

# In an authentic Irish pub in Las Vegas

*by* Ed Higgins

In an authentic Irish pub in Las Vegas where over much crowd noise the three of us are discussing Yeats, Joyce and Lady Gregory. We're in an Irish pub after all, plus the fact we're literature pros attending a Vegas academic conference. Kathy, who holds both Irish and American citizenship, has led us here insisting on a real Irish experience while in Vegas. And it is. On the backbar's shelf a multi-array of amber liquid bottles of gleaming Irish whiskies is echoed in tall, arched mirrors. Half-to-filled bottles of Jameson, Kilbeggan, Greenore, Midleton, Writer's Tears, and a range of peated single-malt selections stand like stolid druid sorcerers. I'm eying Writer's Tears, as a literary self-indulgence, after too many publishing rejections of late.

Kathy's half through her second Guinness Extra Stout pint while lauding Yeats as not only a fine poet and dramatist, but as co-founder of Dublin's Abby Theatre. We are talking loudly over the band across the room where a young woman performer with green-dyed hair is clogging rat-a-tat-tat percussively on the small raised stage like she's Michael Flatley's granddaughter or somesuch. We can't even hear the crunch of our basket of beer-battered and Bloody Mary marinated Drunken Onion Rings; although they're delicious nonetheless. Kathy's also putting away another house specialty, a Sloppy Pat corned beef sandwich, between reciting mouthfuls of Yeat's "Sailing to Byzantium."

Polly's slowly sipping her Baileys Irish Cream on-the-rocks as I'm making my way through my second shot of Writer's Tears while Kathy's starting her 2nd dark Guinness along with her Sloppy Pat. The three of us are leaning against the dark-stained, wet-shiny mahogany bar where Joyce's Leopold Bloom probably once leaned or Dylan Thomas for sure, reciting "And death shall have no dominion"-

-which it nevertheless did anyway after a serious drinking bout celebrating his 39th birthday with friends. We're sipping our drinks looking around the place, admiring all this Irish-cum-Vegas culture. The polished bar and backbar are straight out of Dublin we've been told, as is every single brick of the pub's exterior. Each of us has a foot resting comfortably on the floor's fancy raised faux-brass rail when a drunk staggers from the dance floor crowd toward the bar, spewing a small lake of pretzel-laden vomit just behind us and flooding underneath the brass rail where the three of us are standing holding forth our literary fete.

Rudely interrupted we are rightfully disgusted and not at all feeling sorry for this creep who's just drunkenly puked sourly and loudly in our direction. We are slipping uncomfortably in disgorged spew. But quickly enough a clean-up woman magically appears--summoned by on-duty green cocked-hat leprechauns it seems--to mop away the floor's insult with a few practiced strokes of her Irish spin mop, then dumped back into her green trolley bucket later to be emptied into the imported peat bog located behind the pub, anticipating just such patron surfeits.

The authentic Irish bartender meanwhile, mindful of long established Irish pub vomit custom, sets up on the bar in front of us an on-the-house Irish Cream, another Guinness, and a Writer's Tears for Polly, Kathy, and me. Kathy, who speaks Gaelic, tells us we're well on our way to being absolutely "stocious" given this new round of courtesy drinks. Wouldn't that more authentically be "langered," I say, adding what little drunk-Irish I know. Sure, Kathy says, and "Slainte na bhfear agus go maire no mna go deo!" she adds raising her glass of Guinness to clink with ours. "Health to the men and may the women live forever," she translates. To mine and Polly's bemused laughter. Down the hatch, Polly offers, and then let's get t'hell outa here.

Later at our hotel we wash our one-each vomit-soiled shoes in our rooms' bathroom sink. Thus capping an altogether genuine Vegas-Irish experience.

