's life yielded  
up to me, two bodies joined together  
winter's afternoon, light and water  
flowed. Traffic along a moving street:  
he sought to pass his life along to me.

**EAMONN WALL**

## Facing Eastwards

It is said a picture paints a thousand words,  
But it was the unfinished sentence that  
proved the loudest.  
Like a pick axe put to ice,  
Shattering through my consciousness.  
My water colour thoughts turn black-as  
darkness descends.  
Maskless, I face eastward to conceal this  
agony,  
A tormented soul,  
A protagonist in some great Greek tragedy.  
Yes better it be put down as outside my  
control,  
Rather than admit to any serious personal  
failure.  
Call it what you will- a coping mechanism,  
My mental escape to make me feel safer.

But has this not led to my predicament now?  
This uncompromising yet vulnerable persona  
An antithesis in itself and when all parts are  
put together,  
Depending on the day as variable as the Irish  
weather.  
I am jolted from this reverie by a familiar  
scent and touch from behind  
Old habits kick in,  
The unyielding mule fails to turn,  
And footsteps quickly recede.

**VINCENT STEED**