

PAINTINGS

and

POEMS

of

IRELAND

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by

Philip A. Terry

PAINTINGS AND POEMS OF IRELAND

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the ones I love:

My precious wife, **Patricia Ann [Burke] Terry**

My wonderful children

Philip Jeffrey Terry
Patrick Michael Oliver Terry
Jennifer Lynn Terry

My father, **Lewis Elmer Terry**
My mother, **Kathleen Delores [McCullough] Terry**

and

any others who may have loved me, if only a little ...



THANK YOU ALL!

The photograph is of the author standing at the edge of Lough Gil with Innisfree over his right shoulder. What you can't see is a small rowboat for hire that will take you out to the island. You can see though, how dark the clouds are, forming over the northwestern area of the lake. In fact, it rained for a short while just after this photograph was taken. This photograph was developed long after the painting of the same area was completed (see *Isle at Innisfree* on page 35).

It is scenes like this that inspire me to paint Ireland's landscapes.

A number of people were likewise inspirational with their kind words and help along the way. I would like to thank: Richard Kilbourne, John DeBonis, Nancy Wong, Mr. and Mrs. Barry Wade, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Peacock, Mr. and Mrs. John Donlan, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Wells, Marianne Rafter and Mike Patterson. Also, I would like to thank Bert and Anne Campbell of Ramelton and Emer Kee of Letterkenny, County Donegal for their kindness and exceptional craic. I am sure there are others I should thank and I am thankful to all of you who have offered an encouraging word. Thank you all!

(Photograph by Patricia A. Terry)

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INTRODUCTION

It has been over twenty years since Patricia and I first traveled the back roads of Ireland. Each trip brought a fuller appreciation of its beauty and charm. The landscapes of Ireland vary in mood and drama illustrated by the pure works of nature - plants, valleys, mountains, rivers, streams, lakes, waterfalls, oceans, seas, bogs, rocks, and stone formations. All of which takes on a spiritual effect with the ever-changing weather - wind, rain, clouds, rainbows, sunbeams, sunshine and snow. The landscapes are embellished further by the works of man - villages, farms, castles, demesnes, ruins, walls, pastures, fields, harbors, animals, factories, bridges, sporting venues and most intriguing of all, the thousands of prehistoric graves and monuments collectively referred to as antiquities. The landscapes are intensely attractive and active with people, machines and animals moving about even on rainy days. To the artist's eye, the varying landscapes are totally captivating.

Around each corner is another view, another picture for the travel album. Imagine the delight as we first approached the Rock of Cashel from the east, silhouetted against the western sky in the early evening. The sky was aflame with oranges, reds and various colors of apricot outlining the Rock of Cashel, its towers thrust into the sky. We took roll after roll of film, only to be disappointed upon our return when the developed pictures did not match our expectations. It became apparent that the scenic splendor couldn't be adequately captured with a camera -- at least not by us.

Even if you could capture the visual beauty, you would still be lacking the cacophony of sounds: the wonderful dialects and idioms of the colorful language in everyday use; "live music tonight" in the pubs; the sounds of the cows lowing in the fields; the gentle sound of sheep; the call of the cuckoo, the jackdaws, the crows, or any of the birds for that matter; the sounds of the ocean; the howling or gentle blowing of the wind; the sound of a tractor working in a far-off field; or sometimes the absence of sound, which is in itself incredible. Nothing can adequately capture the smell of turf burning in the hearth, the smell of a decent pub, or the whiff of a fragrant farm on the wind. All of the senses are intensely involved with the day-to-day living in Ireland. My wife and I tried to capture the sights and sounds of Ireland with a camcorder but that also was a disappointment. Patricia said she felt like she was traveling by herself in silence since the

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camcorder was constantly in my face, lest I miss something. Talking would drown out some significant sound. Technology, in my opinion, is incapable of capturing the essence of Ireland.

On our third trip, we decided to just relax and enjoy ourselves. We promised to share our favorite memories when we returned home while sharing a bottle of wine. On the first two trips, we logged over 6,000 miles on our rental car. This doesn't include the miles backing up to see something again. We saw every nook and cranny of the island, staying in a different Bed & Breakfast each night. We decided this trip would have just a few objectives: rent houses for a week at a time, find the perfect Aran "hand-knit" sweater, and attend the Ballinasloe Horse Fair.

The Ballinasloe Horse Fair and later the Millstreet International Horse Jumping Competition were the beginning of my efforts to record my feelings and sightings. The Ballinasloe Horse Fair is held in October and made up of a number of events. We were content to sit on a rock wall and gaze at the horses, each held by the reins. We had never seen so many horses together at one time. There were horses of all sizes, shapes and colors. Some of the horses were in excess of seventeen hands. I was entranced by the sounds of the horses and the subtle movements of the tails, the legs, the ears and the heads, as they stood there obviously aware of the other horses. Suddenly in the midst a shinny black horse began to rear, rising on its hind legs, kicking the air with its front hooves. The horse was beautiful and silky with trim lines; over and over it rose, staying up in the air for long periods of time. The man holding the reins struggled to maintain control as the other horses moved away. After what must have been eight to ten minutes of this dance, between horse and man, the horse settled down but still pranced around nervously. The horse's coat was frothy from the exertion. The clouds, which had been a solid gray, suddenly parted briefly and a small sunbeam penetrated the otherwise gray world and lit up the horse. The horse turned a dark blue color. I assume it was the result of moisture or oil on the hide. I had never seen a blue horse before nor since for that matter. For some reason, I wanted to paint a picture of that blue horse.

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On the way back to our rented house, we bought acrylic paints and thus began an obsession to capture the beauty of the blue horse. Horses are hard to draw or paint, in part because every time they move, they seem to change in dimension. For example, if they reach down and out with their mouth for a bit of grass, the neck becomes longer. All the muscles change when they move. A few nights later we attended the International Jumping Competition in Millstreet. I was fascinated. I painted blue horses for six months. A friend later pointed out to me that Franz Marc (1880-1916) had painted blue horses before the First World War. Subsequently, I have come across several paintings of blue horses. This means simply that I am not the only one to see and appreciate a blue horse.

On this same trip, we happened to come across “The Miniature Art Gallery” at Ballydehob. Its fittingly small sign was flapping in the wind. An elderly gentleman was teaching art to a dozen or so small children within. The man had a wild shock of white hair that seemed to have been last combed by a violent wind. In a calming voice, he said he’d be with us shortly as he was just finishing his class for the day. I looked around the small room, which was perhaps 15 feet by 20 feet. Small, single paintings, at eye level and at respectable intervals, wrapped around the entire room, such that each painting commanded its own space. I looked at each painting but was drawn back to a painting of a ship being tossed about in a choppy sea under roiling clouds. I was deep in thought when the old man spoke quietly near my left ear saying that the painting had “captured my eye.” I agreed that I found the painting very appealing. He then explained the artist’s technique of using the various movements of sails and seas such that your eye was always brought back to the safety of the deck. A long discussion of techniques was finally ended when I asked one naïve question too many, which was “Why are the paintings so small?”

He said, “You are from California, no doubt, where the paintings have to match the sofa or the rug. In Europe, many people live in small apartments, and they buy something with which they can decorate their small, private spaces. The paintings mean something to them. They derive personal satisfaction from them, and they are not just for decoration.”

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“How much?” was my next question and the price of 120 punts (Irish currency at the time) settled the question. I promised the old man, I would return the following year and buy the painting if he still had it. To make a long story short, I did return and I did buy the painting but at a craft shop in Skibereen. I just happened to come across it next to a small sign that said, “The miniature paintings are from The Miniature Art Gallery in Ballydehob. To purchase, please speak with the proprietor.” I had already been to Ballydehob, but the gallery had been closed. A sign there said to inquire at the craft shop up the street. The owner of the craft shop said that the old man from the miniature art gallery had “just disappeared.” That few minutes with the old gentleman had helped me decide to paint small to appeal to people’s private natures and not their public wall space needs.

On subsequent trips, I began to paint the pastures in which the horses were kept. Now, I love to go to Ireland and paint anything that appeals to me - which is almost everything.

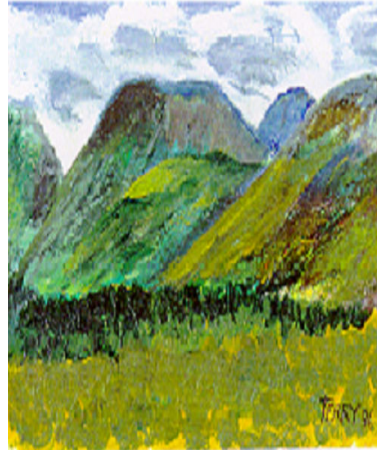
On a recent trip, I asked the meaning of “disappeared” from a man well versed in the ways of Ireland. He told me a relatively short story of a man who came to his door and asked for work. There being lots to do around the estate he was given a job, three meals a day and his own room. For five years the man was at the breakfast table every morning like clockwork. The two of them got along very well and worked side by side. One morning when he did not show, his room was checked fearing an ailment or some such malady. The bed was made, the room was clean, as if no one had been there and the man had gone. He was never seen again. The man telling this story said that after five years a neighbor told him, that after thinking on it, perhaps he had seen a car pick him up on the main road a few miles away. He hadn’t mentioned it earlier because he wasn’t sure. Still troubled today the owner of the estate feels the neighbor was trying to sooth his soul.

Those few words from an old gentleman who disappeared, added so much to the paintings, that I was encouraged to make a few notes to tell the reader about what, where, and sometimes why I painted these scenes. My hope is that the words and poems will add meaning to my paintings. I hope you enjoy this book as much as I have!



The Celtic Knotted Cranes

Paintings and Poems of Ireland



Wild Ireland

In a mystic land called Ireland
Wild skies and dark green eyes
Wet sand and wind-swept land
Beer darkly brewed and clouds multi-hued
The Emerald Isle and the sweet shy smile
The bright red hair and the county fair
The wandering sheep and dark night sleep

Wild Ireland was painted near the Twelve Bens in the Inagh Valley near Recess, Connemara, County Galway. The ruggedness of which, pretty much epitomizes the whole wild experience of Ireland. This painting was painted on site. The “no-see-ems” that day determined how long we could paint.

Philip A. Terry



Paintings and Poems of Ireland



Across Lough Corrib

What a gorgeous house
At the base of that hill

I would love to live there a year
But I know I never will

I wonder if it can truly be
As enchanting as it appears to me

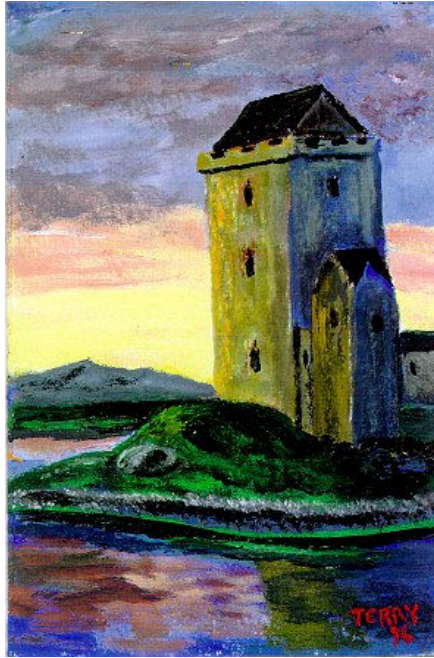
Probably nothing will
Match my dreams, I fear

Across Lough Corrib is the perspective one gets while sitting on the southern edge of this magnificent lake, wondering what it would be like to live at the base of that hill in that beautiful house. We walked a considerable distance, always curious about what we were discovering. At one point we came to the ruins of a number of small buildings. Most were riddled with old trees growing up inside the foundations and out of the walls. An old man told us it was the site of an old mining operation and we were lucky not to have fallen into an old shaft, July 2000.

Philip A. Terry



Paintings and Poems of Ireland



Donlan's Retreat

In a land far away
A castle reflects the fading light of day
Here the Donlans came to stay
To have fun, to laugh and play
(And so did the Wades, Peacocks and the Terrys)
They came by plane, train and ferries
They came to paint, or read a book
Give the sunsets a lingering look
Peddle about on their trusty bikes
Go on dream-perfect, bird spotting hikes
And Donlan is having his best game of all
With a sweet little, white bouncing ball

Donlan's Retreat is painted from the memory of Dungaire, cast in glorious evening colors as we rounded Galway Bay. We traveled with friends and Kinvara seemed a perfect place to spend the night in August 1996.

Philip A. Terry



