

Shine Bright LLCE Cycle Terminal

File 20 The Irish art of exile

The Great Hunger p. 232

During the Great Famine, New Orleans was the second largest port in the nation, a cosmopolitan city with historical ties to Ireland dating back to its colonial days. In the mass exodus from Ireland, immigrants poured into the city, and by 1860 one out of every five residents was Irish. The Irish were drawn to the city by its dominant Catholicism and lack of quarantine facilities, as well as access to the heartland via the Mississippi River. They booked steerage passage on freight vessels that carried cotton and other raw goods to England and passengers on the return trip to New Orleans.

Professor Christine Kinealy: Emigration was not an easy choice for those people who came, and many people in fact died. We think about five per cent, five to ten per cent of people died on what was later called the coffin ships. Even if people got to America, we know that their health was badly affected by all the privations they'd been through, and some research suggests that when people got to America their average lifespan was only six years.

Passengers were crammed into the cargo holds of ships where they endured storms, and sea sickness plus food and water shortages. Despite laws regulating passenger ships, conditions worsened during the famine, and the Irish travelled at great peril.

Song "To the City of Chicago" p. 232

In the City of Chicago

As the evening shadows fall,

There are people dreaming,

Of the hills of Donegal.

Eighteen forty seven

Was the year it all began,

Deadly pains of hunger,

Drove a million from the land,

They journeyed not for glory,

Their motive wasn't greed,

A voyage of survival,

Across the stormy sea.

To the City of Chicago

As the evening shadows fall,

There are people dreaming,

Of the hills of Donegal.

Some of them knew fortune,

And some of them knew fame,

More of them knew hardship,

They died upon the plain,

They spread throughout the nation,
They rode the railroad cars,
Brought their songs and music,
To ease their lonely hearts.

To the City of Chicago
As the evening shadows fall,
There are people dreaming,
Of the hills of Donegal.

On a single day
The 15th of September 1847
At the height of the famine
The following goods were shipped out of Cork Harbour

On a single day
186 bags of flour,
286 barrels of barley
334 barrels of wheat and
96 casks of ham and
496 boxes of eggs and
219 head of cattle

On a single day
The ships sailed out of Cork with their bellies in the water.

To the City of Chicago

As the evening shadows fall,
There are people dreaming,
Of the hills of Donegal.

Home thoughts p. 235

Stefan Pape/Interviewer: I'm gonna begin by asking John, I mean, this film is of course about leaving home and kind of starting, sort of, again, moving out to the big bad world, I'm wondering if that's a theme you can resonate with?

John Crowley: Yeah, absolutely. I, I moved to London when I was 27, and to direct plays, very happily, rather than having to move because there was no work at home, necessarily. But I was struck, and it was very confusing, I was struck by a very similar thing that happens in the novel, which is you move to a new country and it's certainly not home for you. But when you go back home, your home isn't there anymore either. You know, you've left home and your relationship to that country has changed and its relationship to you is different. And this sort of hovering between two spaces is captured so vividly by Colm [Toibin, l'auteur] in the novel, and then we really fought to have that contained in the film as well. Nick got it in the screenplay as well.

Stefan Pape/Interviewer: Somehow, an immigration narrative told through the eyes of a woman is so rare as well, was that part of the appeal for you?

John Crowley: Totally, that's what ultimately feel very fresh and not like a period piece, so that you have a very specific young woman's view on this journey, which sort of kept, it kept surprising you as you read it, that it felt completely free of cliché.

A cosmopolitan Dubliner p. 236

James Joyce is one of the most revered writers in the English language and a central figure in the history of the novel. He is still hugely important to us because of his devotion to some crucial themes: the idea of the grandeur of ordinary life, his determination to portray what actually goes on through our heads moment by moment – what we now know, partly thanks to him, as the “stream of consciousness”, and his determination to capture on the page what language really sounds like in our own minds.

Born in 1882 James Joyce spent the first twenty years of his life in and around Dublin, and the rest wandering in and between the European cities of Trieste, Zurich and Paris. In three decades, he published two books of poetry, one collection of short stories, one play, and three novels, all of them different in scope and scale, but sharing one thing in common – Dublin, a city he loved and hated. “Each of my books,” he once explained to a friend, “is a book about Dublin. Dublin is a city of scarcely 300.000, but it has become the universal city in my work.”

In 1904, he met a young woman from Galway named Nora Barnacle.

After a few months, Nora agreed to follow Joyce to Europe for a self-imposed exile free from the morality of the Catholic church and the subjugation of the British Empire. They eventually landed in Trieste, an Austro-Hungarian port town where they would spend the next ten years, raising two children, both of them given Italian names – Lucia and Georgio. Joyce eked out a meagre existence as a language teacher at the Berlitz School, and translating Irish writers like Yeats and Oscar Wilde into Italian.

Voyages p. 237

Mary Swanzy was born in Dublin in 1882. She is of a generation of Irish artists who were educated in Paris before the First World War. There she literally witnessed the birth of modern art from Post-Impressionism through to Fauvism, Cubism, then onto Futurism, and even Surrealism. Each of these individual styles, she observed, digested its principles, and then produced artworks which are very distinctively her own.